

EFFECT OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA – A NEED FOR HR-DRIVEN ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

As organizations cope with a myriad of operational challenges driven by the ensuing political and economic trends, the need for strategic human resource management has become pertinent. It is in this context that this study addresses Adaptive Leadership and Societal Development. Like all other organizations, public universities in Kenya have human resource management units, which are meant to ensure optimal utilization of their employees as the most critical asset. However, the extent to which the leadership of public universities creatively adapt and leverage on their human resources towards the achievement of their mandates, should be a matter of great concern for the universities and their stakeholders. The two-pronged objective of this study was to determine the effect of strategic human resource practices (SHRMPs), singularly, as well as jointly, on the performance of public universities in Kenya. The bundle of SHRMPs conceptualized and tested is rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward strategies and performance management. The study was philosophically hinged on positivist ontology, mainly based on the resource-based theory, and designed as a cross sectional descriptive survey. Targeting all public universities in Kenya, data was collected from 31 public universities, aided by a self-administered questionnaire. Out of the 117 questionnaires distributed, 110 were returned, representing a 71% response rate. Descriptive statistics and linear regression analyses were used to analyze the data. There was a statistically significant relationship between each SHRM practice in the studied bundle of SHRMPs, and performance of public universities in Kenya, rigorous recruitment being most impactful of the four practices studied. There is need for public universities to strategically prioritize and leverage more on their human resource management functions as represented by the bundle of four practices studied. This would potentially lead to improved performance, in terms of developing and delivering more and better learning programmes, achieving increased student enrolment rates, attainment of enhanced learner graduation rates, generate more research outcomes, as well as enhancement of the much-sought-after staff career promotion rates. Thus, embracing strategic human resource management potentially presents a means to attaining and sustaining competitive levels of performance, towards becoming autonomously self-supporting, as expected.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management Practices, Performance of Public universities

Introduction

All enterprises exist to achieve certain stakeholder interests and their performance, which is usually measured quantitatively, and often in economic terms, is also now increasingly measured qualitatively. The said performance is said to be achieved when aggregated efforts of employees are realized [1]. Empirically, the relevance of human resource management practices in pursuit of desired enterprise performance has been documented by various authors [2,3]. It is important to note, however, that a majority of studies which had hereto linked human resource management practices with performance of enterprises, seem to contextualize human resource management practices affecting performance, rather than strategic human resource management practices affecting the said performance [4,5]. In practice, the former is more to do with operationalizing human resource management at the functional (department) level, while the latter refers to operationalizing human resource management at the strategic level [6].

It is at the strategic level of human resource management that this study was premised, and undertaken. Strategic human resource management practices refer to the application of a structured bundle of HR-oriented interventions by an organization, towards achieving strategic organizational goals, and therefore, the enhancement of the ability of such an organization to influence its performance [7]. Likewise, the use of HR bundles has been found to enhance employee motivation, and empowerment, towards employee and organizational performance [8]. Hence, based on the scope of typical human resource management practices typically used in most organizations, including in the public universities, this study conceptualized the bundle of strategic human resource practices as; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management.

Literature Review

The study was fundamentally founded on the Resource Based Theory, which suggests a strategic approach by organizations to consider employees as the key resource in strategizing towards achieving competitive edge. The Resource Based Theory became prominent in the 1980s and 1990s, from key contributions of Wernerfelt [9], Prahalad and Hamel [10], and Barney [11] among others, who asserted the need for entities to focus internally and hence, determine the elements of enabling competitiveness, instead on

focusing on searching for the same elsewhere. The recognition of the relevance of strategizing the management of people in an enterprise in seeking to create organizational competitiveness marks the theory's relevance here as it directly resonates with this study which is attempting to empirically investigate the potential relationship between the variables in question.

More specifically, therefore, various studies have linked strategic human resource management practices to the performance of enterprises. For instance, Al-Khaled et al 2020 [12] observed that adoption of strategic human resource management practices (SHRMPs) created a sustaining capacity in attaining organizational goals. Likewise, Eneh and Awara (2016), in a descriptive study on strategic human resource management practices and organizational growth in Nigeria, found that Strategic Human Resource Management Practices (SHRMPs) significantly enabled better use of human resources.

Thus, human resource management practices such as training of employees, human resource planning, prompt rewarding, and selective recruitment, all served as drivers of sustainable competitive advantage for enterprises. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of empirical studies linking strategic human resource management practices to enterprise performance seem to be contextualized in the private sector rather than in the public sector [14]. Nevertheless, and of particular relevance to this study, a descriptive study of eight Nigerian universities demonstrated that using SHRM practices had positively impacted the universities by attracting more research sponsorships, increasing scholarly writings and research-based innovations, among others. Thus, there is need for universities in Nigeria to be more strategic at operationalizing the HR function towards sustainable improvement of the otherwise declining levels of declining performance, as aptly supported by Ojokuku and Akanbi 2015 [7].

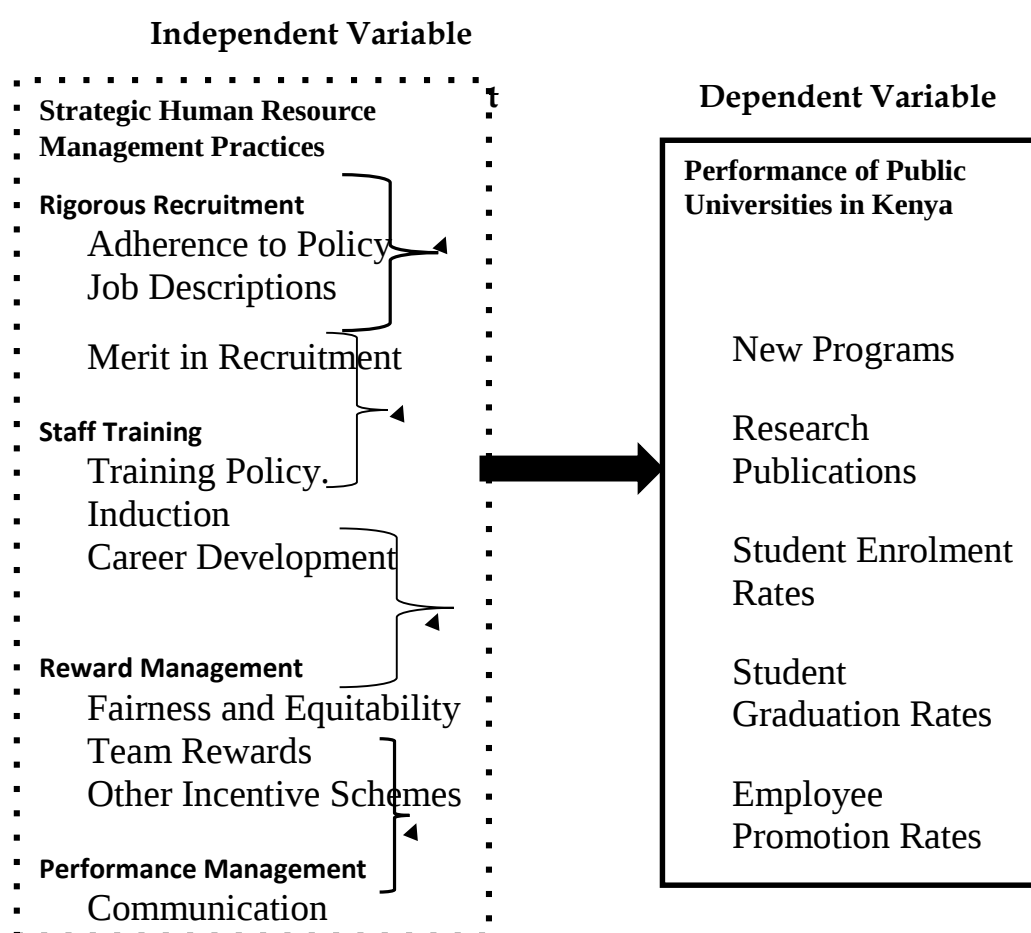
Similarly, in Kenya, a census study targeting public universities by Mutahi and Busienei 2015 [15], revealed that strategic HRM practices positively, including strategic rewarding and training, were key. They relevantly recommended development of appropriate employment policy to encourage job security, urging that the government supports this by basing recruitment and selection in the universities on periodic analysis of employee competencies, and identifying employee training needs for employee growth, among other

interventions. This was empirically affirmed by Naitore and Wanyoike 2019 [16], using a descriptive survey of 13 public universities in Kenya and established that there was a positive and significant relationship between strategic human resource management practices, in terms of HR planning and staffing and, the performance of selected public universities.

From the foregoing, it appears evident that strategic human resource management practices do, indeed positively influence performance in organizations, including public universities. Indeed, and more relevantly for this current study, Kallio et al 2021 [17] used university-specific quantitative indicators, including graduation rates, and enrolment rates, to measure performance. Likewise, Hamadamin & Atan 2019 [18], studied the role of strategic human resource management practices in maintaining competitive advantage in higher education institutions, finding that these practices influenced learner related outcomes as well as the overall performance of the institutions. Elsewhere, Alach, Zhivan 2017 [19], averred, on studying the use of human resource management-oriented performance measures in universities, including student performance, research outcomes and so on. However, and pertinently in this study, there seems to be contradicting evidence from the industry, as well as from empirical research, of declining performance in the same public universities. For instance, according to Commission for University Education reports 2018 [20] reports from the industry indicate that public universities in Kenya declined in performance, in terms of student enrolment rates, graduation rates, and research output. The National Treasury and Economic Planning (National Treasury) Report on Performance Evaluation of State Corporations and Tertiary Institutions (2021/2022) [22], also indicates a declining performance trajectory by public universities, especially with regard to lack of basic facilities, including libraries, internet connection, and inadequate facilitation and development of academic staff.

Even more interestingly, Naitore and Wanyoike 2019 [16], who, as pointed out earlier, studied strategic human resource management in the context of public universities in Kenya, found that lack of adequate consideration for human resource management practices by the universities adversely affected their performance. This was especially because of demoralized and disinterested staff. This was duly supported by Shikokoti et

al (2023) [22], who pointed to the declining performance in public universities, with respect to rates of completion. It is in this context that this study, therefore, sought to empirically investigate and provide a possible explanation for the seemingly apparent contradiction between the expected value of implementing strategic human resource management practices, on the one hand, and the evident declining performance of the public universities as supported by reports from the industry as well as from empirical literature. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.



Source: Research Concept (2022)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study was philosophically inclined towards positivist ontology, and adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey research design. The target population was academic and non-academic employees of 31 public universities in Kenya, whose sample comprised 155 respondents purposively selected from the representatives of the three unions respectively;

(UASU, KUSU, KUDHEIHA), Academic Registrar and HR departments respectively. Data was collected using a self-administered five-level Likert type questionnaire. A 71% response rate was achieved, and descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

Findings and Discussion

The two-fold objective of this study was to establish whether strategic human resource management practices; individually, and jointly, affected the performance of public universities in Kenya. A five level Likert type scale, numbered 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, representing strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively was used for data collection. Three indicator statements for each of the four strategic human resource management practices were put to the respondents, who were asked to respond accordingly, indicating their perceptions respectively. The descriptive statistics, findings and discussion on each are presented below.

Rigorous Recruitment: A slight majority 44% agreed that their universities strictly adhered to the prescribed or customized recruitment and selection policy in hiring staff. Notably, the 44% majority agreement was minimal, in comparison with the 38% disagreement. Hence, almost as many disagreed, especially in the light of the 18% who were neutral; a majority 52 % disagreed with the statement on whether hiring was based on elaborate job descriptions of the vacant positions by the universities. Thus, a majority of the respondents perceived that hiring was not based on job description and that this negatively impacted them, in terms of their level of commitment, motivation and teamwork; and a majority 67% disagreed with the statement suggesting that merit, rather than nepotism counted in the recruitment processes at their universities. Therefore, although the universities engaged in recruitment, the practice did not appear to be as rigorously implemented, and most likely, not as impactful on performance as desired.

Staff Training: 60% disagreed with the first statement that the universities adhered to an elaborate training and development policy; 72% disagreed with the statement that induction training was strategically provided for new and also promoted workers; while 75% disagreed with the statement that continuous professional career development for all categories of employees was adequately provided. Therefore, based on the three statement

indicators, the majority of respondents in each of the indicators negatively perceived the implementation of strategic training in terms of its impact and adequacy.

Reward Management: 75% disagreed with the statement that job promotion and upward mobility were part of the rewarding mechanisms in the universities; 75% disagreed with the statement that the terms of service were motivating; while 75% disagreed with the statement, that there were other university-driven incentive schemes other than those provided by government. Therefore, based on these findings, it was concluded that though the universities had various rewards for staff, these incentives were not perceived to be of any input by the staff.

Performance Management: 67% of respondents reported that communication was not well done between supervisors and their subordinates in the universities. 72% reported that performance appraisal systems in their universities were not well defined, accurate, fair, objective and reliable, while 74% reported that performance evaluation system in their universities did not provided a linkage to training and development programs and a mentoring system for junior employees. These findings suggest the employee perception that performance management did not achieve the desired impact on the employees on University performance.

Table 1: Responses on Strategic Human Resource Management Practices

NO.	STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.0	Rigorous Recruitment	N								
1.1	My university strictly adheres to the prescribed or	110	5%	39%	18%	25%	13%	110 100%	2.95	1.12

	customized recruitment and selection policy in hiring staff									
1.2	Hiring is based on elaborate job descriptions of the vacant positions	1 1 0	4%	10%	34%	38%	14%	110 100%	2.4 1	941
1.3	Merit, rather than nepotism counts in the recruitment process	1 1 0	7%	7%	19%	42%	25%	110 100%	2.3 7	1.04
2.0	Staff Training									
2.1	The university adheres to an elaborate training and development policy.	1 1 0	4%	18%	18%	44%	16%	110 100%	2.4 2	1.01
2.2	Induction training is strategically provided for new and also promoted workers	1 1 0	4%	7%	17%	55%	17%	110 100%	2.1 4	.800
2.3	Continuous professional career development for all categories of employees is adequately provided	1 1 0	2%	4%	18%	51%	24%	110 100%	1.9 6	.74

Source: Research Data (2022)

3.0	Reward Management									
3.1	Job promotion as well as upward mobility are part of the rewarding mechanisms in the university	110	6%	12%	7%	50%	25%	110 100%	2.16	1.07
3.2	The terms of service and benefits are motivating to employees in the university	110	6%	10%	9%	50%	25%	110	2.10	.100
3.3	There are other university-driven incentive schemes other than those stipulated by the statutory government scheme	110	2%	8%	14%	53%	23%	110 100%	2.04	.81
4.0	Performance Management									
4.1	Communication is well done with appropriate feedback between supervisors and their subordinates in the university	110	3%	15%	15%	41%	26%	110 100%	2.19	1.04

illustrated on Table 1, it was the employee perception that all the four strategic human

4.2	The performance appraisal system in the university is well defined, accurate, fair, objective and reliable	110	4%	9%	15%	43%	29%	110	2.05	.93
4.3	The performance evaluation system in the university provides a link to the training and development programs as well as a mentoring system for the junior employees	110	4%	8%)	14%	47%	27%	110	1.92	85

resource management practices; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, and performance management, were not as impactful on performance as they ought to be, given the relatively low percentage scores on each. Therefore, although the public universities undertake recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management, the employees felt that these practices do not significantly input staff or University performances.

SHRMPs and Performance of Public Universities.

Data was also collected and analyzed on performance of public universities, as the dependent variable. Five indicators of university performance were purposely conceptualized, based on empirical literature, among them new academic programmes, research publications, student enrolment rates, student graduation rates, and staff promotion rates.

44% reported that the number of programmes in their respective universities had been increasing over the previous five years, 48% disagreed, 43% reported that student enrollment agreed that student enrollment rates had been increasing for the previous five years, 46% reported no increase in the number of students graduating from their respective Universities in the previous five years and 72% indicated that there was no increase in the number of staff promoted over time. Table 2 presents a detailed descriptive summary of these findings.

Table 2: Descriptive Responses on Performance of Universities

N O .	PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES		Str ong ly Ag ree	Ag re	Neit her Agr ee nor Disa gree	Dis agr ee	Str ong ly Dis agr ee	Tot al	M ea n	Stan dard Devi ation
5. 0	New Programs	N								
5. 1	The number of programs/courses in my university have been increasing for the last five years	1 1 0	10 %	34 %	26%	26 %	4%	110 100 %	3.2 1	1.02
6. 0	Research Publications									
6. 1	The number of research publications by faculty have been increasing over the last five years	1 1 0	7%	9%	36%	38 %	10 %	110 100 %	2.6 5	93
7. 0	Student Enrolment Rates									
7. 1	Student enrollment rates have been increasing for the last five years' in my university	1 1 0	7%	36 %	22%	29 %	6%	110 100 %	3.1 3	1.05

8.0	Student Graduation Rates									
8.1	My university has been graduating increasing number of graduates for the last five years	110	8%	17%	29%	34%	12%	110 100%	2.75	1.10
9.0	Employee Promotion Rates									
9.1	In my university the number of staff promoted has been increasing over time	110	4%	7%	17%	38%	34%	110 100%	2.04	1.01

Overall, the descriptive data on Table 2 seems to be supportive of the various government reports relating to the performance of state entities in Kenya, and in this case, the public universities. For instance; Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) Report (2016) [23], Republic of Kenya, The National Treasury and Economic Planning (National Treasury) Report on Performance Evaluation of State Corporations and Tertiary Institutions (2021/2022) [21], and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Economic Survey (2022) [24], all of which have reported that public universities in Kenya had been declining in terms of performance, and that the universities faced a myriad challenges that seemed to get worse. These include, lack of research infrastructure and qualified human resources, among others (Commission for University Education (CUE) (2018) [20]. It is interesting to note, however, the only divergent finding on statement 5.1 on Table 2, where only 44% agreed that the number of programs were increasing.

Generally speaking, public universities have tended to increase their programme offerings over time. However, the development of new programmes does not entirely lie in the hands of the universities, but also on government initiatives. It is also true, based on anecdotal evidence that many of the programmes initiated in the public universities have been said to be redundant hence, it is arguable that increasing numbers of programmes in the universities is substantially a decline, rather than a growth in terms of performance. It

is also interesting to note the large number of respondents who neither agree nor disagree in every indicator statement. The fact that so many were undecided, is arguably an indicator that a number of employees do not take keen interest in operations and performance of the Universities.

Regression Analysis

To test the descriptive findings further, regression of performance of public universities on strategic human resource management practices as a composite variable was conducted.

Thus, a rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management, on performance of public universities in Kenya, comprising the five indicators; new programmes, student enrolment rates, research publications, student graduation rates, and staff promotion rates. The hypothesis; H01 Strategic human resource management practices, singularly or collectively, do not influence performance of public universities in Kenya, was tested. Regression was undertaken at two levels; first to investigate the likely effect of each of the SHRMPs respectively, and secondly, to measure the total effect for the composite SHRMPs. The general model for linear regression analysis was; $Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4$, where Y = performance of public universities in Kenya, β_0 = Constant, $\beta_1 - B_4$ = coefficients of the respective SHRMPs (rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management).

The model which was used for SHRMPs as a composite variable was $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + B_5K_1 + \varepsilon$, where Y = performance of public universities in Kenya, β_0 = Constant, β_1-B_5 = coefficients of the respective independent variables (X_1 rigorous recruitment, X_2 staff training, X_3 reward management and X_4 performance management), $X_1-X_4 = K_1$ = interactive term, and e = error term. The results of the regression analysis, based on objective and hypothesis, are presented on Table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3: Regression Results Showing effect of Respective SHRMPs on Performance

Model Summary

a. Dependent Variable; University Performance

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
1	0.662	0.439	.417	.60319			
Predictors: (Constant), SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management. Dependent Variable – Performance of Public Universities							
ANOVA							
Model		Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression		26.650		4	7.390	20.311	0.001
Residual		37.839		104	0.364		
Total		67.396		108			
Predictors: (Constant) – SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management Dependent variable – Performance of Public Universities							
Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig		
	B	Std Error					
Constant	1.092	0.197		5.542	.001		
Recruitment	0.289	0.101	0.031	2.843	.005		
Training	0.235	0.124	0.220	1.895	.006		
Reward	0.028	0.093	0.031	.305	.007		

Performance	0.231	0.089	0.250	2.598	.011
Predictors: (Constant), – SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management					
Dependent Variable – Performance of Public Universities					

Source: Research Data (2022)

From Table 3, the adjusted R Square is .417, implying that strategic human resource management practices together accounted for approximately 42% of the change in the performance of public universities, implying that 58% of the change in performance may be attributed to other factors other than SHRMPs. The F (4, 104) statistics was 20.311 with a P-value .001 (P value < 0.05). Likewise, the Beta coefficients for the respective SHRMPs in the bundle were 0.289 for rigorous recruitment, 0.235 for staff training, 0.028 for reward management, and 0.231 for performance management. All the respective SHRMPs had a P-value < 0.05. This implied that, for a unit change in the respective SHRMPs, there was likely to be corresponding 29%, 24%, 3%, and 23% changes respectively for SHRMP, on university performance. Notably, therefore, it may be concluded that each strategic human resource management practice was positively and statistically significant, and did affect performance of the public universities. In this case, rigorous recruitment with 29% possible change, may be said to be the most impactful, while reward management, with 3% potential change, may have the least impact. Regression analysis was also undertaken for the joint impact of SHRMPs on performance. Table 4 illustrates.

Table 4 Regression Results for Strategic Human Resource Management Practices as a Composite variable, and performance of Public Universities

Model Summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	0.665	0.421	.302	0.2402496
Predictors: (Constant), SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management. Dependent Variable – Performance of Public Universities				

Anova					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	6.235	2	1.559	26.002	0.000
Residual Total	7.850	128	0.058		
	14.085	141			
Predictors: (Constant) – SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management Dependent variable – Performance of Public Universities					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig
	B	Std Error			
Constant	1.680	0.130		12.889	.000
SHRMPs	0.325	0.049	0.552	7.795	.000
Predictors: (Constant), – SHRMPs; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management, performance management Dependent Variable – Performance of Public Universities					

Source: Research Data (2022)

From Table 4, the adjusted R Square is .421, implying that strategic human resource management practices together accounted for approximately 42% of the change in the performance of public universities, implying that 58% of the change in performance is attributable to other factors other than SHRMPs. The F (2, 128) statistics was 26.002 with a P-value .001 (P value < 0.05). Likewise, the Beta coefficient of the interactive term for the bundle of strategic human resource management practices was positive and significant at .325 with P-value at .001 (P-value < 0.05). This implied that a unit change in the bundle of SHRMPs is likely to cause a 33% corresponding change in university performance. Hence, going by these findings, the combined effect of SHRMPs (K_1) on performance was greater than any of the SHRMPs individually, the results can be summarized as per the regression model: $Y = 1.680 + 0.325K_1 + \epsilon$.

These findings seem to be consistent with the relevant empirical literature reviewed. For instance, Al-Khaled, Akram and Chung, Jee Fenn (2020) [20], studied strategic human resource management practices and organizational performance, and found that entities which adopted strategic human resource management practices were able to sustainably improve their performance. Hence, although such reports were not contextualized in the public sector, nor in public universities, it is evident that strategic human resource management practices were impactful in all organizations. Seeming to support the same, Ojokuu and Akanbi (2015), studied strategic human resource management practices and performance of Nigerian public universities. The authors reported that using SHRM practices had beneficially impacted the public universities in terms of attracting more researching sponsorships, increasing scholarly writings and research-based innovations, notwithstanding the fact that Ojokuku and Akanbi (2015) [7], was contextualized in Nigeria rather than Kenya. Most relevantly, and in Kenya, Naitore and Wanyoike (2019) [16], used a descriptive survey design to study the impact of strategic human resource management practices on performance of public universities in Kenya and reported a positive and significant relationship between strategic human resource management practices and performance, in terms of HR planning and staffing. The authors however confined their studies to HR planning and staffing practices, as opposed to recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management as in this study.

Similarly, in Kenya, Mutahi and Busienei (2015) [15], used a descriptive design to investigate the influence of strategic human resource management practice on performance of public universities in Kenya and observed that the practices affected performance of public universities, in terms of strategic rewarding and strategic training. The authors confined themselves to reward and training practices, as opposed to the bundle of four; rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management as undertaken in the current study. The findings of this study are also in line with the Resource Based Theory (RBT) [11] which postulated that business entities needed to focus internally to activate resources, the most important one of which is the people within. Thus, it is the people as a resource that would enable such entities to achieve competitive advantage in their operations. In this respect, as deducible from this study, the universities needed to take deliberate measures to determine and select appropriate SHRMPs.

Accordingly, these are most likely, to be valuable, inimitable, and rare and likely to be strategically substitutable, towards ensuring that public universities, like all other organizations, are able to sustainably achieve competitive advantage, in the light of a future where the universities will be expected to be more substantially independent of government benevolence.

Conclusion

Based on the objective and findings of this study, it is concluded that strategic human resource management practices, entailing rigorous recruitment, staff training, reward management and performance management have a positive and statistically significant influence on the performance of Kenya's public universities, collectively as well as singularly. The implication is that the universities have most likely not taken their staff, both academic and non-academic, with the seriousness that they deserve. It would appear that although the public universities have human resource management units, HR policies and systems, including HR staff establishments, the value which is expected to be derived from the HR function, among the other operational functions of the universities, does not appear to come forth.

Recommendations

This study recommends that universities should consider their staff as strategic capital assets, which should drive their competitive advantages. This is especially in the face of the ever decreasing Government support on the one hand, and the ever increasing competitive university sector dynamics, on the other. The leadership of the universities have to be guided by the understanding that the people who work in these universities constitute a veritable means of turning around the current circumstances of the public universities, which seem to get worse, year by year.

More specifically, going by the findings of this study, using a deliberately strategic approach in all matters human resource management, would more than likely enhance the universities' prospects with respect to their performance. Thus, this is more than likely to lead to introduction of more innovative learning programmes, attracting higher enrolment rates from local and international pools enhancing commensurate enrolment-graduation rates, generating more commercially viable research projects and publications, as well as

enhancing the much-sought-after staff promotional career growth rates. In addition, the universities ought to be deliberately strategic at operationalizing HR practices through strict adherence to prescribed or customized recruitment and selection policy in hiring staff – which was found to be most impactful of the four SHRMPs studied, being creative and innovative.

The universities should also embrace use merit, rather than nepotism, adhere to an elaborate training and development policy, embrace induction training for the benefit of new employees and promoted workers. This should be in such a way that continuous professional career development for all categories of employees would be adequately provided for. In reward management, the universities should ensure that Job promotion as well as upward mobility are part of the rewarding mechanisms. They ought to implement the terms of service and benefits of staff and create others innovatively and creatively instituted university-driven incentive schemes other than those stipulated by the statutory government schemes to motivate employees. Likewise, for performance management, the universities should embrace the all-important communication to enhance appropriate feedback between supervisors and their subordinates, while at the same time re-invigorating performance appraisal system to make it well-defined, accurate, fair, objective and reliable.

The universities should also embrace training and reward management to achieve better performance outcomes. One of the key strategies is that the universities' leadership ought to be strategic and proactive in preparing for, and managing the limitations, towards enabling the universities strategically adoptive to the dynamics of an ever-evolving business environment.

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