



THE MODERATING EFFECT OF STAKEHOLDERS' INFLUENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCE OUTCOMES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES, KENYA

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Abstract: The growing number of private universities in Kenya continues to increase opportunities for higher education, in tandem with elevating competition, as each institution strives to attract quality employees for competitive services. Thus, retention of experienced academic administrators is increasingly becoming a key challenge in many universities, with implications on leadership stability and performance. Some universities are responding to this challenge through Succession Management (SM) and stakeholder engagement programmes, hoping to improve Human Resource (HR) outcomes. However, little is known in academia about the effect of such programmes on HR outcomes. This study sought to establish the moderating effect of Stakeholders' Influence (SH) on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes in the private universities. Using the cross-sectional data, sourced from 253 academic administrators, the study found that SM accounted for 31% of variance in HR outcomes, while the interaction term between SM and SH explained up to 51% of the variance: with a positive and significant effect (Beta = 0.718, $p < 0.000$). This led to rejection of the research hypothesis for being untrue, and the conclusion that SH had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes in private universities, in Kenya.

Keywords: Stakeholders, succession management, human resource, private universities

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) embodies all the activities associated with selection, recruitment, training, development, performance management, mentorship of employees, among others; collectively described as HR practices (Marescaux et al., 2013;

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Koster & Brenda, 2020; O’Riordan, 2017). While HR practices are designed to create value by enhancing efficiency and professionalism, HRM optimizes the value created to improve organisational performance (Ekpa, 2021; Koster & Brenda, 2020). HR practices can be favourable or unfavourable depending on the extent to which, and how soon they address employees’ needs (Marthalia, 2022).

The success of HRM manifests through measurable HR outcomes, which Jiang et al. (2012) classified as: employee-related, organisational, and business-related. While, employee-related outcomes address individual experiences and behaviors, organisational outcomes focus on overall operations and performance. Business-related outcomes include top-level impacts, such as growth in sales or return on investment, among other performance metrics (Jiang et al., 2012). This study focused on employee-related outcomes, including job security and pay equity (Ekpa, 2021; Koster & Brenda, 2020). The relationship between HRM and HR outcomes is increasingly becoming important across all sectors, with a considerable number of studies focusing on underlying factors such as leadership transition (Marescaux et al., 2013).

Succession Management (SM) involves carefully selecting appropriate individuals from internal talent pools, retaining and developing them to assume senior management and leadership roles. Its purpose is to ensure that vacant positions are filled by the right people, at the right time to avoid leadership gaps, loss of knowledge and expertise in the event that staff exit for various reasons (Nyagudi, 2020). SM process involves forecasting the need for future senior managers and leaders, assessing the list of potential candidates, planning for talent development, and communicating to employees about career paths and opportunities (Wonnia, 2021). It benefits organisations by preparing them for planned and unplanned departures, breaking the cycle of homo-social reproduction at the workplace, propagating diversity, minimising conflicts during leadership transitions, and enhancing organisational competitiveness. SM also boosts employee morale, enhances retention and motivates performance (Wonnia, 2021). In universities, SM ensures leadership continuity and organisational stability, both of which are critical for performance. Therefore, an organisation that fails to prioritise SM gradually impairs its operations, business culture and competitiveness (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2020).

A stakeholder is any individual or group with vested interests in an organisation. Thus, a stakeholder can influence, or be influenced by the decisions and operations of an organisation (Boutilier, 2024). Stakeholders can be external such as investors, shareholders and suppliers; or internal like managers and employees (Boutilier, 2024; Sahal & Bett, 2022). Stakeholders’ Influence (SH) is becoming a common phenomenon in organisations, as stakeholders adopt various strategies to entrench their interests in organisational decisions (Darškuvienė & Bendoraitienė, 2014). Consequently, organisations have a crucial task of maintaining good relations with stakeholders, for positive reputation and optimal performance (Boutilier, 2024). In this study, although stakeholders contribute towards the success of private universities, little is known about the effect of SH on processes such as SM and HRM.

In 2022, Kenya had 36 private universities, having increased from 30 in 2015 (Cowling, 2023). Among other dynamics, the growing number of private universities has created more opportunities for the academic administrators, and intensified competition in the sub-sector. Thus, every university strives to attract and retain quality employees for competitive services. However, retention of experienced employees is gradually becoming an inevitable challenge to most institutions (Amburi et al., 2024). Although some institutions are increasingly responding to the challenge through programmes such as SM and stakeholder engagement, to prepare employees for higher management and leadership positions, little is known about the effect of such programmes on HR outcomes in academia. Furthermore, the relationship between SM and HR outcomes has attracted substantial research; however, the effect of SH on SM and HR

outcomes remains under-investigated. This study sought to establish the moderating effect of SH on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and the institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Whereas the stakeholder theory explained the relationship between SH and SM, as well as between SH and HR outcomes; institutional theory was used to elaborate the relationship between SM and HR practice, especially how organisations compete for legitimacy and survival.

A review of previous studies revealed relations between SM and HR outcomes, SH and SM, as well as SH and HR outcomes, but which were either contextually irrelevant or conceptually inadequate to fully address the research gap. For example, Nyagudi (2020) established a positive and significant relationship between SM and employee retention in mobile telecommunication companies; and concluded that improving SM was likely to influence HR outcomes positively. Rotich and Kiiru (2021) revealed that succession planning had a strong, positive and significant effect on employee performance. However, the study's simple conceptual configuration limited the extent to which it addressed the research gap.

Bassam et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of SI vis-à-vis SM, by influencing organisational decisions to perpetuate their interests. However, no hypotheses were tested to determine the relationship between SH and SM, which limited the study's contribution. Boutilier (2024) highlighted the importance of SH in relation to leadership transitions. It also revealed that SH was a critical factor in leadership transition processes; thereby, hinting at its potential moderating role on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes.

While citing a study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, Vorecol (2024) indicated that companies prioritising stakeholder engagement in HR projects were 40% more likely to meet their project objectives compared to those not doing so. Besides, organisations with high levels of stakeholder engagement in HR initiatives experienced a 21% increase in project success rates. Though the cited reports highlight the importance of SH in relation to HR outcomes, they were more than five years old, and were confined to the corporate sector; thereby, limiting their contextual relevance to private universities.

In conclusion, the literature review revealed shortage of studies focusing on the nexus between SM, SH and HR outcomes, particularly in private universities. Therefore, by investigating the moderating effect of SH on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes, this study addressed a valid research gap. The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 indicates the hypothesised relationship between SM, SH and HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya.

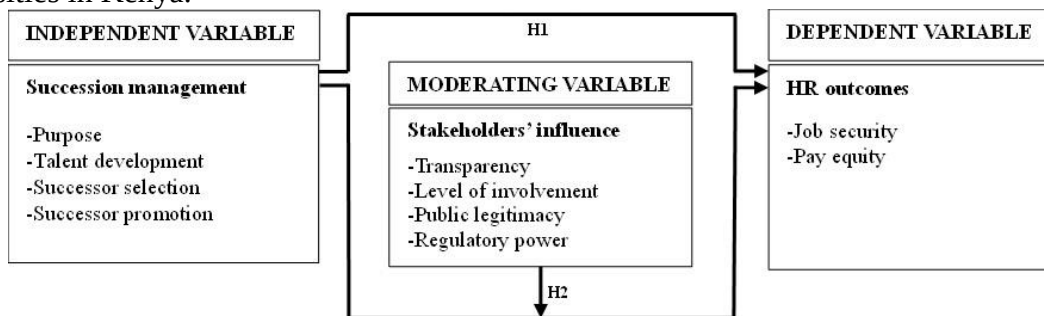


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Based on the conceptual framework linkages, this study tested two research hypotheses: H1: SM has no significant influence on HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya; and H2: SH has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study anchored on pragmatist philosophy and employed a cross-sectional design. The design was chosen due to its cost-effectiveness and efficiency (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). The study targeted academic administrators in all the 36 private universities (CUE, 2022). The target population was 316 academic administrators, including 158 deans and 158 directors. Based on the census principles, all the 316 respondents were involved. The sampling frame was stratified into two groups of deans and directors, who were sampled purposively. Primary data were sourced using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested, its validity was determined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity; while its reliability was computed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) (Shrestha, 2021).

Descriptive and inferential analyses were used to address study objectives. Descriptive analysis included computation of composite Likert scale scores for each variable, to identify central limit tendencies and variability. Likert scale composite scores represent participants' overall perceptions towards the constructs being measured. Depending on the scale, lower scores indicate negative perceptions, while higher scores show positive perceptions or agreement (Alkharusi, 2022). This study used a scale of 1-5, calibrated as 'not at all (1)', 'small extent (2)', 'some extent (3)', 'moderate extent (4)' and 'great extent (5)'. Inferential analysis was performed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, simple linear and multiple regression. The model can be expressed in terms of the equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_{2m} X_{2m} + \beta_{3i} X * Z_{3i} + \varepsilon. \quad (1)$$

Where: Y is the dependent variable (HR outcomes); β_0 is the intercept; X_1 is independent variable (SM); β_1 is the regression coefficient measuring effect of SM on HR outcomes; X_{2m} is the moderating variable (SH); β_{2m} is the regression coefficient indicating effect of SH; $X * Z_{3i}$ is the interaction term between the SM and SH; β_{3mi} is the regression coefficient indicating effect of $X * Z_{3i}$; while ε is the error term. The stepwise iteration method was used to determine the moderating effect of SH on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes (Ruengvirayudh & Brooks, 2016). Both simple linear regression and multiple regression equations were used to test the research hypotheses. The results were interpreted from the standardised regression coefficients ($Beta$), adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2), and the significance of F statistic (Morgan et al., 2007). The study was guided by the framework of ethical principles for social science research to protect participants. The researcher sought respondent's informed consents to ensure voluntary participation. Participants were also assured about the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of their information (Praveen & Showkat, 2017). The researcher also sought ethical clearance from the Strathmore University Ethics Committee, and a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation ahead of data collection.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented under two broad themes, including descriptive and inferential results. Whereas the descriptive results focus on participants' socio-demographic characteristics, inferential results involve correlation and regression analyses.

4.1. Descriptive results

The study captured information on participants' attributes, including gender, age, highest academic qualification, academic rank, years of work at the institution, and managerial training, among others. Of the 253 participants, 154 (60.9%) were males, suggesting that administrative positions were dominated by men. The participants were aged between 26 and 72, with a mean age of 47 years ($SD = 9.647$). Besides, 152 (60.1%) respondents had PhD education or its equivalent, while 95 (37.6%) indicated master's degrees. Cumulatively, 97.7% of the participants had at least a master's education, suggesting specialized knowledge and potentially informed perspectives on SM, SH and HR outcomes in their institutions. Ninety-seven (38.4%) participants were lecturers, 79 (31.2%) were senior lecturers, while 55 (21.7%) were assistant lecturers. Regarding years of work at the institution, the analysis obtained a mean of 9.5 years, ($SD = 9.000$). Furthermore, 120 (47.4%) participants had accessed some certified managerial training; making them better placed to perform managerial duties. Notably though, more than one-half, 133 (52.6%) participants had not accessed any training. Despite this, up to 241 (95.3%) participants performed both academic and administrative duties, raising curiosity about the quality of leadership in private universities in Kenya.

The study covered 36 chartered private universities at the time; of which 22 (61.1%) were non-profit, suggesting a focus on mission-driven objectives. Six (16.7%) institutions are profit-oriented, while another 6 (16.7%) reported a blend of profit and non-profit. The ownership status of private universities may have some influence on the institutional culture around SM, SH and HR practices. Twenty-three 23 (62.5%) institutions were faith-based, suggesting that SM, SH and HR practices may be founded on religious values. However, 14 (37.5%) universities were classified as secular, with distinct SM, SH and HR practices. The population of students in private universities ranged between 120 and 60,000, with a mean of 8,403 students ($SD = 12,042$). Out of 36 institutions, 10 (27.8%) operated on annual budgets of less than KES 500 million, suggesting that about one-third of the private universities may be constrained in funding SM and HR practices, considering that about two-thirds were non-profit oriented. Six (16.7%) institutions operated on budgets of KES 502-999 million, while 4 (11.1%) stated budgets of KES 1-50 billion. However, 15 (41.7%) institutions did not disclose their annual budget, suggesting a gap in financial disclosure and transparency.

More still, 35 (96.0%) institutions adhered to CUE guidelines on promotions, suggesting that promotions were based on established standards; thereby, encouraging appropriate succession practices. Regarding the gender of most recent appointees to deanship positions, 16 (44.4%) institutions had appointed males, while 4 (11.2%) indicated females, suggesting that the proportion of women holding leadership positions in private universities falls below the one-third constitutional requirement. Notably though, 16 (44.4%) institutions were unclear on the gender of most recent appointees to the deanship positions. About the models used in most recent appointments to deanship positions, in 12 (32.0%) institutions the appointments followed the insider relay model, 5 (14.2%) indicated the insider non-relay model, another 5 (14.2%) stated the outside succession model, while 10 (27.7%) hinted the use of a mixture of succession models. Despite this, 4 (11.9) lacked appropriate succession plans, which may impact SM, SH and HR practices. Furthermore, Table 1 indicates the composite Likert scale scores for each study variable.

Table 1. Likert scale composite scores

Constructs	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HR outcomes	253	1	5	3.62	0.933
SH	253	1	5	3.98	0.872
SM	253	1	5	3.49	0.962
Interaction factor between SM & SH	253	1	25	15.74	6.349
Valid N (listwise)	253				

Participants expressed positive perceptions about the constructs of the study, including SM, SH and HR outcomes. The perceptions ranged from 3.49 for SM to 3.98 for SH. Thus, participants were more positive towards SH than SM, with the extent of agreement ranging from ‘some extent’ to ‘moderate extent’. This information was used to establish whether or not the constructs were significantly correlated.

4.2. Inferential results

Correlation analysis was performed to establish whether the predictor variables (SM and SH) had significant correlations with HR outcomes. Correlation analysis is an essential precedent for linear and multiple regression analysis. Its purpose is to determine whether linear relationships exist between predictor and predicted variables, in line with a fundamental assumption of linear regression analysis. Correlation analysis was achieved using Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient (r) and the results showed that SM had a direct positive and significant correlation with HR outcomes ($r = 0.547$ & $p < 0.000$). This means that SM and HR outcomes in private universities had a linear relationship, such that as SM improved, HR outcomes also improved proportionately. This affirmed that SM could be regressed against HR outcomes. The analysis revealed a direct, positive and significant correlation between SH and HR outcomes ($r = 0.633$ & $p < 0.000$); suggesting a linear relationship between the two variables. Regarding the interaction term between SM and SH, the analysis revealed a direct, positive and significant linear relationship with HR outcomes ($r = 0.718$ & $p < 0.000$). Furthermore, the interaction term had the strongest positive correlation with HR outcomes, followed by SH and SM in that order. Despite this, the results suggested that all the variables used in the study fulfilled the assumption of linear relationship with the outcome variable; thereby, justifying the application of linear and multiple regression to test the research hypotheses.

Regression analysis generated three models: Model 1 fitted SM against HR outcomes; Model 2 regressed SM and SH against HR outcomes; while Model 3 regressed the interaction term against HR outcomes. Table 2 shows regression analysis results.

Table 2. Regression analysis results

Model Summary									
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Change statistics				
					<i>R Square Change</i>	<i>F Change</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig. F Change</i>
1	0.562 ^a	0.315	0.313	0.774	0.315	115.590	1	251	0.000***
2	0.641 ^b	0.411	0.407	0.719	0.411	87.332	2	250	0.000***
3	0.718 ^c	0.516	0.514	0.651	0.516	267.298	1	251	0.000***
ANOVA									
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F		Sig.		
1	Regression	69.234	1	69.234	115.590		0.000***		
	Residual	150.339	251	0.599					
	Total	219.573	252						
2	Regression	90.310	2	45.155	87.332		0.000***		
	Residual	129.263	250	0.517					
	Total	219.573	252						
3	Regression	113.239	1	113.239	267.298		0.000***		
	Residual	106.334	251	0.424					
	Total	219.573	252						
Regression Coefficients									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value			
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>					
1	(Constant)	1.577	0.196		8.040	0.000***			
	SM	0.545	0.051	0.562	10.751	0.000***			
2	(Constant)	1.284	0.188		6.833	0.000***			
	SM	0.164	0.076	0.169	2.163	0.031**			
	SH	0.456	0.071	0.500	6.385	0.000***			
3	(Constant)	1.959	0.110		17.886	0.000***			
	$X*Z_{3i}$	0.106	0.006	0.718	16.349	0.000***			
Dependent Variable: HR outcomes									
a Predictors: (Constant), Succession management									
b Predictors: (Constant), Succession management, SH									
c Predictors: (Constant), $X*Z_{3i}$									

** & *** shows significance at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$, respectively.

The analysis was conducted to investigate the moderating effect of SH on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes. Collinearity tests were interpreted from the Variable Inflation Factor (VIF), which formed part of the output. The analysis generated VIF values ranging between 1 and 1.419, which according to Zach (2019) signals moderate levels of Collinearity between the predictor variables. The summary models show that Model 1 with SM as the predictor variable obtained the adjusted R square of 0.313, which suggest that the model explained 31.3% of variance in HR outcomes. The model's goodness-of-fit is supported by the R Square Change of 0.315 from the default model and an F-statistic of 115.590, which is significant ($p < 0.000$). These results suggest that inclusion of SM in the regression equation created a robust model explaining variance in HR outcomes in private universities. In addition, Model 1 shows that SM had a positive influence on HR outcomes that was also significant (Beta = 0.562, $p < 0.000$). This suggests that a unit change in the standard deviation from the mean

for SM, influenced up to 0.562 of change in HR outcomes. Based on this, the research hypothesis stating that *SM has no significant influence on HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya* is rejected for being inconsistent with empirical findings. SM influences HR outcomes by creating pipelines for internal talent development, with clear career progression paths, growth opportunities, and employee engagement, which collectively reduce uncertainty about future job dynamics. Helping employees to feel more secure in their positions and confident about ascending to positions with greater responsibilities, is not only crucial for job satisfaction, but also for improving individual performance. SM in private universities also contributes to better HR outcomes by propagating merit in the compensation of workers, which are essential for motivation, satisfaction and performance.

The results in Table 2 show that Model 2, which incorporated SM and SH, obtained the adjusted R square of 0.407, suggesting that the model accounted for 40.7% of variance in HR outcomes. The model's explanatory power is further indicated by the R Square Change of 0.411 and the F-statistic change of 87.332, which is significant ($p < 0.000$). The results suggest that addition of SH and SM in the regression equation generated a robust and significant model to explain variance in HR outcomes in private universities. Model 2 further shows that SM and SH had positive influence on HR outcomes, individually, and the effect of each was statistically significant (Beta = 0.169, $p < 0.000$) for SM and (Beta = 0.500, $p = 0.031$). In relation to the results of Model 1, the results obtained by Model 2 suggest that addition of SH in the regression equation usurped the influence of SM on HR outcomes, meaning that SH had more power in explaining HR outcomes compared to SM. This means that stakeholders have a critical role to play in SM in private universities. Most private universities in Kenya depend on stakeholder funding, and these stakeholders often influence HR decisions. Thus, enhancing stakeholder engagement can have a greater impact on HR outcomes than SM alone, as it introduces diverse perspectives and expertise to shape HR practices.

Model 3, with the interaction term as the predictor variable, generated the adjusted R square of 0.514, suggesting that it accounted for 51.4% of variance in HR outcomes. Thus, inclusion of the interaction term in the equation significantly boosted the model's explanatory power. This further reflects with the R Square Change of 0.516 and the F-statistic change of 267.298, which was significant ($p < 0.000$). The results suggest that the interaction term between SM and SH was the most effective in explaining variance in HR outcomes in private universities. Besides, effect of the interaction term on HR outcomes was not only positive, but also significant (Beta = 0.718, $p < 0.000$). This means that inclusion of SH in the equation boosted the relationship between SM and HR outcomes. Consequently, the research hypothesis claiming that *SH has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya* was rejected for being untrue. While SM develops future leaders and promotes stability, SH ensures succession plans reflect institutional values and funds their implementation. Optimizing SH in SM is key to aligning HR practices with organizational goals for improved performance.

5. CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to determine the moderating effect of SH on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes. The study demonstrated that SM and HR outcomes had a significant and positive relationship. However, addition of the interaction term between SM and SH improved the model's robustness and explanatory power. Therefore, SH had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between SM and HR outcomes in private universities in Kenya. Improving SH is likely to improve the strength of the relationship between SM and HR outcomes. This may be achieved by improving stakeholder involvement

in institutional decision-making processes focusing on SM and HRM programmes. Stakeholder involvement may also be enhanced through consistent and transparent communication, interactive engagement forums, leveraging on their professional experience and perspectives; in addition to expeditious response to their concerns.

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