



AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE: A PERSPECTIVE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the impact of strategic human resource management on the performance of Nairobi City County's public universities. The theories that were used to guide the research included the Resource-Based View Theory, the Human Capital Theory, and the Balanced Scorecard. A descriptive research design was used for this investigation. The intended audience was teaching and non-teaching employees from Nairobi City County's public universities. The University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, the Technical University of Kenya, the Multimedia University of Kenya, and The Co-operative University of Kenya were among them. The research included 9121 teaching and non-teaching personnel from the five universities. The Yamane method was used to obtain a sample size of 384 respondents. The study employed a stratified and simple random sampling approach. Primary data was gathered using standardized Likert-type scale surveys, while secondary data was gathered from published sources. The instruments for data collection were evaluated for their validity and reliability. Content validity was utilized to establish the validity, while the Cronbach alpha test, with a threshold of 0.70, was used to verify the instrument's reliability. The investigation included both descriptive and inferential data analysis. In the descriptive statistics, means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations were presented. Inferential statistics, correlation, and regression were utilized at a 5% significance level. The findings were presented in tables, and figures. The survey had a high response rate of 62% from stakeholders in public universities. The study found that strategic human resource management has a statistically significant positive impact on the performance of public universities. Specifically, strategic human resource management had a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.362$, $p<0.01$) and a statistically significant positive impact ($B=0.301$, $Beta=0.362$, $p<0.01$) on the performance of public universities in Nairobi City County. It is important to note that other factors not included in this analysis may also impact university performance. Further research may be necessary to comprehend the relationship between these variables and university performance fully.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management, Training Systems, Change Management, Recruitment and Retention, Student Advocacy, University Ranking

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INTRODUCTION

There is rising anticipation that universities will use process improvement strategies to better integrate their missions with the needs of their constituents and the resources at their disposal (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2018). Institutions aspire for quality and productivity in research, teaching, and service, but there is growing demand to change and enhance accountability in higher education, leading to confusion about their actual responsibilities (Schulz, 2019). It is widely accepted in performance enhancement that strategic alignment is necessary for businesses of all sizes to create a productive environment. However, according to Walter, Kellermanns, Floyd, Veiga, and Matherne (2017), there has been surprisingly little current study into strategic alignment and its effects on performance. Since advanced education is under growing pressure to become more responsible, efficient, and impactful (Alexander, 2020), it is essential to learn how strategic alignment may boost the effectiveness of educational institutions.

Most Kenyan universities have agonized and still suffer low academic performance, loss of finances, demotivated staff, and staff transfers in pursuit of greener pastures and loss of students culminating in loss of public confidence. This has resulted in poor quality education and the production of ill-considered graduates posing danger to the fulfilment of Vision 2030. Moreover, universities have continuously clinched on IT in their activities for them to remain competitive and noticeable on websites. This is an initiative that assists in the ranking universities both locally, regionally and internationally (Akoyo, Bula, and Wambua, 2022).

In a competitive marketplace, higher education systems must implement relevant strategic approaches based on research and development. To strengthen an education system, the institution has to align its management, financing, governance, and performance incentive mechanisms to produce learning for all (World Bank, 2020). As the world is dynamic, our higher education systems must be willing to identify and adapt (Lin, 2018).

The current performance of any business affects its capacity to reach its long-term objectives. As a result, organizations can better identify areas for improvement in their operational operations and plan for the successful execution of future initiatives (Lahiri & Narayanan (2013). According to Richard, Devinney, Yip, and Johnson (2009), the three most important aspects of an organization's performance are capital adequacy (including cash flow, return on assets (ROA), and return on investment (ROI)), market performance (including sales and market share), and investor return (including total shareholder return and economic value added). Strategic management may also involve procurement aspects that may determine how organizations perform (Muiruri & Orwa, 2016).

According to Geiger (2020), universities and colleges are struggling due to budget cuts, dwindling resources, and the need to consider alternative approaches to operational development. Financial metrics are important, but there has been significant success in increasing performance management tools to encourage enhanced organisational rather than reactive leadership (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2019; Tangen, 2018). Universities' primary missions include service, instruction, and research; nevertheless, the persistent problems in the field necessitate faculty taking on greater responsibilities in these and other strategic university endeavors (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2019).

While formerly seen as delivering a public benefit, graduates are expected to gain more than technical skills from their university experience; they are also seeking social mobility, improved economic potential, and employment security (Williams, 2018). According to Ramaley (2018), the ever-increasing difficulty of today's academic environment necessitates a new look at how strategic alignment affects the whole institution. An integral aspect of shared institutional governance, strategic alignment requires buy-in from all stakeholders if its underlying structures and procedures are to succeed (Heaney, 2020).

Increased student numbers, inequality, inadequate assets, employee turnover, insufficient capital investment, industrial conflicts, and drain of intellect have all contributed to increased public scrutiny and a corresponding decline in university performance in recent years. For this reason, Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 5% is significantly higher than Ethiopia's GER of 3%. (Arayesh, Golmohammadi, Nekooeezadeh & Mansouri, 2017). According to Times Higher Education (2021), the global university ranking is built on four performance indicators; university ranking, increased revenue, student advocacy, and employee satisfaction. The ranking only included two Kenyan universities. The University of Nairobi was ranked position 1 in Kenya, position 501-600 worldwide, with a female-to-male ratio (of 24:76) and a number of students per staff of 34.5. In contrast, Kenyatta university was ranked position 2 with Female to male ratio of 52:48 and the number of students per staff at 33.3 and ranked worldwide as a reporter since the data they provided did not meet the eligibility criteria to receive a rank. The post-COVID era necessitates a paradigm shift in how universities teach and operate. This informed the study's foundation.

Regarding the existing literature, questions of how strategic alignment influences performance in the university sub-sector in Kenya still linger. Most research has examined strategic alignment's influence on organizational performance in various industries. Therefore, this study aimed to address a number of knowledge gaps by analyzing how strategic alignment affects the efficiency of government agencies in Nairobi City County, Kenya. To identify how the factors impact the performance of public universities in Kenya, the research will centre on information technology, market orientation, and strategic human resource management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The following theories were used in the study: Resource Base View, human capital theory and the Balanced score card model

Resource-Base Theory

According to Penrose (1959), important strategic resources that are precious, scarce, unique, and non-substitutable enable organizations to gain a competitive advantage for long-term performance. A valuable resource benefits the company as it can exploit market opportunities, reducing market threats. Additionally, it enables a company to undertake its operations and increase sales, low costs, and high-profit margins. A rare resource is difficult to find among the company's competitors. Unrivalled resources are difficult to duplicate. Resources that are not interchangeable cannot be swapped. The RBV theory assists managers in understanding the importance of competencies in a company and how they can be efficiently applied to advance total performance. The three types of capital are physical, human, and organizational resources.

Teece (2007) claims that RBV saw its assets and skills as immutable. This is not easy because the ever-evolving market necessitates a corresponding shift in how businesses allocate resources. According to Brumagim (1994), there are four distinct types of organizational resources: those devoted to production and maintenance; those devoted to organizational learning; those devoted to the organization's vision; and those devoted to the organization's strategic vision. The resource-based view idea is significant to the research because it helps businesses create immediate value-enhancing strategies that other businesses will have difficulty replicating. The effectiveness of public universities in Nairobi City County will be evaluated in light of market orientation, strategic human resource management, and information technology using resource-based perspective theory.

Human Capital Theory

Becker (1993) posits that investing in employees through on job training and education increases an employee's capability to efficiently and effectively work. As workers acquire new information and hone their abilities, it is believed that this is a natural outcome of a productive workplace. This is regarded as capital as they earn income and other useful outputs in the long run. Investing in one's health and financial stability by taking a computer course, paying for medical treatment, or getting a personal tutor to teach one the value of being on time and telling the truth is another form of capital. More educated people tend to earn more within different sectors, especially in less-developed countries. This has resulted to continuous growth in income. Education and training enable the labor force to adapt to the continuously evolving technologies and increasing efficiency in various industries. The fact that sectors with faster growth tend to employ more highly educated individuals and have more opportunities for in-house professional development is evidence of this.

There have been critiques of the theory. Brymer et al. (2012) argue that human capital needs should include knowledge management due to the correlation between knowledge and behavior in human cognitive capital to maximize the value of human assets. This theory applies to the research because it places a premium on organizational and societal improvement through training and development programs. Through the lens of human capital theory, this research analyzed how strategic human resource management affects the output of Kenya's public universities in Nairobi City County.

The Balance Scorecard

Kaplan and Norton (1992) came up with the idea for the balanced scorecard, which compares more traditional financial evaluation methods to a company's larger strategic goals. Financial, internal business, customer, innovativeness, and learning are the four metrics of performance that are combined in this paradigm. The approach gives managers a bird's-eye idea of the enterprise,

helping them zero in on what's truly important. The balanced scorecard concept originates from the realization that value for shareholders can be generated at three distinct organizational levels: the corporate, the strategic business unit, and the board. This is achieved through collaboration based on company strategies, a unique value proposition, and the mitigation of investment risk for shareholders through openness and responsibility. Moreover, the balanced scorecard offers crucial input on internal processes and external outcomes for enhancing a company's strategic performance.

Popular though this structure may be, it does not tell us much about which of a company's endeavors bring in money. The balanced scorecard does not lead to more precise pricing of a company's product line. This makes it difficult for managers to determine which goods are profitable and which are not and what customers value. (Meyer, 2002). Since the balanced scorecard draws a connection between financial outcomes and the main drivers of a business—customers, internal processes, and employees—it is an appropriate tool for this analysis. Public universities in Nairobi City County will use the balanced scorecard to analyze how strategic alignment affects efficiency.

Empirical Literature Review

Ojokuku and Akanbi (2019) studied strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices and institutional effectiveness at Nigerian public institutions. A total of 220 academic and otherwise professionals were expected to attend. Human resource management strategies that aimed to be strategic included hiring and selecting employees, promoting from within, providing formal education and training, assessing and rewarding performance based on tangible outcomes, and determining pay rates. The data were examined using descriptive and inferential statistics, and the study's underlying premise was assessed. The findings suggest that various variables affect the pace at which SHRM practices are adopted. These include university funding, decisions made by the governing council, staff connectedness with the organization's vision

and mission (particularly in the Operation department), and knowledge of the benefits of SHRM practices. This investigation resulted in universities using SHRM principles acquiring more research funds, academic publications, international partnerships, and accolades for research breakthroughs. However, the research failed to demonstrate how organizational performance is affected by change management, recruiting, and retention. The research was conducted in Nigerian public institutions, whereas the present study was conducted in Kenyan public universities. Due to regional variances, the findings of this research cannot be generalized.

Ayanda and Sani's (2011) research attempted to evaluate if Nigerian universities' Strategic HRM methods vary in their uptake based on the age and type of ownership. Line management delegation, selection system, performance evaluation, compensation, employee participation, succession planning system, and training and development were the components of strategic HRM practices. The emphasis of the research was on 29 government-owned and 15 private institutions in Nigeria. A stratified sampling method was used. The outcomes of this study specify that SHRM practices are being adopted at a remarkably low rate across the Nigerian university system, with the degree of implementation varying mostly according to whether the public or private investors own the school. The outcomes also disclosed noteworthy differences among public and private universities in Nigeria in terms of SHRM alignment, development and training succession design framework, and worker participation. The study focused on private and public Nigerian institutions, but this one only looked at public universities in Kenya and will place more emphasis on outcomes. Because of variations across regions, the results cannot be extrapolated.

Naitore and Wanyoike (2018) study examined the strategic human resource management on the output of selected public universities in Kenya. Human resource (HR) factors like planning, staffing, and retention were examined to determine their

impact on productivity. The methodological framework for this study was descriptive research. Nine hundred and fourteen faculty and staff personnel from thirteen Kenyan public universities served as the study's subjects. A random selection process was used to choose the samples. Using the methodology described by the Israeli researchers, a sample size of 278 people was assessed to be adequate for the study. Open and closed questions were included in the questionnaires used to gather primary data. Human resource planning, staffing, and retention were shown to have a good and substantial link with the performance of a few of Kenya's public universities. But it was impossible to draw any conclusions on the role of Training Systems, Change Management, Recruitment, or Retention in boosting organizational performance.

Marura (2018) examined how Strategic HRM methods at USIU-Africa impacted worker output. A case study methodology was used for the investigation. The investigation analyzed how different employment practices, such as hiring, training, and pay and benefits, affect productivity in the workplace. In this study, a descriptive approach was used. All 622 of the staff members at USIU-Africa were considered potential participants. Using a stratified selection method, a total of 156 employees were selected at random. Questionnaires were utilized to collect the bulk of the data used in the analysis. According to the results, USIU-Africa lacked strategic training programs, meaning that seasoned workers did not mentor newer hires. However, it was impossible to draw any conclusions on the impact of Training Systems, Change Management, Recruitment, or retention on organizational performance. More so, despite the generalizability of the conclusion, the researchers used a case study approach.

The theoretical and empirical review conducted on the relevant literature established a conceptual framework that captured the association between strategic human resource management and performance as shown in Figure 1 below.

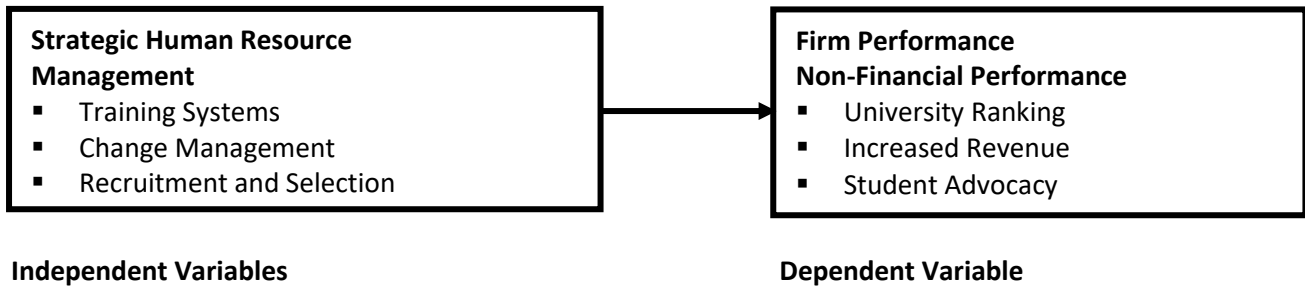


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Literature Review (2023)

The study adopted the following research hypotheses.

H₀: there is no statistically significant effect of strategic human resource management on performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

H₁: there is a statistically significant effect of strategic human resource management on performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research approach was used for this study because it gives a thorough perspective of a scenario and how variables are connected as it occurs naturally (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005). Research design is defined by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) as a comprehensive structure that supports researchers in data collecting, analysis, interpretation, and reporting to respond to research questions. In addition, the design was appropriate due to its ability to gather large amounts of data simultaneously and at a low cost. Because of this, it is appropriate to analyse the effect of strategic alignment on the overall performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

The research focused on five public colleges in Nairobi City County as its primary target. The University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, the Technical University of Kenya, Multimedia University, and The Cooperative University of Kenya were some universities under this category.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a target population consists of participants who can articulate their opinions and experiences to address the research purpose fully. The target population comprised 3401 teaching and 5720 non-teaching staff of the five universities who: held a bachelor's degree or higher, had worked in the institution for the past eight years, and had received training based on their area of specialization. This helped gather credible and relevant information to determine the link between strategy alignment and performance.

The sample sizes consisted of 384 respondents; 143 teaching and 241 non-teaching staff. The study was used stratified random sampling techniques. The population was first divided into groups according to the university, and then those groups were further subdivided into two distinct strata: teaching personnel and non-teaching employees. After that, the researchers used simple random sampling to choose a sample proportional to each institution's stratum. A simple random sample ensures that study samples are equally likely to be included.

The investigation made utilization of both primary and secondary data sources. To obtain primary data, structured questionnaires with Likert scales were employed. A questionnaire is an investigation tool containing queries designed to elicit data from a responder (Brymann & Bell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), a questionnaire consists of standardized questions to gather information from respondents, as it is a relatively discreet and inexpensive method for gathering data. The

questionnaires were handed out in person to the non-academic and academic staff of the five institutions, and a follow-up was done through telephone calls and email. The study used published materials on the Commission of Universities Education website and the universities website for secondary source data.

The data obtained were processed and analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. This regression mode was used in the research on the influence of strategic alignment on the performance of public universities in Nairobi City County. For linear regression, homoscedasticity, normality, and independent residuals are prerequisites. This is because linear regression is based on the assumption that there is a linear link among the independent variable and the dependent variable. The following equation provides the multiple regression models;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where: β_1 is estimated by the model's regression coefficients

Y = Performance

β_0 – The intercept of the equation (Constant term)

X_1 = Strategic human resource management

ε – The Error term

The proper authorities were contacted for approval of this study. A letter was drafted to request permission to distribute surveys, conduct interviews, and examine relevant documents. No one was forced to take part in the research. A copy of the study's results can be provided upon request. The researcher treated the subjects' right to privacy

seriously. The researcher kept all responder information and identities secret throughout the data-gathering procedure to prevent unnecessary exposure of participant identities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was administered to a sample size of 384 individuals, and the results show that 62% of the participants responded to the survey, while 38% did not respond. The high response rate of 62% suggests that the survey was relevant to the target audience, which consisted of stakeholders in public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The responses obtained are, therefore, likely to exemplify the beliefs and experiences of the target population. It is worth noting that non-response bias may have affected the results, as the characteristics of the non-respondents may differ from those of the respondents. However, the high response rate of 62% still indicates that the data collected will likely be reliable and valid. The survey response rate of 62% provides an encouraging indication that the data collected is reliable and valid for investigating the research topic of strategic human resource management and performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Tests of Hypotheses

The study utilized a simple regression model to investigate the association between strategic human resource management and performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Table 1 below shows the regression model summary of strategic human resource management and performance.

Table 1: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.362 ^a	.131	.127	.423843547908552	1.907

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic HRM

b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Universities

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 1 above showed the regression model summary for strategic human resource management and performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. In the Model Summary Table 1, the model's overall fit is displayed, revealing a moderately positive correlation ($R = 0.362$) between the predictor variable (Strategic HRM) and the dependent variable (Business Performance) (Performance of Public Universities). The value of R Square (0.131) indicates that the predictor variable can account for approximately 13.1% of the variance in the dependent variable. After controlling for the

number of predictors, the Adjusted R Square value (0.127) indicates that the predictor variable has a minimal effect on the dependent variable. The estimate's standard error (0.423) indicates that predicted values of the dependent variable are likely to differ from actual values by approximately 0.42 units. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.907 indicates that the residuals do not exhibit significant autocorrelation. The table indicates that although the predictor variable has a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, this effect is not strong.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.430	1	6.430	35.792	.000 ^b
	Residual	42.755	238	.180		
	Total	49.185	239			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Universities

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic HRM

Source: Field Data (2023)

From table 2 above, the F-test is 35.792 with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 (alpha). Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a statistically significant

relationship between strategic human resource management and the performance of public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	2.553	.197		12.932	.000
	Strategic HRM	.301	.050	.362	5.983	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Universities

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 3 displays the coefficients for the linear regression model with Performance of Public Universities as the dependent variable and Strategic Human Resource Management as the predictor variable. The intercept coefficient is 2.553,

indicating that the expected mean value of Performance of Public Universities with Strategic HRM set to zero is 2.553. Strategic HRM has a coefficient of 0.301, which indicates that for each unit increase in Strategic HRM, the expected

Performance of Public Universities increases by 0.301 units, all other predictor variables being held constant. The standard error column provides the standard error of each coefficient, which quantifies the coefficient's precision. The t-value column provides the t-statistic for each coefficient, which is the coefficient divided by its standard error, and indicates the number of standard errors removed from zero the estimated coefficient is. The p-value column indicates the probability of observing a t-statistic as extreme as the one observed, assuming that the null hypothesis (that the coefficient is zero) is correct. The p-value for Strategic HRM is less than 0.05, which is statistically significant, indicating that Strategic HRM has a significant positive impact on the performance of public universities. The results of this study was confirmed by Naitore and Wanyoike (2018) who concluded that strategic human resource management practices had a good and substantial link with the performance of public universities in Kenya. A study by Ojokuku and Akambi (2019) also confirms the study findings by emphasizing the positive effects of utilizing strategic human resource management practices in research breakthroughs for public universities. Therefore, the predictive model that yielded from the regression analysis of strategic human resource management and the performance is shown below.

Performance = 2.553 + 0.301*Strategic Human Resource Management

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The researcher's recommendations provide policymakers in public universities in Nairobi City County with valuable guidance. The study's findings and recommendations contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this area, and academic researchers can use them as a resource for future studies. This study's findings and recommendations could enhance comprehension of how Information Technology, Market Orientation, and Strategic Human Resource Management influence university performance and inform future decision-making. The third objective of the study was to investigate

the impact of Strategic Human Resource Management on the performance of public universities in Nairobi City County. Strategic human resource management has a considerable positive impact on the performance of public universities, according to the findings of this study.

The research uncovered a lack of comprehensive strategic human resource management for implementing Strategic HRM. Therefore, the study suggests that public universities employ a strategic human resource management (HRM) approach that focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining talent that correlates with the institution's goals and values. This may include developing a comprehensive HR strategy, effective recruitment and retention practices, and offering staff development and career advancement opportunities. By leveraging their human capital, universities can enhance their performance outcomes in this manner.

Suggestions for Further Research

Focusing on the independent variables of Information Technology, Market Orientation, and Strategic HRM, this study investigated strategic alignment. An extended longitudinal study could be conducted to obtain a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of these variables on performance outcomes. In addition, a comparative study could be conducted to compare the performance of public universities in Nairobi City County to that of private universities or universities in other regions, thereby identifying the factors contributing to superior performance outcomes and shedding light on how public universities can be improved. By conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, a qualitative study could also be conducted to investigate the mechanisms by which Information Technology, Market Orientation, and Strategic HRM affect university performance. This could provide useful insights into how universities can optimize these variables to improve performance outcomes.

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