

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Moderation of Top Management Support on the Relationship between Human Resource Strategy Evaluation and Performance: A Survey of Universities in Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: the purpose of the study was to ascertain the moderating role of top management support on the relationship between the utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and the performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya. The study hypothesized that there was no significant moderating role of human resource strategy evaluation and performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya.

Methodology: the study employed a cross-sectional sample survey in the Republic of Kenya. Data was collected from a randomly sampled size of thirty-one universities from a population of 74 universities accredited by the Commission for University Education. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed for completion by the registrar in charge of administration with oversight over the human resource management function that is in charge of the human resource strategy. Data was coded and processed by SPSS version 25. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data.

Findings: the study found moderate to high utilization of human resource strategy. The direct relationship of utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy was strong and significant. However, the influencing role of top management support was found to be non-significant.

Unique contribution to theory, practice, and policy: the study identified the supportive behaviours of top management as applied to universities in Kenya. It also emphasized the weak structural position of human resource management within the management hierarchy of universities. Human resource management needs to be strengthened structurally and professionally given that people constitute the most important resource within universities.

Keywords: Top management support, human resource strategy evaluation, performance, higher education

1. Introduction

This paper reports a study that sought to investigate the moderating role of top management support on the relationship between utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and the performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya. Over the past two decades, universities have utilized strategy through strategic planning. Macdonald (2019) quoting Elizabeth Buckner notes strategic planning in universities a huge global trend. Fredua-Kwarteng (2020) observes majority of African tertiary education institutions have strategic plans. The environment, in complexity and dynamism, has compelled institutions to adopt market-like mechanisms so as to survive and thrive. Citing Keller (1983), Shattock (2010), Bayenet et al. (2000), and Groves et al. (1997), Parakhina, Godina, Boris, and Ushvitsky (2017) outline some of the pressures on universities: turbulence in context; high velocity evolution of international competition; changed demand requirements to university education; fading lines of distinction of the education market; inadequate qualified scientific and instructional human resources; and demands for innovations.

Higher education institutions have found themselves in a competitive marketplace; the main variables being attraction of exceptionally respected scholars, top-rate students, sponsors, as well as raising their profile and reputation (Goldman and Salem, 2015). Notably, public universities have transformed from being 'state-controlled to state-supervised' (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2020). And the university institution is now considered an 'organization like any other' (Macdonald, 2019, quoting Elizabeth Bruckner). Thus, the identity of the university, 'half-public, half-private', has become problematic (Tavernier, 2005); and the varied stakeholder demands have added on to this identity crisis. Thus, according to proponents, strategic planning, a rigorously critical brainstorming process university administrations deploy to direct their activities (Ofori&Atiogbe, 2012), help institutions confront hostile environments; and in particular to efficiently allocate resources for attainment of key milestones (Ofori&Atiogbe, 2012, citing Bain and Company, 2003). Goldman and Salem (2015) suggest strategic planning portend success for complex entities among them universities and colleges.

But strategic planning alone hardly suffices. Ofori and Atiogbe (2012) observe that organizations that merely deploy the classical planning model will hardly survive environmental complexity and dynamism; they instead have to embrace strategic thinking. In addition, critics accuse strategic planning of stifling organization-wide strategic thinking. That strategic thinking is an imperative (Goldman, Scott, & Follman, 2015; Gilmore, 2007) is an attractive proposition to human resource strategy as strategic thinking is people-based. Universities are distinct from businesses in myriad ways and may not respond directly to strategic plans. The challenge with strategy, then, is evidence that it works, that is, strategic management efficiency and effectiveness (Zotovaa, Kandrashinaa, Ivlievb&Charaevac, 2016). This necessitated the entry of strategy evaluation. A combination of strategic thinking, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation and control makes up strategic management of which strategic human resource management is an essential constituent. Ideally, human strategy evaluation is a component of SHRM, and HSE naturally cascades from SE.

According to Menon (2021), strategy evaluation has the purpose of assessing strategy for effectiveness via attainment of organizational objectives. It is essentially questioning the strategy (Fuller, 2005; Tabatoni, Davies & Barblan, 2000). The purpose of strategy evaluation is to ensure strategic choice is sound and that it is contributing to the realization of organizational strategic aims. Two key questions are involved: the correctness of the premises on which the strategy rests; and how the strategy performs (Menon, 2021). Rumelt (1979) proposed dimensions of strategy evaluation as follows: Consistency; Consonance; Feasibility; and Advantage. Consistency implies internal fit of the strategy with other organizational elements. Consonance is alignment of strategy with external factors. Feasibility is the cost of strategy in the face of available resources. And Advantage relates to the benefits from the strategy vis-à-vis he stated objectives. In this study, utilization of human resource strategy evaluation meant domestication of the principles of business strategy evaluation to the human resource strategy. As a function level strategy and given that people are found all over the organization, the evaluation of human resource strategy assumes a central position in the entire strategy process of institutions.

A key feature of strategic decisions is that they are top management-related (Ghosh, 2010). To management support or lack of it matters. Like all corporate initiatives, the workability and efficacy of HSE are contingent on the support of top managers, or at the minimum at least, management support. This, in principle, should not be problematic: top management's foremost role is to ensure organisations perform controlling, a basic sub-process of management, should come naturally to managerial work (Jones & George, 2006; Bateman & Snell, 1999). Hambrick and Mason (1984) assert: top executive's matter. According to Ghosh (2010), one of the critical success factors (CSFs) for a winning strategy consists in the quality of top management; and for Bateman and Snell (2007), lax top management comes first in the list of symptoms of an out-of-control organisation. Thus, premium ought to be placed on the development of future managers (Ghosh, 2010), a CSF and an HRS of its own.

Obiefuna (2013) has defined management in four ways: management as a resource (citing Johnson & Page, 1975; Drucker, 1979); management as a body of knowledge; management as a process (citing Necker, 1981; Breach, 1973; Fayol, 1959); and management as an economic act by which resources get to be allocated. As a resource, management comprises a group of people who perform the oversight role in organisations. In this study management is conceptualized as a resource although this evidently subsumes the other three conceptualisations given that managerial work is processual, requires some level of knowledge, skill and experience, and involves execution of resource-allocating activities. Obiefuna (2013) observes further that a distinction between management as a resource is established on the basis of vertical rank; hence the incidence of top management, middle management, and line management (Jones & George, 2006). This distinction guides the setting up of roles for the various levels of management, although all manages carry out planning, organizing, leading, and controlling activities albeit in varying combinations (Obiefuna, 2013). According to Bateman and Snell (1999), top management exercises overall responsibility for the organizational effectiveness. Jones and George (2006) consider top management work as entailing setting up organisational goals, determining the interplay between units of the organization, and monitoring the conduct of middle management. Generally, top managers supervise middle managers who in turn oversee frontline managers. Significantly, therefore, top managers report to no one, are only responsible to the owners of the organization and enjoy high discretion (Obiefuna, 2013). But top managers are highly dependent on the work of the other managers (ibid), which raises questions of the effectiveness of their contribution to organizational performance (Lee & Teece, 2013).

The quest by HR for strategic partnership is influenced by top management's supportive or unsupportive behaviours. The management process is an interaction between levels of management in the course of organizational routines. Consequently, the relationship between top management and the other levels of management shows the level of mutual support. In many organizations, specialist HR is either a middle level or first line function, a pronounced hierarchical distance without a doubt. Thus, for HR activities to succeed, they require support from the top, where their presence is hardly felt. According to Lee and Teece (2013), top management exercises control over the strategic context. To Baron and Kreps (1999), successful HRM is contingent upon the involvement of executives since human resources constrain strategy, executives set the tone for employment relationships that affects expectations and attitudes of workers, and HR policy implementation requires input of line management. In other words, HR is organisation wide and only top management can take organisation wide decisions, including those of HSE and HSC. Top management roles that make its support to other functions necessary include: direction setting; SEC; and involvement (Baron & Kreps, 1999).

Despite the indispensable role of top management, rarely is its contribution direct. Senior executives usually play an influencing role. To that extent, top management is the most significant internal contextual factor, particularly for most functional activities as human resource strategy is. Simmering (2021) notes managers are organizational members who are responsible for the work performance of other organizational members. Managers have formal authority to use organizational resources and to make decisions. As a strong force in business, top management may either support or

oppose the usage of resources and ideas. According to McNamara (n.d), top (or executive) managers are responsible for overseeing the whole organization and typically engage in more strategic and conceptual matters, with less attention to day-to-day detail. Top managers have middle managers working for them and who are in charge of a major function or department. Among the supportive behaviours include: resource allocation; commitment; involvement; and communication.

1.1. Problem Statement

The role of top management in the business strategy process is well established. That role, however, is less clear, at least from literature, in relation to human resource strategy evaluation, particularly at HEIs, specifically universities in Kenya. As universities relentlessly pursue strategy, there is need for evidence that strategy is contributory, which brings to the fore the role of strategy evaluation. While the evaluation of corporate and business strategies is fairly straightforward in relations to the functions of top management, this is not the case with human resource strategy evaluation. Human resource strategy is a functional level strategy, which, theoretically, is not a direct top management responsibility. Thus, in human resource strategy related activities and their effect on performance, top management roles, including supportive and non-supportive behaviours, constitute a contingent factor. This argument has not received adequate scholarly attention in strategic human resource management (SHRM). In this case, TMS was operationalized as resource allocation, commitment, involvement and communication.

1.2. Objective

The objective of the study was to ascertain the moderating role of top management support on the relationship between the utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and the performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya.

1.3. Hypotheses

The study considered two hypotheses.

- H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and the performance of human resource strategy in universities in Kenya.
- H_{02} : Top management support has no significant influence on the relationship between the utilization of human resource strategy and performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya.

1.4. Justification

Despite that universities are labour intensive and, therefore, human resource initiatives are at the heart of the success of these institutions, evaluation of human resource strategy and contextual factors thereof, including that of top management support, have received scant attention in both the literature of strategic human resource management and strategic management. The study contributes to the field of HRM and strategy by examining the interaction of HSE-performance and top management support.

1.5. Significance

The study has value for both top management teams and human resource professionals at universities who need to be aware that human resource strategy works. Knowledge of the factors, both internal and external, that have implications on the strategy is also required. Among these factors are the supportive behaviours of top management.

1.6. Scope

Geographically the study covered selected public and private universities in Kenya spread across some counties. In terms of content, the study focused on HSE and not general SE. concern of the study ranged from the period 2003 to the present; the period that witnessed widespread liberalisation in Kenya's HE environment in response to significant change leading increased adoption of market ideas. The study also limits itself to registrars of administration arm of the universities rather than targeting the entire top management. But the late parts of the period also witnessed increased regulation. The target population was the position of registrar in charge of administration.

1.7. Limitations

The study covers the higher education sub-sector in Kenya, targeting those HEIs accredited by the Commission for University Education. Study covers the period from 2003 to 2018, the periods during significant liberalization and regulatory change have taken place, which in turn have affected the management and governance of universities. It is during this period also that universities have embraced in earnest strategic planning as a tool in their management. The study is confined to those HEIs that have formal strategic plans. The study also limits itself to HR professionals and those members of top management who deal with HR-related initiatives, including strategy. This makes the study non-exhaustive, and hence limits its generalizability since evaluation and control are organisation wide and study thereof should be conceptualized as such.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Literature

2.1.1. Strategic Management Theory

According to O'Regan and Ghobadian (2004), Wang, Walker, and Redmond (2007) as cited by Persaud, Woodhouse, and Scriven (2016), strategic management constitutes an art/science by which strategists formulate, implement, and evaluate cross-functional decisions to enable entities realise long-term objectives. Strategic management theory anchors the concept of human resource strategy evaluation. Two central ideas buttress this theory: strategy hierarchy or pyramid; and the strategic management structure or process. Hierarchy means enterprise strategy has three levels: corporate; business; and functional. Human resource strategy is functional and implementational. As people are pervasive in institutions in their entirety, human resource strategy is vital in strategy implementation. As process, (David, 2013) as cited by Persaud, Woodhouse, and Scriven (2016) conceptualizes strategic management as 'systematic, logical, and rational approach' by which management takes charge of an organization's future. Thus, strategic management is four-phased: Environmental scanning; strategy formulation; strategy implementation; and strategy evaluation and control (Jofre, 2011). Human resource strategy evolution is, therefore, part of strategy evaluation and control.

2.1.2. Role Theory

Role theory anchors the top management support construct. Roles are expectations of conduct within established framework and perform the function of stabilizing structures and enhancing predictability. They are organized sets of behaviour identified with positions. Role theory has basis in society of which organizations are integral. Mintzberg (1973) as cited by Weihrich, Cannice, and Koontz (2010) and Boddy (2008) proposed a managerial roles approach, a framework within which managers enact work behaviours. Top management support is, therefore, a function of role behaviour. Mintzberg (1973) grouped roles into three sets: interpersonal (including figurehead, leader and liaison); informational (involving monitor, disseminator, and spokesperson); and decisional roles that include entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. The roles are a given, existing independent of individual managers, and moderated only by that individual's style. Obiefuna (2014) cites Ansoff (1984)'s typology of managerial roles: manager-leader; manager-controller; manager-administrator; manager-planner; and manager-entrepreneur.

Management has emerged as key component of organisational life. Citing a number of authors among them Necker (1981), Drucker (1979), Johnson and Page (1975), Breach (1973), Fayol (1959), Obiefuna (2014) conceptualises management as a resource, a body of knowledge, a process, and an economic activity. As a resource, management comprises a group of individuals responsible for the functioning of the organisation. A distinction is made among these individuals on the basis of vertical rank so that there is top management, middle management, and supervisors (ibid.). By their roles, top management teams are responsible for overall performance. Unsupervised and enjoying unlimited discretion (Obiefuna, 2014; Ireland, Hoskisson&Hitt, 2009), top management generally gives direction, control resources, communicate areas of emphasis and attention, and handle the relationship between the organization and its external environment (Bateman & Snell, 1999). Consequently, CEO knowledge of operating and external environment (Ireland, Hoskisson&Hitt, 2009), attitudinal and behavioural commitment, involvement in HR (Baron & Kreps, 1999), and communication of performance measures (Wheelen&Hunger, 2011) are vital.

But top management can also be problematic. CEO disease (*De Stobbeleir, 2019*), principal-agent conflicts, and managerial hubris can damage organization. And although top management is responsible for overall performance, yet it is removed from operations (Digman, 2003). Lee and Teece (2013) drawing on Hambrick and Mason (1984) observe that top managers are cognitively limited in the view of the total organization. The reason is that they work through other managers and thus are highly dependent on others (Obiefuna, 2014).

2.1.3. Systems Theory of Performance

Systems theory explains the interaction among things, notably the relationship between a whole and its parts (Mele, Pels&Polese, 2010 echoing Aristotle). According to Drack and Pouvreau, (2015), Von Bertalaffy (1956) defined a system 'as a complex of interacting elements'. HEIs are complex, with many parts among them the human resource management functions and related practices. Universities are also open systems; they constantly interact with their environments. This complicates the perspective on performance. HEIs are not only under pressure to perform but to do so in a way that is relevant to society, as other organizations (Kreeva et al., 2018; Rómulo, et al., 2015), and to other myriad stakeholders. Crow (2014) notes universities are unique global institutions. Thus, determining performance is intractable, necessitating the need for a holistic approach, which systems theory facilitates.

The basis of systems approach is the logic from one of the laws of biology by which 'everything is connected to everything else' (Butler, 2012). Thus, HRS is linked to other organizational subsystems. Among these are other HEI functions such as Castro and Levy (2001)'s four functions namely 'Academic Leadership, Professional Development, Technological Training and Development, and General Higher Education'. Academic leadership is typically the most prestigious function within academia. Martins, Carlos, and Costa (2006) show role of universities in the development of knowledge in a large number of graduate and postgraduate courses. For Holten-Andersen (2015) and Boulton (2009) universities are repository of knowledge, generate new knowledge, facilitate knowledge transfer, both inter-generationally and to society, and generate economic development. Kireeva et al. (2018) argue HE stimulates the brain to handle new challenges, and the intelligence to view the bigger picture of life. All HEI functions are people-based and, thus, implicate HRS.

2.2. Empirical Literature

2.2.1. Human Resource Strategy Evaluation in Higher Education

Human resource strategy is a nascent field; most business strategy practices, evaluation included, have not crystallised in it. Evaluation is the determination of the worth of the evaluand (Rafiei&Davari, 2015). Empirical literature in support of its contribution with respect to HEIs is difficult to find (Peiseniece&Volkova, 2010), implying it is direr for HSE. And generally, HSE is still under-researched in Kenya, mainly due to the fact that widespread strategizing is hardly two decades old. However, evaluating HR sub-disciplines, notably human resource planning, recruitment and selection, and performance appraisal is common. Any time a paper surfaces about evolution of HR strategy, it quickly becomes an analysis of HR practices (Anwaar, Nadeem, &Hassan, 2016) or an analysis of the human resource function (Ayanda& Sani, 2011; Fan & Wang, 2015).Again, while HRS is considered strategy, it is largely treated as an operative function. Yet Starner (2015) consider HR issues in strategy in the broadest terms like vision and values, culture, leadership, plans, and change. In examining the appropriateness of the Balanced Scorecard in HEIs, Patro (2016), alludes to the intractability of evaluation. Elbanna (2016)'s investigation of SHRM practices in the Saudi Arabia HE environment little attention to SE.Muraga (2015)'s report on the SHRM practices in parastatals in Kenya did not include HSE. Indeed, specific HSE indices are lacking. Thus, this study sought to apply the dimensions of business strategy namely consistency, consonance, feasibility, and advantage to human resource strategy evaluation.

2.2.2. Performance of HRS in Higher Education

Definitional challenges around the concept of performance have been well noted. Performance is completion of a task and its result. It entails the production of value in an effective and efficient manner. General performance is goal-oriented so that attainment of goals is performance; objectives and methods to attain thegoals is performance (Tanveer& Karim, 2018). Performance in HEI is complex, transcending effectiveness and efficiency. It implicates economic development of societies (OECD, 2017). At the same time, pressure on HEIs to prove their contribution mounts.As labour intensive institutions, HRS performance implicates overall HEI performance; thus, efficiency, effectiveness, and impactare pertinent. Gordon and Whitchurch (2007) citestudies that show the role of faculty evolving into more complexity and fragmentation, and more pressured. OECD (2017) notes HEI costs are becoming intractable.Teirand Zhang (2016) find 'the capacities, competencies, skills, and the quality of human resources' key to theresults of institutions.And Hashmi (2014) adds that human resource management and development has become a significant area of study for professionals not only in the corporate but in the education milieu as well.Thus, the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of HRS are pillars to the performance of HEIs.

2.2.3. Top Management Support

Structuringorganizations is such that TMTsareomnipresent.This brings to the fore the significance of their supportive behaviour, that facilitates performance behaviours both nearby and far way. Iqbal,Long, Fei, and Bukhari (2015)consider TMS akey factor inthe success of projects. Butapparently, TMTs cannot provide all the support due (Iqbal et al. citing Young & Jordan, 2008) possibly due to some of the limitations Hambrick and Mason (1984) outline. As a variable, TMS is rarely discussed in HEI; its role in moderating HSE-P link in universities is particularly novel. Some studies have used this construct without adequate operationalization.The researcher hereinanalyzed TMS as resource allocation, commitment, involvement, and communication.

2.2.4. TMS's Moderation of the Relationship between HSE and HRS Performance

Moderationis an influencing mechanism that alters the direction or size of related factors, the reason being life is hardly a straight line as many factors come into play in myriad ways (Dawson, 2014). This is in line with the assertion of environmental complexity and dynamism. In organizational processes, TMS, which is among the internal contextual factors, moderate relations given that TMTs work through other managers, among them HR. Waithaka (2016) found organizational factors, such as managerial attitudes,influenced competitive intelligence-performance link. According toShaar, Khattab, Alkaied,and Manna (2015), TMcreates a desirable environment. Citing Memon et al. (2019), Al-Subari, Ruslan, and Zabri(2020) outline three techniques for determining moderation in case of a continuous moderator: product-indicator; two-stage; and orthogonalization. This study utilized the product-indicator (HSE-TMS) to measure moderation.

2.3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

A conceptual framework, notes Jabareen (2009), constitutes a network of linked concepts. This research intended to explain the intertwining among human resource strategy evaluation, performance of human resource strategy, and top management support in universities in Kenya. The study proposed that HSE is related to performance. The indicators of HSE were consistency; consonance; feasibility; and advantage. The indicators of performance were HR strategy efficiency, HR strategy effectiveness, and HR strategy impact. Thus, this study postulated that HSE-TMSinteraction affected HSE-P link, non-significantly. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the interplay among these concepts.

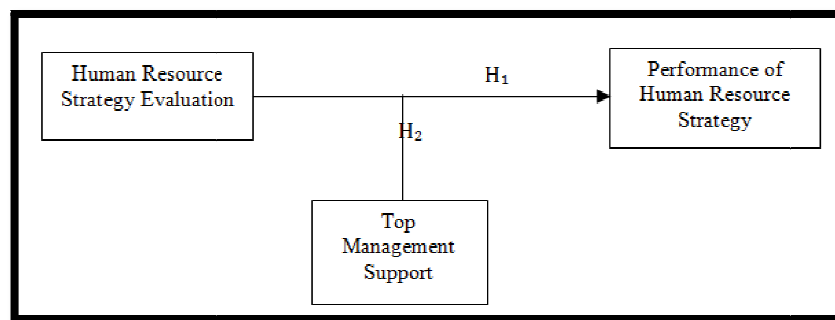


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

The particular design this study adopted was the Cross-Sectional sample survey, described as a snapshot, capturing the phenomenon of interest at a point in time. According to the USCL (2016), this particular design focuses on studying and drawing inferences from existing differences between people, subjects, or phenomenon, is amenable to use of data from a large number of subjects, and is not geographically bound. These attributes were germane to this study. Practical research work can, however, be hardly said to be mutually exclusive; thus, within this cross-sectional type, traces of exploration, description, and explanation were found.

3.2. Target Populations

The study focussed on universities within the Republic of Kenya as mandated to operate by the Commission for University Education (CUE, 2014). They are spread across 30 counties in the country, evidence of rapid expansion, with implications on human resource management and strategy. The study sample was equally spread across the country giving this its quality as a survey of universities in Kenya. According to CUE (2017), universities in Kenya fall into four categories (Appendix III): chartered public (31); public constituent colleges (06); chartered private (18); and private constituent colleges (05).

3.3. Sampling Design

This inquiry was a sample survey. Lapin (1990) notes that for reasons of economy, time factor, inaccessibility of sections of the population, and accuracy, sample survey becomes more advantageous than complete enumeration. The researcher employed probability sampling design, the purpose of which was to ensure all members of the universe had an equal and likely chance of being included in the study. According to Dooley (2001), probability designs increase representativeness of the sample by reducing bias in sampling as would be likely in non-probability sampling designs. To pick the actual sample, the researcher used Stratified Sampling and Simple Random Sampling methods. Random numbers were assigned to elements on the sampling frame. The researcher accessed the sampling frame from the Commission for University Education (CUE, 2017) website.

3.4. Sample Size

The researcher drew a sample of 34 institutions using the Yamane's formula with finite population correction factor. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling with proportions were used to pick elements from each university category that served as a stratum. The researcher ordered the sampling frame by year of establishment of the universities, oldest first, and a table of random number used to pick the actual elements included.

3.5. Instrumentation

The research elicited data using self-administered questionnaires, the instrument of choice in survey research. Being self-administered, it was fast, cost-effective. The tool was in two parts: Part I comprising preliminary information; and Part II comprising five sections on human resource strategy evaluation, human resource strategy control, information characteristics, top management support, and performance. The preliminary section consisted of open and closed-ended questions. Statements on the study variables indicators were adequately grounded in the literature, enhancing validity. The study adopted Cronbach's α to measure the internal consistence reliability. The results showed that Cronbach's α values for all dimensions were above $\alpha = 0.5$, indicating that the design of the questionnaire had a high internal consistency.

3.6. Data Collection

The researcher followed the regulatory stipulations in the conduction of research before mailing the questionnaire to the respondents. To foster co-operation, avert non-response and thereby increase the response rate, the researcher and assistants made prior notification by telephone and in some cases physical appearance. The researcher then research addressed an introductory letter personally to the institutional head to request clearance for the respondents to participate in the research. In all 34 letters were mailed. Follow-up was done on telephone and physical visits.

3.7. Data Analysis

The researcher cleaned and edited the returned instruments for completeness, consistency, accuracy, and homogeneity (Gupta, 1969). Items were coded and entry made into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). As recommended by Franfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2011), the researcher used descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and coefficient of variation) to summarise and present data. Summarised data was presented in bar graphs, pie charts, frequency polygons and histograms (Lapin, 1990). These tools are critical as they give the general shape of the frequency distributions and thereby facilitate further analysis (Vernoy & Kyle, 2002). The study employed correlation and regression analyses to establish the relationships among the HSE, TMS, and performance at the specified statistical significance as compared with practical or scientific significance (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2006). In addition, the researcher employed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to countercheck the adequacy of the models.

4. Findings

4.1. Results

Results from the study were categorized into three: preliminary findings; the relationship between HSE and P; and the moderation of TMS on HSE-P link. Descriptive and inferential statistics were deployed t and tests of significance for HSE, performance and for top management support.

4.1.1. Preliminary Findings

4.1.1.1. Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Out of the 31 respondents, 12, 38.3%, were female and 19, 61.7% were male. The pie chart (Figure 2) below represents this result. The female gender still underperforms in representation at university management boards as indeed in many other sectors of the society, which still negates the two-thirds gender policy that is intensely contested in the country.

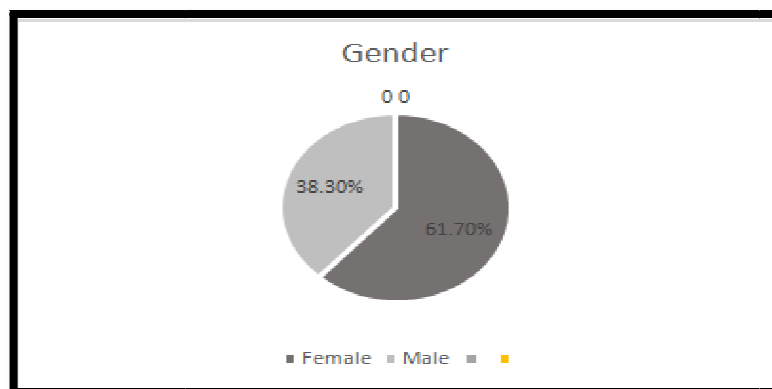


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

4.1.1.2. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age has implications on work experience, career growth and development, and seniority. 12% of the respondents fell in the 26-35 age bracket. In a study of top managers, Felicio (2013) identifies age among the key characteristics of managerial performance. According to

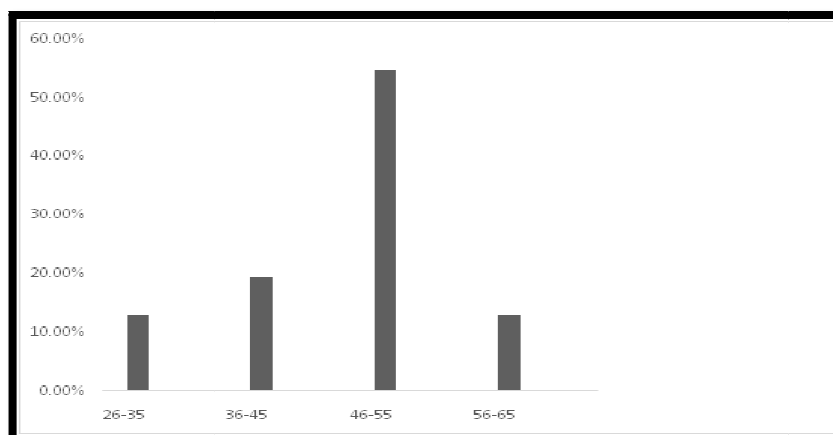


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age has implications on work experience, career growth and development, and seniority. 12% of the respondents fell in the 26-35 age bracket. In a study of top managers, Felicio (2013) identifies age among the key characteristics of managerial performance. According to conventional wisdom, sound judgment as that required for HSE comes with maturity that is age-related.

4.1.1.3. Distribution of Respondents by Education

Bachelors (05), PGD (01), Masters (12) and PhD (13). Education is a determinant of managerial competence. Felicio (2013) notes a number of categories of this variable: basic education; high school; bachelor's degree; master's degree/postgraduate; and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Like Felicio (2013), the present study did not analyse the value of this variable although in a knowledge economy, its role need not be overemphasized.

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	05	16.10
PGD	01	03.20
Master's	12	38.70
PhD	13	41.93
Total	31	100.00

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Qualification

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4.1.1.4. Distribution of Respondents by University Category

The study categorized universities by categories borrowing from the Commission for University Education (CUE, 2017). The response for each category was as follows: Public Chartered (PBLC), 11; Private Chartered (PVTCU), 6; Public University Constituent College (PBLCC), 5; Private Constituent College (PVTCC), 2; and University with Letter of Interim Authority (UWLA), 7. Figure 2 illustrates this result.

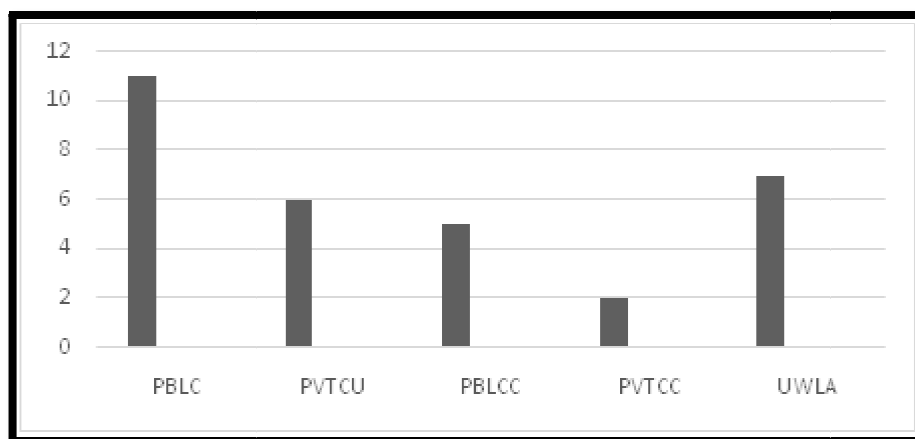


Figure 4: Distribution of Responses by University Category

Public Chartered (PBLC), 11; Private Chartered (PVTCU), 6; Public University Constituent College (PBLCC), 5; Private Constituent College (PVTCC), 2; and University with Letter of Interim Authority (UWLA), 7.

4.1.2. Performance of the Human Resource Strategy

In this study, the dependent variable was the performance of the human resource strategy. Overall performance involved combined measures of efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. Generally, performance was rated as moderate to high. Table 4.13 indicates that 58.1 percent (18) of the respondents rated performance as moderate, 38.7 percent (12) as high, and 3.2 percent had low overall performance rating.

Overall Level of Utilisation	Frequency	Percentage
Low	01	3.2
Moderate	18	58.1
High	12	38.7
Total	31	100

Table 2: Overall Levels of Performance of Human Resource Strategy

The results suggest relevance of the indicators to the university HR function. The overall utilization of human resource strategy in universities in Kenya is moderate to high, though moderate is the modal rating. Universities are labor-intensive; it is thus expected that people issues will take centre-stage. It can also be inferred that HRS will be at the heart of strategic plans, even if it is not thus named. The ordinal rating scales is also consistent with other HR performance ratings such as 'acceptable,' 'effective' and 'very effective' (SHRM, n.d). (Amaeshi, 2013), however, decries too much emphasis on intermediary rather bottom-line performance indicators.

4.2. Top Management Support

Top management support was measured through resource allocation, commitment, involvement, and communication on a five-point Likert type scale. Individual the results were summed up into a TMS composite score as Table illustrates.

Levels of Use	Frequency	Percent
Low	0	0.0
Moderate	11	35.5
High	20	64.5
Total	31	100.0

Table 3: Overall Levels of Top Management

Table 4.83 indicates that 20 respondents, 64.5 per cent, had high top management support, 35.5 per cent (11) moderate, and none had low. This suggests that the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya has high top management support by resource allocation, commitment, involvement, and communication. This could be attributed to institutions awareness of SHRM (Allui&Sahni, 2017). Higher education institutions have become more interested in implementing human resource management as a full strategic partner in their operations. HR is key in quality of education (Dauda& Singh, 2017).

4.3. Inferential Analysis

4.3.1. Partial Coefficient Analysis

To determine the effect of the moderator, the study compared two coefficients of the correlation: between utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy; and partial correlation coefficient (r) between the independent and dependent variables, controlling the moderator variable. As indicated in Table 4.17 in the first objective, the bivariate correlation between HSE and Performance was ($r = 0.608$). Table 4.84 summarises the partial correlation coefficient matrix between human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy, controlling for top management support.

Control Variable		Performance Index Score	HSE Index Score
Top Management Support	Performance Index Score	Correlation	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.
		Df	0
	Human Resource Strategy Evaluation Index Score	Correlation	.208
		Significance (2-tailed)	.269
		Df	28

Table 4: Partial Correlation Coefficient of Performance and HSE Controlling Top Management Support Not Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-Tailed)

From the table, it can be observed that although there was still a positive correlation between utilization of human resource strategy evaluation, independent variable, and performance of human resource strategy, dependent variable, in universities in Kenya, the control variable, top management support, had suppressed the relationship between the two variables. The buffering effect resulted into a weak positive partial correlation between the independent variable and dependent variable ($r = 0.208$). The positive partial correlation between the two variables suggests the higher the utilisation of the human resource strategy evaluation, the higher is the level of performance of an organisation, and vice versa. Still, it contrasted from the original *unmoderated* relationship of a strong positive correlation between the two variables, ($r = 0.608$).

The partial correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.208$ means that due to the presence of top management support, every unit (100%) change in the utilisation of human resource strategy evaluation leads to a 0.208 (20.8%) change in the performance of human resource strategy, a positive but lower rate than was in the direct relationship. Nevertheless, since $\{0.269\} > 0.05$, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, that top management support has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy in universities in Kenya. While the direct relationship between HSE and P was significant, the moderation of top management has changed it into non-significance.

4.3.2. Regression Analysis

The researcher examined the moderated regression model below to deduce further the performance of the interaction. The question was to identify the value the interaction would towards improvement in how well the regression is performing. $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \beta_2 TMS + \beta_3 (HSE)(TMS) + \varepsilon$ where, P = performance, dependent variable, HSE = human resource strategy evaluation, independent variable; TMS = top management support, moderating variable; β_0 = model constant; β_1 = model coefficient for simple effect; β_2 = model coefficient for the moderating variable; β_3 = model coefficient denoting the moderation effect; ε = error term. Statistically, the moderation model is analyzed into three components, depicted diagrammatically in figure below.

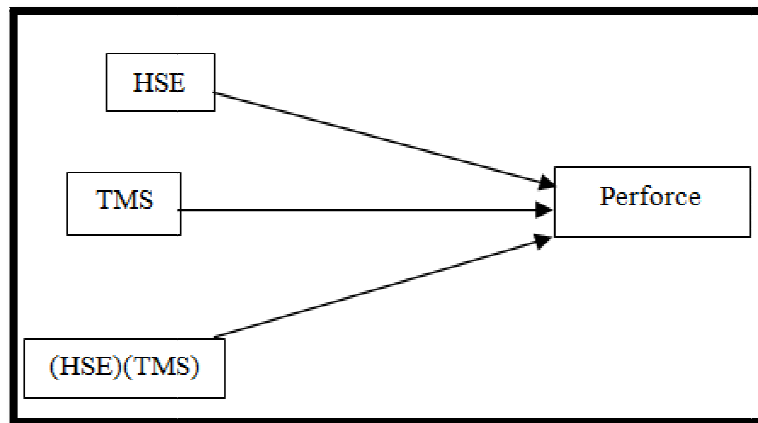


Figure 5: Illustration of Moderation Model

Key: HSE - Human Resource Strategy Evaluation; TMS - Top Management Support

Thus, two more equations are implied: $P_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \varepsilon$ and $P_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_2 TMS + \varepsilon$. The two models also needed to be significant for moderation analysis to proceed. To perform the necessary moderation analysis, first the two predictor variables were mean-centered and the product of the mean-centred variables derived. In effect, three new variables were established: mean-centred HSE; mean-centred TMS; and mean-centred HSE-TMS. The researcher then ran regression analyses to determine model adequacy and fitness as well as predictive power on the basis of regression coefficients.

4.4. Regressing Performance on HSE and TMS

Tables 4.2 shows model summaries for models P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 . P_3 is the main model with interaction effect ($P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \beta_2 TMS + \beta_3 (HSE)(TMS) + \varepsilon$).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
P_1	.608 ^a	.369	.347	6.75981
P_2	.760 ^a	.557	.563	5.53433
P_3	.773 ^a	.597	.552	5.59894

Table 5: Model Summary for P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 .

a. Predictors: (Constant), HSE_TMS, Center_TMS, Center_HSE

From Table 4.85 it is decipherable that a unit change in human resource strategy evaluation and top management support (mean-centred) contribute to 61% and 77% to performance in models P_1 and P_2 respectively. Both the moderator, individually, as well as in conjunction with the independent variable contributes positively to the performance of the human resource strategy, from 0.608, to 0.772, to 0.773. The four variables appear to be closely associated, moving together in the same direction. This, however, is far from suggesting the presence of moderation.

The researcher also carried out Analysis of Variance to determine the adequacy of the models. Table 4.86 indicates the ANOVA results that were all significant, affirming the fitness of the models.

Model	Df	F	Sig.
P_1	(1, 29)	16.975	.000 ^b
P_2	(1, 28)	30.346	.000 ^b
P_3	(3, 27)	13.339	.000 ^b

Table 6: Analysis of Variance F-Test Results for Models P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 .

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), HSE_TMS, Center_TMS, Center_HSE

Finally, the research sought to establish regression coefficients for the three models and their significance, significance of the first two models being a precondition for further moderation analysis. Results are as tables 4.87, 4.88, and 4.89 show.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	48.672	1.215		40.075	.000
	Center_HSE	.679	.165	.608	4.120	.000

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for Model P₁
a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	48.806	.994		49.101	.000
	Center_TMS	.865	.138	.760	6.292	.000

Table 8: Regression Coefficients for Model P₂
a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	48.556	1.198		40.521	.000
	Center_HSE	.214	.187	.192	1.150	.260
	Center_TMS	.720	.188	.633	3.835	.001
	HSE_TMS	.006	.018	.040	.324	.749

Table 9: Regression Coefficients for Model P₃
a. Dependent Variable: Performance

In models P₁ and P₂, the relationship between the predictors and the criterion was positive and significant (B = .679, $p = .000 < 0.05$; B = .865, $p = .000 < .05$), thereby satisfying the preliminary conditions for moderation analysis. But results from the third model, $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \beta_2 TMS + \varepsilon$, show obvious non-significance of the interaction term (B = .006, $p = .749 > .05$). Just like the partial correlation, the results do not establish a significant moderating role of top management support on the relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and performance of the human resource strategy. In addition, under moderation, human resource strategy evaluation has not retained significance retained significance, ($p = .060 > .05$). Accordingly, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis five. With the coefficients in the table above, the moderation regression model reads as follows: $P = 48.56 + .2146HSE + .720TMS + .006(HSE)(TMS)$.

4.4.1. Test of Hypothesis of Hypothesis

Objective five was accompanied by the null hypothesis five which stated: top management support has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between utilization of human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy in universities in Kenya. Moderation generally takes three forms: enhancing; buffering; or antagonizing. To test this hypothesis, partial correlation was first used to describe the relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy while adjusting for the effects of top management support. The researcher then solved the following structural equation to determine the significance of the moderation: $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \beta_2 TMS + \beta_3 (HSE)(TMS) + \varepsilon$.

4.5. Discussion

Meaning of results: HSE (consistency, consonance, feasibility, and advantage); Performance (efficiency, effectiveness, and impact); TMS (resources, commitment, involvement, and communication). Comparing direct effect and moderating effect of TMS.

As is evident, the interaction term, TMS, slows down the independent variable, from $b=0.347$ in the *unmoderated* (Table 4.18) relationship to $b=0.192$ in the moderated model (Table 69). In terms of the significance of the coefficients, it is clear from the table that $p\{0.749\} > 0.05$, an obvious case of non-significance for the interaction term. Moderation has also converted HSE into non-significance, $p\{0.260\} > 0.05$. Accordingly, the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis that top management support has no significant effect on the relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and the performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya.

That top management support buffers the relationship could be attributed to some TMS behaviours. This finding is consistent with Boada-Cuerva, Trullen, Valverde (2019), Junior, Pascuci, and Meyer (2018), Friesl and Kwon (2017), Birken et al. (2013), Daniel (2013), Lee and Schaefer (2015), and deSchreveland and Jost (2013), and Punia and Saharan (2012). Boada-Cuerva, Trullen, Valverde (2019) citing Khan, Iqbal, long (2014) found top management support scarce and

less coordinated. Friesl and Kwon (2017) reported incidences where top management was resistant to bottom-up initiatives for change. Lee and Schaefer (2015) reported moderate-to-poor rating of top managers' support in healthcare facilities. According to Daniel (2013), reporting lines and organizational structures have less influence on how work gets done as strict hierarchies and top-down communication surrender to flatter, fairly dispersed and flexible structures. Universities appear to be still embedded in the 'old normal'. de Schreveland and Jost (2013) observes that both management and leadership are new for universities, noting an inadequacy in both management systems as well as management know-how, a position Punia and Saharan (2012) agree with while noting underinvestment in HR by universities. And Junior, Pascuci, and Meyer (2018) argue that the endemic conflict between top administration and the academic sectors reconfigure strategy. Generally, the hierarchical distance between top management and HR affects the mutual impacts among them. Schuler and Walker (1990) conceptualization of strategy excludes the role of top management.

But this result is inconsistent with literature that privileges top management support findings such as Boada-Cuerva, Trullen, and Valverde (2019; Kiesnere & Baumgartner, 2019; Mkonya et al., 2018; Pham, Pham, and Pham, 2016; Iqbal, Long, Fei, & Bukhari, 2015; Boonstra, 2013; Young and Poon, 2013; Van Ameijde et al., 2009). Boada-Cuerva, Trullen, and Valverde (2019) note the vital but under-researched role of TM to HRM. Kiesnere and Baumgartner (2019) report the indispensability of TMS for sustainability development. Ali, Ahmed, and Israr (2018) amplifies the resourcing aspect of top management support for effective HRD in Pakistani HEI. According to Mkonya et al. (2018), top management support enhances quality of accounting information systems. Kezar Holcombe (2017) finds the support from vertical leaders an important condition for functional shared leadership as do Mkonya et al. (2018) with respect to accounting. Pham, Pham, and Pham (2016) report the causal chain between top management support and performance involving employee satisfaction and employee commitment both very much HR elements. Iqbal, Long, Fei, and Bukhari (2015) find a positive contribution of TMS despite negative impact. According to Young and Poon (2013), project success is inconceivable without top management support. But Boonstra (2013) found the level of support high although the departures of a top manager could weaken support.

This study yielded another interesting finding to support the role of top management. Table 7 shows the model summary for the regression of performance on both human resource strategy evaluation and top management support.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.772 ^a	.596	.567	5.50872

Table 10: Model Summary for Regressing Performance on HSE and TMS

a. Predictors: (Constant), Center_TMS, Center_HSE

The model is identical to $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HSE + \beta_2 TMS + \beta_3 (HSE)_{(TMS)} + \varepsilon$, indicating that top management would perform, at least statistically, just as well as a direct independent variable as a moderator. In practice, however, top management teams (TMTs) formulate strategic decision but influences (moderates) the implementation of tactical initiatives (Eriksson, Robertson & Näppä, 2020). According to Mareia, Daoud, Ibrahim, and Al-Jabalya (2021) a high TMS levels of also negatively influences the relationship between complexity and e-procurement usage in firms, thereby increasing e-procurement usage. Al-Subari, Ruslan, and Zabri (2020) as cited by Dawson (2014) concluded that top management support significantly moderated the relationship between internal environment and performance of Malaysian universities, so did Beitelspacher et al. (2012). But Yaacob, Baroto, Kamarudin, and Arifin (2019) citing Rajput et al. (2018) found the moderating role of TMS was not significant. Yang and Zhang (2018) found TMS moderation not significant for non-financial performance but significant for financial performance.

5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1. Summary

This paper set to inquire into the moderating role of top management support on the relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and performance of human resource strategy performance. Top management support was operationalised as resource allocation, commitment, involvement, and communication. The moderation of top management support on the relationship between human resource was found to be not significant.

5.2. Conclusion

Analysis of data for the objective found a positive but non-significant moderating role of top management support on the relationship between human resource strategy evaluation and performance in universities in Kenya. Consequently, the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis that stated 'There is no significant moderating role of top management support on the relationship between the utilisation of the human resource strategy evaluation and performance of the human resource strategy in universities in Kenya'. This alludes to the undesirability of micromanagement of the HRM as the more TM exerts itself on the HRM, the more unfavorable the outcomes.

5.3. Recommendations

In terms of policy, the HR function within the institutions needs to be strengthened so that professionals assume greater autonomy and take on higher responsibilities. As far as practice is concerned, institutions need to determine which behaviours TM should dispense and in what proportions. Further research needs to examine what levels of top management support are ideal moderators.

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