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Generativity is a Core Value of the ESJ: A Decade of Growth

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) was one of the great psychologists of the 20th century¹. He explored the nature of personal human identity. Originally named Erik Homberger after his adoptive father, Dr. Theodore Homberger, he re-imagined his identity and re-named himself Erik Erikson (literally Erik son of Erik). Ironically, he rejected his adoptive father's wish to become a physician, never obtained a college degree, pursued independent studies under Anna Freud, and then taught at Harvard Medical School after emigrating from Germany to the United States. Erickson visualized human psychosocial development as eight successive life-cycle challenges. Each challenge was framed as a struggle between two outcomes, one desirable and one undesirable. The first two early development challenges were 'trust' versus 'mistrust' followed by 'autonomy' versus 'shame.' Importantly, he held that we face the challenge of **generativity** versus **stagnation in middle life**. This challenge concerns the desire to give back to society and leave a mark on the world. It is about the transition from acquiring and accumulating to providing and mentoring.

Founded in 2010, the European Scientific Journal is just reaching young adulthood. Nonetheless, **generativity** is one of our core values. As a Journal, we reject stagnation and continue to evolve to meet the needs of our contributors, our reviewers, and the academic community. We seek to innovate to meet the challenges of open-access academic publishing. For us,

¹ Hopkins, J. R. (1995). Erik Homburger Erikson (1902–1994). *American Psychologist*, 50(9), 796-797. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.50.9.796>

generativity has a special meaning. We acknowledge an obligation to give back to the academic community, which has supported us over the past decade and made our initial growth possible. As part of our commitment to generativity, we are re-doubling our efforts in several key areas. First, we are committed to keeping our article processing fees as low as possible to make the ESJ affordable to scholars from all countries. Second, we remain committed to fair and agile peer review and are making further changes to shorten the time between submission and publication of worthy contributions. Third, we are looking actively at ways to eliminate the article processing charges for scholars coming from low GDP countries through a system of subsidies. Fourth, we are examining ways to create and strengthen partnerships with various academic institutions that will mutually benefit those institutions and the ESJ. Finally, through our commitment to publishing excellence, we reaffirm our membership in an open-access academic publishing community that actively contributes to the vitality of scholarship worldwide.

Sincerely,

Daniel B. Hier, MD

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Resumen

Escárcega, municipio del estado mexicano de Campeche, conformado por nueve comunidades y dos juntas municipales; situado en el sur-sureste del Estado, rico en gastronomía, cultura y recursos naturales. Escárcega ha sido conocido como un lugar rico en especies maderables; también han sido sobreexplotados sus recursos y otros se han desaprovechado. Es fundamental conservar los mismos a través de prácticas sustentables. Por tanto, para realizar acciones en pro de los recursos naturales, es indispensable realizar diagnósticos en las comunidades más importantes que tengan influencia en el proyecto del Tren Maya, agrupar dichas actividades y construir alianzas entre los sectores que existen en Escárcega. Por lo anterior, para la realización de este proyecto, la muestra se definió de manera aleatoria, analizando variables de superficie, número de habitantes y recursos naturales que poseen cercanía con la ruta del Tren Maya, entre otros. Además, se consideraron las características de los recursos que pueden ser aprovechados para el turismo rural. Parte de la metodología fue el diseño y aplicación de cuestionarios de manera física para obtener la información agrupada en tres categorías:

recursos naturales, sociales y áreas de oportunidad dirigidos a los representantes (comisarios y agentes municipales), vecinos y líderes naturales de cada comunidad. Los resultados obtenidos muestran la similitud tanto en recursos potencialmente favorables para el desarrollo del turismo rural como las áreas de oportunidad, tales como: Organización, comunicación asertiva grupal y capacitación en temas de turismo rural (diseño de rutas, mercadotecnia, entre otras).

Palabras clave: Comparación, comunidades, Escárcega, Campeche

Comparison of Natural Resources to Enhance Rural Tourism in Four Communities in the Municipality of Escárcega, Campeche

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Abstract

Escárcega, a municipality in the Mexican state of Campeche, is made up of nine communities and two municipal councils. Located in the south-southeast of the state, it is rich in gastronomy, culture, and natural resources. Escárcega is known for its wealth of timber species; however, its resources have been overexploited and others have been wasted. The objective of this article is to conserve these resources through sustainable practices. Therefore, in order to take measures in favor of natural resources, it is essential to carry out assessments in the most important communities that influence the Maya Train project, group these activities, and create alliances between the sectors that exist in Escárcega. For this reason, to carry out this project, the sample was defined randomly, analyzing variables such as surface area, number of inhabitants, and natural resources located near the Maya Train route, among others. In addition, the characteristics of resources that can be exploited for rural tourism were considered. Part of the methodology consisted of designing and administering physical questionnaires to obtain information grouped into

three categories: natural resources, social resources, and areas of opportunity, aimed at representatives (commissioners and municipal agents), residents, and natural leaders of each community. The results obtained show the similarity in both potentially favorable resources for the development of rural tourism and areas of opportunity, such as: Organization, assertive group communication, and training in rural tourism topics (route design, marketing, among others).

Keywords: Comparison, communities, Escárcega, Campeche

Introduction

Hoy en pleno siglo XXI, México aún, está en deuda con la población rural un ejemplo de ello es el sureste del país que mantiene altos índices de pobreza, por lo que, es una situación pendiente que sin duda mejoraría el nivel económico y social de las poblaciones rurales. La investigación se centra en realizar una revisión y análisis de los recursos naturales que poseen cuatro comunidades del municipio de Escárcega, Campeche, tomando en cuenta algunos criterios como apoyos gubernamentales, migración, inclusión, equidad e igualdad de género, entre otros. Un aspecto a considerar y que quizás se desprende de la falta de atención a las zonas rurales es la falta de seguridad en las comunidades rurales, esto, aunque existan apoyos por parte del gobierno, no impactan positivamente en la calidad de vida de las personas (Sandoval et al., 2020). Por otro lado, el Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI, 2019) considera zona rural aquella que tienen menos de 2,500 habitantes y que todas sus actividades productivas estén ligadas al sector primario, específicamente el sector agropecuario. La Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT, 2016) considera que la privación de los servicios públicos contribuye a que las comunidades no tenga los elementos básicos y necesarios como el agua para uso doméstico, energía eléctrica, etc., para poder desarrollarse social y económicamente, lo que potencializa la pobreza extrema de los pueblos rurales. Así lo sostienen Ramos *et al.* (2019) la importancia de no contar con los servicios básicos para tener una vida digna, trae consecuencias en la calidad de vida de los individuos, esta situación es el caso de muchos pobladores rurales que no tienen conocimiento de los programas sociales dirigidos a mejorar las actividades productivas, subsidios para estudiar y formarse profesionalmente, este fenómeno no solo ocurre en las comunidades, sino también en las cabeceras municipales, que, aunque tienen recursos, no tienen acceso a los beneficios. Respecto al salario y las horas laborales el CONEVAL (2017) menciona que la percepción en sueldos de los trabajadores de las zonas rurales no alcanza para satisfacer las necesidades básicas de los mismos, ni hablar del aspecto de seguridad social que muchos no cuentan con ello, quedando en evidencia las jornadas laborales

muy largas, desorganización laboral, baja posibilidad de asociación por parte de los trabajadores, cero normas de seguridad laboral y prestaciones de ley. Para Kieffer (2021) el turismo en comunidades rurales en México adoptó desde sus inicios formas de organización basadas la gestión colectiva y en el manejo de recursos de uso común. Este trabajo pretende visibilizar los procesos asociativos, democráticos y participativos que sostienen estos proyectos, para luego entender si las lógicas, instrumentos y mecanismos existentes permiten hablar de procesos alternativos a los modelos dominantes, coherentes con el sistema de valores e ideas de la Economía Social y Solidaria (ESS). Ante las situaciones que enfrentan las comunidades rurales en México se propone la comparación de recursos naturales turísticos de cuatro comunidades del municipio de Escárcega, Campeche con la finalidad de identificar actividades turísticas que se puedan desarrollar en las mismas.

Metodología

Este proyecto de investigación tiene un enfoque cualitativo y descriptivo, como se menciona a continuación: Hernández et al. (2014) se enfocan en comprender los fenómenos, explorándolos y tomando en cuenta la perspectiva de los pobladores de las comunidades en su ambiente natural y su contexto; es decir, se utiliza la recolección y análisis de los datos que obtienen a través de preguntas estructuradas. Tomando en cuenta lo anterior, se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa realizando una recolección de datos mediante un cuestionario conformado de 25 preguntas divididas en 4 secciones: la primera sección es sobre datos personales del entrevistado y aspectos generales de la comunidad; la segunda sección, sobre los recursos con los que cuenta la comunidad, potencialmente aptos para ser aprovechados para el turismo rural; la tercera sección, sobre aspectos organizacionales (capacitaciones, pláticas, talleres, etc.). Los temas de turismo que pueden ser tomados en cuenta para el desarrollo del objetivo de este proyecto son la última sección no menos importante, que puede aportar algunas estrategias que pueden contribuir para la construcción de rutas turísticas y alianzas entre diferentes sectores. Con respecto al tipo de estudio, es cualitativo descriptivo. En un primer momento, se realizó una búsqueda bibliográfica exhaustiva sobre turismo rural, recursos naturales de México y el mundo. Para el segundo momento, se utilizó el análisis cualitativo descriptivo debido a que se buscó describir la situación de cada una de las comunidades analizadas con potencial turístico del municipio de Escárcega e ir generando información que permita realizar un inventario de especies y recursos naturales que poseen. En cuanto a la población se refiere, Hernández et al. (2014) define la población como un conjunto de todos los casos que concuerdan con una serie de especificaciones. Por tanto, la realización de esta investigación tuvo como población a los comisarios y líderes naturales, así como a los pobladores de más antigüedad

de las cuatro comunidades analizadas que están cercanas a la ciudad de Escárcega, esto conforme a las características ponderadas en los rubros de riqueza de recursos naturales, principal parámetro para determinar las cuatro comunidades. De acuerdo con Hernández et al. (2014), la muestra en el proceso cualitativo es donde pueden intervenir personas y comunidades, como es el caso de esta investigación sobre la cual se recolectan los datos, tomando en cuenta que estos pueden no ser necesariamente estadísticamente representativos de todo el universo en cuestión. Para el desarrollo de esta investigación se utilizó una muestra no probabilística con base en lo que menciona Hernández et al. (2014). Por lo que, para la realización de este proyecto, la muestra se definió de manera aleatoria analizando variables de superficie, número de habitantes, recursos naturales que poseen, cercanía de la ruta del Tren Maya, entre otros; además de las características de los recursos naturales que pueden ser aprovechados para el turismo rural. En este caso son cuatro las comunidades seleccionadas. Un instrumento de medición es lo que el investigador utiliza para registrar los datos que obtenga de las variables propuestas. Otro recurso metodológico es el análisis de datos, utilizado para posteriormente difundir los resultados mediante publicaciones (Gil Pascual, 2016). Para este proceso de investigación se diseñó y se aplicó un instrumento para recolectar la información que consiste en un cuestionario compuesto por 45 preguntas de elección múltiple. Dicho instrumento fue validado a través del proceso de jueceo de 3 expertos en investigación y 1 especialista en el ramo de comunidades rurales y se utilizó el alfa de Cronbach para evaluar la fiabilidad de los mismos. La población de estudio está constituida por 2 juntas municipales y 9 comunidades pertenecientes al Municipio de Escárcega. Se determinó una muestra aleatoria de cuatro comunidades: División del Norte, Matamoros, Justicia Social y la Libertad. La colecta de datos se desarrolló a través de la aplicación del cuestionario de manera física a cada persona; cabe mencionar que se realizaron visitas a cada comunidad de acuerdo a la disponibilidad de los líderes naturales de las comunidades o comisario ejidal para realizar las entrevistas y dar respuesta a los cuestionarios. El análisis de datos se realizó a través de software de procesamiento de datos Excel versión 13, donde se obtuvieron los principales datos de manera estadística sobre el cuestionario aplicado, analizando cada respuesta, y de esta manera poder tener una conclusión a través del instrumento aplicado. Siendo los identificados: la falta de capacitación, organización y el acompañamiento por parte de diferentes instancias gubernamentales para poder aprovechar de manera óptima todos los recursos, tanto humanos como recursos naturales.

Resultados

Se realizó la comparación y análisis de cuatro comunidades del municipio de Escárcega, Campeche: División del Norte, Matamoros, Justicia

Social y la Libertad, encontrando que, debido a la cercanía entre ellas, poseen gran similitud en los aspectos de recursos naturales como la flora y la fauna, además de la cultura que caracteriza a cada una de ellas. Lo anterior se debe a que sus pobladores son provenientes de los estados de Veracruz, Michoacán, Guanajuato y Tabasco. Otro aspecto que se identificó es la similitud en su orografía, lo que permite realizar actividades turísticas como el senderismo. Al menos tres de las cuatro comunidades cuentan con una laguna que puede ser aprovechada para practicar kayak o pesca turística. Algo que también tienen en común las cuatro comunidades es su ubicación a orilla de la carretera internacional, lo que permite un buen acceso, y también la cercanía con los restaurantes, donde podrían establecer alianzas con ellos para captar más visitantes para las comunidades y beneficiarse mutuamente. Una situación sumamente importante que se identificó en esta investigación son las áreas de oportunidad que, si se atienden, pueden contribuir a desarrollar el turismo rural de las comunidades mencionadas. Estas áreas de oportunidad incluyen el desconocimiento de los temas sobre riquezas culturales, arqueológicas, turismo rural, comunicación asertiva, organización y trabajo colaborativo, así como la identificación de recursos naturales con potencial turístico que puedan ser aprovechados de manera sustentable para generar ingresos económicos. Un ejemplo de ello es la comunidad de Justicia Social, donde existe evidencia de vestigios arqueológicos. También se pudo observar que existe la oportunidad de realizar una ruta turística cercana al ejido Matamoros, donde se localiza un lugar de esparcimiento, restaurante, cabañas para pernoctar, una laguna y espacios naturales para hacer senderismo. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar la importancia de concientizar y sensibilizar a los pobladores de las comunidades para fomentar el turismo rural sustentable.

Tabla de resultados de comparación de recursos naturales y necesidades de las cuatro comunidades del municipio de Escárcega, Campeche.

Comunidad	Población	Superficie total	Actividades Turísticas (propuestas)	Recursos naturales para el turismo rural	Necesidades Detectadas
Matamoros	1677 hab	17500 has	Kayak Senderismo Fotografía rural Diseño de ruta turística Recorridos guiados	Laguna Senderos Flora y fauna endémica	Capacitación Organización y comunicación asertiva Talleres sobre el turismo Elaboración de proyectos Comunicación asertiva
División del Norte	3,963 hab	21000 has	kayak	Laguna “el Ramonal” Flora y	Capacitación Organización y

			Pesca deportiva Fotografía rural Recorridos guiados Visita a lugares de esparcimiento	fauna endémica Apiarios	comunicación asertiva Talleres sobre el turismo Elaboración de proyectos
La Libertad	Menos de 2500 hab	6734 has	Fotografía rural Recorridos guiados Senderismo	Biodiversidad en flora y fauna endémica	Capacitación Organización y comunicación asertiva Talleres sobre el turismo Elaboración de proyectos
Justicia social	Menos de 2500 hab	17500 has	Eco arqueología Senderismo Recorridos a la Isla chacón Diseño de ruta turística para recorridos guiados	Zona arqueológica (no abierta al público) Apiarios Flora y fauna endémica	Capacitación Organización y comunicación asertiva Talleres sobre el turismo Elaboración de proyectos

Discusión

Agüera (2015) coincide con los resultados de la investigación sobre la importancia de la participación y capacitación de los pobladores en las comunidades, así como de la participación activa de la ciudadanía, además de conocer la percepción de las personas sobre los recursos que poseen, a fin de contribuir al aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales y fomentar el turismo sustentable. Mientras que Figueroa González (2021) considera que, a pesar de que los principales beneficiarios de esta actividad son los grupos de interés que promueven el turismo, y aunque son generadores de empleos, explotan a las personas contratadas para realizar las actividades turísticas. Por otro lado, Sandoval *et al.* (2020) propone el trabajo colaborativo entre los pobladores de las comunidades para buscar el desarrollo de las mismas y evitar la privatización de los recursos, lo cual frena el desarrollo de las comunidades rurales, situación que se agrava por la falta de conocimiento por parte de los pobladores y el beneficio económico queda en manos de quienes se apoderan de los recursos, mientras que los habitantes de las comunidades solo padecen

el saqueo de sus recursos naturales y siguen viviendo en la pobreza sin oportunidad de crecimiento económico.

Conclusión

El estudio refleja que las cuatro comunidades poseen recursos naturales y humanos que pueden desarrollar el turismo rural. Para poder realizar actividades relacionadas con el turismo rural, se deberán llevar a cabo diversas actividades que permitan aprovechar de una manera óptima y sustentable los recursos para fomentar actividades turísticas, gastronómicas, entre otras. Se requiere mayor conocimiento por parte de los pobladores, líderes y autoridades sobre temas relacionados con el turismo rural. Con la llegada del Tren Maya, se ha creado la necesidad de proveer espacios para ofrecer a los visitantes; sin embargo, no se está preparado en estos temas. Para mostrar y difundir a los visitantes, se requiere de impartir capacitación a los habitantes de las comunidades en aspectos de comunicación organizacional y en temas de turismo (diseño de rutas, mercadotecnia dirigida al turismo rural), elaboración de proyectos para buscar financiamiento, así como alianzas entre los sectores restauranteros, hoteleros, transporte e Instituciones Educativas como el Tecnológico Superior de Escárcega, teniendo en cuenta que imparte programas educativos en Turismo, Administración de Empresas, Contabilidad entre otras, que pueden contribuir al fortalecimiento de las habilidades y destrezas que tienen los pobladores; cabe mencionar que dicha Institución se encuentra ubicada a un promedio de 20 km de la comunidad encuestada, en este caso Justicia Social (más lejana), por lo que, al conjuntar todos estos elementos se lograría un desarrollo en el turismo rural y un mejor servicio al turista. Es importante enfatizar que, si estas áreas de oportunidad son atendidas, podrán contribuir a que esta zona, que nunca se había visto como un destino turístico, lo sea. Dicho lo anterior, es muy importante darle seguimiento al proyecto, sobre todo atendiendo las áreas de oportunidad identificadas.

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Omnichannel Integration and Performance of Large-Scale Retail Stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

The changes in the retailing industry have led to the emergence of omnichannel retailing, which has disrupted conventional retailing. The primary objective was to investigate the impact of omnichannel retailing on the performance of large-scale stores. The specific objective of the study was to examine the effects of omnichannel integration on the performance of large-scale retail stores in Nairobi, Kenya. This study was anchored on the Resource-Based View theory and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. The study employed a cross-sectional design using descriptive and explanatory research designs. The large-scale retail stores were the unit of analysis, while the heads of the marketing, IT, finance, and operations departments served as the units of observation. The questionnaires were distributed through drop-and-pick and online circulation. The pilot testing was conducted on questionnaires before data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and a 0.7 level was considered reliable, where the variables in the study were higher than the cut-off. The correlation analysis was determined using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The study analyzed the impact of omnichannel integration on the performance of large-scale retail stores through Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Content analysis was used to extract meaning and make inferences from qualitative data. For hypothesis testing, the study used P-values and a

5% significance level to assess significance. The finding indicated ($p= 0.001 < 0.05$) a significance level and coefficient of 0.772, implying that an increase in omnichannel integration, holding all other variables constant at zero, results in a 0.772 increase in the performance of large-scale retail stores. The results of this study showed that omnichannel integration significantly affects the performance of large retail stores.

Keywords: Omnichannel Retailing, Omnichannel Integration, Resource-Based View Theory, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, Performance

Introduction

The retail industry has developed into a highly competitive environment with evolving consumer behaviour (Griffith, Noble & Chen 2006). Thus, establishing a competitive advantage relies on the organization's competence to develop dynamic capabilities. The resource-based view theory proposes that organizational resources and capacities are linked to superior financial performance. This theory provides a guide on how an organization may attain superior performance by considering three fundamental elements of competitive advantage, sustainable competitive advantage, and firm resources (Ferreira & Ferreira, 2024). The deployment and leveraging of a firm's resources and competencies provide a competitive edge that drives firm performance in the context of operational efficiency and growth in sales, market share, and profitability.

The changes in the retailing industry have led to the emergence of omnichannel retailing (Savisaari, 2016). The advancements in retail have facilitated consumer-brand engagement, brand image building and enhancement of customer overall experience (Bennett & Azhari, 2015). According to Iglesias-Pradas, Aquila-Natale and Del-Rio-Carazo (2022), technological advancement has given retailers a competitive advantage in the market. However, this has affected retailers' operations, performance and customer behaviours (Lynch & Barnes, 2020; Savastano, Dascenzo & Demarco, 2019). This study was conducted to understand the role of omnichannel integration on the performance of large-scale stores. The performance dimensions were sales growth, profitability growth, market share growth and operational efficiency. The study focused on 22 large-scale retail stores within Nairobi City County, and respondents came from the heads of departments.

The Research Problem

In the third quarter of 2024, Kenya's GDP expanded by 4.0%, compared to 6.0% during the same time in 2023. The decline in most economic

sectors was blamed for the slower growth. Although the GDP of the retail and wholesale sectors grew by 4.8%, the industry struggles with operational efficiency, sales growth, market share growth, and profitability (KNBS, 2024). Furthermore, the profit margins of omnichannel retailers have declined due to challenges in order fulfilment (Eriksson, Norrman & Kembro, 2022; Riaz, Meidute-Kavaliauskiene, & Ahmed, 2021). Lee, Chan, Chong and Thadani (2019) indicate that the challenges of managing the expectations of shoppers across various channels affect sales. According to Akturk, Ketzenberg and Heim (2018) and Reguraman and Subbiah (2019), implementing omnichannel retailing information systems is challenging due to the complexity of integrating these systems and the high cost. Omnichannel integration is key to addressing retailing challenges by creating a seamless and consistent customer experience across multiple sales channels. It enhances retail performance by improving sales conversions, enabling cross-selling, increasing customer satisfaction, and building stronger brand engagement (Nguyen, 2021). Few research studies have been conducted on retail performance, as most have been conducted from a Western perspective and the viewpoint of the customers (Chen, Su, Lin, Xu, & Zheng, 2022; Gao & Huang, 2021; Lazaris, Sarantopoulos & Doukidis, 2021). The study was contextualized from the Kenyan context and utilized performance dimensions using a descriptive and explanatory research design

Literature Review

Omnichannel integration, a construct under omnichannel retailing, refers to how well a retailer combines activities and processes in all channels in offering a seamless shopping experience to the customers (Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020; Li & Gong, 2022; Zhang, Wang & He, 2018). The tenets of channel integration are information technology infrastructure coupled with finance and human resources that necessitate the creation of a seamless experience, behavioural responses, and retailer performance (Thaichon, Quach & Nguyen, 2023). This is accomplished through the alignment of retailers' objectives with channel design in delivering benefits to the retailer and its customers (Nguyen, 2021).

Omnichannel integration is regarded as the foundation of an effective omnichannel retailing strategy (Gao and Huang, 2021) and an important enabler of omnichannel retailing performance (Shen, Li & Wang, 2018). It affects firm sales growth through increased sales conversion, cross-selling of products, customer satisfaction, brand engagement and confidence in purchasing (Nguyen, 2021; Cao & Li, 2015). Lee et al. (2019) posit that channel integration enhances customers' perception of omnichannel service quality, reducing their perceived risk, which leads to increased desire to search, purchase and pay. According to Le and Nguyen-Le (2020), Nguyen

(2021) and Shen et al. (2018), the level of shopping experience and customer satisfaction depend on channel integration quality (Le & Nguyen-Le, 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Shen et al., 2018).

Jiang, Xu and Bao (2015) conceptualized channel integration into three constructs, which are channel access, information, and customer service integration. Zhang, Ren and He (2015) conceptualized omnichannel integration constructs as the integration of product, price, promotion, customer service, fulfilment of order, information, transaction and access. Nguyen (2021) studied channel integration and patronage intention and utilized integration interactions and omnichannel service configuration constructs. Li and Gong (2022) conceptualized omnichannel integration with three dimensions: relational, informational and transactional integration. Shi et al. (2020) used constructs of connectivity, flexibility, personalization integration, and consistency. The study conceptualized omnichannel integration as content, process and customer service consistency as adopted by (Jiang et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2021; Shen et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2020).

The extent of consistency in omnichannel retailing affects consumers' product quality perception, store trust and ability to channel switch (Gao & Huang, 2021). Enhancement of content and process consistency generates seamless customer experience, and channel synergies that increase the value perception, saving cost and time and reducing channel perceptual differences (Chen et al., 2022). The studies on omnichannel integration have been conducted using different variables in omnichannel retailing. Nguyen (2021) examined customer patronage and experience and found channel integration significantly improves the customer shopping experience in omnichannel retailing; Zhang et al. (2018) examined consumer responses and found that omnichannel integration promotes consumer empowerment, which boosts consumer satisfaction, trust, and increased consumer intentions to patronage; Li and Gong (2022) studied omnichannel integration in perceived fluency and flow found that Customer engagement was facilitated by perceived flow that was positively correlated with transactional and relational integration variables. Gao and Huang (2021) examined the loyalty of customers; the results indicated that omnichannel integration quality positively impacted receptiveness to the relationship program and engagement of customers, which had an overall impact on customer loyalty.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Venkatesh, Morris and Davis in 2003 developed the theory, which comprises four components: social influence, enabling condition, performance and effort expectancy (Misra, Mahajan & Singh, 2020). The model integrates key components from previously established theories related to technology acceptance and consumer behaviour (Gunasinghe, Hamid &

Azam, 2020). UTAUT is a widely used model that effectively measures users' adoption and utilization of new technologies in individual and organizational settings (Sultana, Chowdhury and Hague, 2023). The model covers a wide range of applications, integrations, and extensions (Erjavec & Manfred, 2022). This model provides theoretical context in explaining the adoption of omnichannel retailing, which is supported by information technology, and the interaction between retailers and customers (Singla, Tomas-Aguilar & Salazar-Gonzales, 2022). The theory is considered a robust model to explain the acceptance of new technology by users (Bellet & Banet, 2023). Thus, the usage and customer acceptance of omnichannel retailing have an impact on the performance of omnichannel retailers. The exogenous constructs of the theory are set as major antecedents of omnichannel retailing acceptance (Nguyen & Borusiak, 2021). The usage and adoption of new technology depend on the user's intentions and exogenous constructs (Bellet & Banet, 2023).

Performance expectancy within the framework of omnichannel retailing is customers' perceptions of the benefits of using mobile apps, online channels and physical channels along their shopping journey. Retailers can leverage technology to ensure seamless integration across channels, which optimizes customers' shopping experience. The performance expectancy of the model helps to illustrate how the system component of omnichannel retailing improves the efficiency of customers, leading to increased purchases and sales (Singh, Kumar & Mahlawat, 2023). Performance expectancy positively influences the usage of omnichannel retailing platforms (Nguyen & Borusiak, 2021). The effort expectancy component of the UTAUT model can be contextualized in omnichannel retailing as customer perception of ease and convenience (Singh et al., 2023). This necessitates the development of an integrated and user-friendly omnichannel retailing system that guarantees seamless operation across all channels. Facilitating conditions imply the resources and technical support that enable shoppers to use omnichannel retailing. The social influence component illustrates how peer pressure and social proof shape attitudes and behaviour about omnichannel retailing (Nguyen & Borusiak, 2021).

Resource based view Theory (RBV)

The theory was developed by Wernerfelt in 1984. It posits that organizations are collections of resources that are tangible and intangible assets (D'Oria, Crook & Wright, 2021). According to the theory, superior financial performance is linked to organizational resources and capabilities. According to Ferreira and Ferreira (2024), the theory offers a framework for achieving better performance by taking into account three essential components: firm resources, competitive advantage, and sustainable

competitive advantage. Moderno, Braz, and Nascimento (2024) show how a company can improve resource bundle management and show a strong correlation between information systems capabilities, decision-making, and performance. The theory emphasizes that firms with efficient resource utilization are more likely to attain improved performance. This theory provides a theoretical foundation for examining performance in an omnichannel retailing context. It describes how a firm can achieve and maintain firm performance, making it the most suitable for anchoring firm performance (Helfat et al., 2023). The relationship between organizational capabilities and performance is widely understood through the application of the RBV theory (Dutta, Narashiman & Nath, 2014). However, the critics of the theory argue that the main focus is on internal factors, and inadequacy in explaining the causality effects of resources and performance (D’Oria et al., 2021; Ferreira & Ferreira, 2024).

Omnichannel Integration and Firm Performance

Lazaris et al. (2021) investigated omnichannel integration effects. The study intended to establish how the integration of retail channels impacts performance outcomes in the UK. The study conducted laboratory and experimental tests on 223 mechanical Turk workers who were pretending to buy a 65-inch smart TV model from three top brands. According to the results, omnichannel integration was mediated by low experience that depends on the perception of channel complementarity by consumers. According to the study, an increase in omnichannel integration leads to channel synergies with favourable effects on loyalty intention and customer satisfaction. This study shows that examining flow experiences in physical and online stores within an omnichannel retail environment can improve understanding and knowledge of consumer behaviour. The study had a methodological gap in conducting experiments and laboratory studies only with expensive electronic products. The current study used various product categories available in different stores. They used both explanatory and descriptive research designs to overcome the inherent limitations of laboratory and experimental design, of the artificiality of a controlled environment.

Gao and Huang (2021) examined channel integration quality. The aim was to determine the effects of channel integration on the loyalty of customers through engagement of customers and receptiveness to relationship programs. The other objective was to validate the existence of the relationship in omnichannel retailing between receptiveness to relationship programs and customer engagement. The questionnaires were used in data collection, and 378 respondents used Hema’s offline and online platforms in China. The PLS-SEM model was utilized in assessing the structural model. The results indicated that omnichannel integration quality positively impacted

receptiveness to relationship programs and engagement of customers, which had an overall impact on customer loyalty. The study was limited to fresh food supermarkets in China, which would restrict generalization to other product categories, retail formats and nations. This study used different product categories in the performance measurement of retail stores.

Nguyen (2021) examined channel integration quality in Vietnam. The objective was to examine channel integration effects on customer experience and intentions to patronage. The researcher employed a sample size of 351 participants from four major omnichannel retailers in Vietnam. The hypothesis testing was done using the PLS-SEM model. The research findings revealed that the quality of channel integration dimensions contributed greatly towards the customer shopping experience. The content consistency dimension had the greatest impact on customer service. These findings indicated that channel selection freedom and content delivery consistency across all channels are essential for optimizing omnichannel retailing. The study had a contextual gap and limited generalizability as it focused on Vietnam. The study utilized a quantitative survey method with self-administered questionnaires. To overcome the methodological gap, qualitative research was used where questionnaires were explained before administering them to the respondents. The study measured the retail performance from the managers' perspective.

Li and Gong (2022) studied omnichannel integration in perceived fluency and flow. The objective was to investigate how omnichannel integration boosts customer engagement through perception enhancement of flow and fluency during the customer purchasing journey. The sample of 227 was collected from online survey data through a crowdsourcing platform. The study used 25 famous brands in the apparel and technology sectors that provide omnichannel services. The hypotheses were tested using the PLS-SEM model. The study conceptualized omnichannel integration into three levels: transactional, informational and relational integration. The findings indicate that all these levels positively influenced perceived fluency, which in turn generated customer engagement in terms of purchase, repurchase, referral and knowledge in omnichannel retailing. Customer engagement was facilitated by perceived flow that was positively correlated with transactional and relational integration variables. However, there was no significant relation between informational integration and the relationship between perceived flow and informational integration; this may be explained by the mediation effects of perceived fluency. The study's limitation of using famous brands may have led to low construct variance due to respondents' tendency to bias in scoring due to high brand affinity for omnichannel brands. This research overcame the conceptual gap by using different categories of retail stores with various brands.

Zhang et al. (2018) examined the relationship between consumer responses and omnichannel integration. The focus was to analyze the responses of consumers by incorporating the empowerment of consumers as a mediator in omnichannel integration. The study used the stimulus-organism-response framework. A survey was done on 12 major omnichannel retailers in Beijing and Tianjin, China and a sample of 155 was used. The study used the PLS-SEM method in testing the hypothesis, and the model supported all proposed hypotheses. The study revealed that omnichannel integration promotes consumer empowerment, which boosts consumer satisfaction, trust, and increases consumer intentions to patronage. The study had limited generalizability as it focused on omnichannel stores in China dealing with consumer electronic products, which significantly influence omnichannel behaviour. Finally, culture influences omnichannel retailing behaviour, as China exhibits a unique culture from other nations; thus, the generalizability of our research findings would be challenging. To overcome the conceptual gap of the study, the current research used various theories, like the resource-based view, and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) instead of the stimulus-organism response framework. The limitation of using consumer perception was overcome by the use of retail managers in demonstrating the channel integration on firm performance.

Research Methodology

The study blended descriptive and explanatory research to enhance the validity by allowing the triangulation of the results designs as recommended. According to Saunders et al. (2009), descriptive research provides reliable relationships between research variables without inferring causality (Saunders et al., 2009). The explanatory research design was utilized to explain research variables and analyze their causal relationships, making it an ideal method for testing cause-and-effect relationships (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The study focused on all 22 large-scale retail stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya, using a census survey. These stores were categorized into hypermarkets, food retail, and speciality stores. Data was collected from the heads of departments in finance, marketing, information technology, and operations, who were specifically chosen for their in-depth knowledge of omnichannel integration and performance.

The research questionnaire underwent a reliability and validity test before the collection of data. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with Varimax rotation was undertaken to measure the construct's level of validity to be considered in the final variables model. Any variables loaded above 0.40 were considered for further analysis, and those below 0.40 were dropped from the model as they were determined to lack validity (Taherdoost, 2016). The validity of the indicators informing each variable was measured using CFA.

Omnichannel integration variable: 70.1% of the variability in channel integration is explained by three indicators. These indicators include integrated mobile, online and physical channels (43.5%); improved operational efficiency by integrating various channels (14.3%); and consistent product information across channels (12.3%). The remaining variability is explained by three factors: processes to ensure customer service consistency across channels (10.7%); transition between physical store visits and online interactions to ensure a unified experience (9.3%); and consistent pricing information across channels (9.9%). The principal component analysis (PCA) for all these factors loaded was observed to be higher than 0.40 (PCA ranges from 0.819 to 0.648), with no significant cross-loading reported.

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by Cronbach's Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.7 or more was considered adequate (Hair, Anderson and Black, 2012). The Cronbach alpha of the variables of omnichannel Integration ($\alpha = 0.874$). The pilot study was conducted before actual data collection. The research instruments for data collection were distributed to the departmental heads in finance, marketing, operations, and information technology through drop-and-pick and online distribution. Before the data collection procedure, the researcher explained the study objective and that the data collection procedure complied with ethical guidelines. The data was screened post-collection to ensure that the responses were accurately coded. To ensure accurate results and eliminate errors from the initial data collection, the survey was subjected to data coding, cleaning, editing, and imputation (Hair, Black, and Anderson, 2014). The study interpreted and analyzed the data gathered using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Research Findings and Discussion

The total response rate realized was 94.3% after acquiring 83 responses out of the 88 responses from the studied retail stores. The stratification was in the three levels of speciality stores, with the highest response rate of 96.9%; the hypermarkets indicated a 94.4% response rate and food retail stores with a 90% response rate. The study was therefore able to realize an adequate response rate from three strata. The survey included 53% females and 47% males, with the majority aged 20-30 years (47.0%). Education levels varied, with 67.5% having a bachelor's degree, 31.3% having a diploma, and 1.2% having a certificate. Most respondents worked in large-scale retail stores, with a majority having over 15 years of experience. The study found that large-scale retail stores use both physical and online channels, with 83.1% using third-party mobile apps. In-store technology is widely used, including point-of-sale systems, inventory management systems, payment gateways, order management systems, customer relationship management systems, and supply chain and logistics platforms.

To measure the effect of omnichannel integration, retail managers were presented with a list of statements on integration constructs. The statements were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = moderately agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The mean scores and standard deviation were used in analyzing the response.

Table 1: Omnichannel Integration

Statements	N	Mean	S.D.
The retail store has integrated mobile, online and physical channels	83	4.12	.705
The retail store has improved operational efficiency by integrating various channels	83	4.27	.734
The retail store has processes to ensures customer service consistency across channels	83	4.34	.630
The retail store manages transition between physical store visits and online interactions to ensure a unified experience	83	4.29	.725
The retail store maintains consistent product information across channels	83	4.36	.655
The retail store provides consistent pricing information across channels	83	4.64	.554
Aggregate Mean score & Standard deviation	83	4.335	.488

The assessment of the mean aggregate of 4.335 confirmed that most managers agreed to the omnichannel integration constructs. The mean assessment indicates a high adoption of omnichannel integration in large-scale retail stores. The aggregate standard deviation of 0.488 reveals minimal deviation from the mean, implying a low variation in the retail managers' observations. These findings indicated that a majority of the studied stores have adopted omnichannel integration.

Correlation Analysis

In the determination of the degree and direction of the relationship between the variables, the study employed correlation analysis, as suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2013). Schober, Boer and Schwarte (2018) stated that a correlation between 0.9 and 1 is very strong, 0.7 to 0.89 is strong, and 0.4 to 0.69 is moderate. The findings revealed moderate positive correlation coefficients that are all statistically significant between retail stores' performance and omnichannel integration ($r=.699$; $p=.00$). This reveals the presence of a linear relationship between omnichannel integration and the performance of large-scale retail stores.

Hypothesis Testing

The assumption of this study was that the performance of large-scale retail stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya, was significantly impacted by omnichannel integration. The multiple regression analysis examined the hypothesis through the use of adjusted R² and P-values.

Test of Direct Relationship

The study analyzed the impact of omnichannel retailing on the performance of large-scale retail stores through an OLS regression, as demonstrated in the table below. The findings are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Empirical Model Summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.569	.324	.298	.55572	2.067

The results of the study showed a positive correlation between the performance of large-scale retail stores and omnichannel retailing, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.569. The three components of omnichannel retailing, i.e., omnichannel integration, omnichannel order fulfilment, and omnichannel services configuration, account for 29.8% of the variation in the performance of large-scale retail outlets, according to the coefficient of determination (adjusted R² = .298).

Table 3: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11.696	3	3.899	12.625	.000 ^b
Residual	24.397	79	.309		
Total	36.094	82			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Large Scale Retail Stores
b. Predictors: (Constant)

At a 95% confidence level, the results in Table 3 show that the F statistic value = 12.625 (P = 0.000), is a good fit for predicting the relationship between the performance of large-scale retail stores and omnichannel integration. This supports omnichannel integration capacity to significantly affect the performance of the retail stores under study, as indicated by the goodness of fit model.

Table 4: Empirical Model Coefficients

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower	Upper
(Constant)	-.221	.632		-.350	.727	-1.479	1.037
Omnichannel Integration(OCI)	.772	.221	.568	3.498	.001	.333	1.211

a. *Dependent Variable: Performance of Large Scale Retail Stores(FP)*

The regression model demonstrated in Table 4 indicates that omnichannel integration has ($\beta = 0.772$; $p = 0.001$).

This suggests that for every one-unit increase in omnichannel integration, the performance of the large-scale retail stores is expected to increase by 0.772 units, assuming all else is constant. The p-value (0.001) associated with the t-test is less than 0.05; this result is statistically significant, implying that omnichannel integration has a positive effect on performance. The intercept of the regression equation (constant = -0.221) represents the estimated value of performance (FP) when OCI = 0. However, this value is not statistically significant ($p = 0.727$). Standardized Coefficient (Beta) for omnichannel integration at 0.568, which indicates a moderately strong positive effect. The research rejected the null hypothesis: *H0: Omnichannel integration has no significant effects on the performance of large-scale retail stores in Nairobi City County, Kenya*. Thus, confirming the significant effect of omnichannel integration on the performance of large-scale retail stores.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of omnichannel integration on the performance of large-scale retail stores. In the operationalization of the variable, content, process and customer service consistency were used. The study rejected the null hypothesis, concluding that omnichannel integration has a significant effect on the performance of large-scale retail stores. The findings are consistent with studies of Le & Nguyen-Le, (2020) and Li & Gong (2022), which state that omnichannel integration is key to a seamless shopping experience and positively influences the retail stores' performance. The findings highlight the importance of omnichannel integration in enhancing customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and overall performance. This study highlights policy impact on decision-making in the retail sector, emphasizing the role of large-scale stores' performance in economic development. The findings would help policymakers in evaluating the value of omnichannel integration in performance enhancement. From the

findings, retail store management should leverage omnichannel integration and continuously invest in retailing infrastructure. The large-scale retail managers emphasized that coordinated and convenient channels significantly improved customer experience through personalization and accessibility, often enabled by mobile apps. Moreover, cost reduction and productivity gains were cited as key outcomes of integrating multiple retail functions into unified platforms. Retail technology emerged as a critical enabler, facilitating flexibility, adaptability, and digital transformation. Finally, omnichannel integration offers retailers a competitive and sustainable solution in a dynamic retail environment.

Recommendations for Further Research

The researchers recommend that future studies on omnichannel retailing include other medium-scale retail stores in Kenya, as the current study focused only on large-scale retailers. Expanding the geographical scope to encompass other counties in Kenya could provide comparative insights and enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, similar research could be undertaken in other sectors, like banking, where omnichannel integration is evolving. The study recommends more studies on other omnichannel integration constructs and exploring their distinct contributions to retail performance and customer satisfaction.

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Gamification, Scaffolding and Integrative Background: Toward an Inclusive Education Model

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Abstract

This article investigates the theoretical interconnections among gamification, Bruner's concept of scaffolding, and the Italian pedagogical method of the integrative background, examining their potential in fostering personalized and inclusive education. Based on a critical synthesis of theoretical and empirical contributions from recent literature, the study highlights how the convergence of these methodologies can enhance motivation, cognitive development, and active engagement in diverse educational settings. Gamification is analyzed as a tool that fosters engagement and persistence through playful learning dynamics, acting as motivational scaffolding. Scaffolding, as conceptualized by Bruner and enriched by Vygotsky's contributions, is presented as a flexible support process that adapts to students' evolving cognitive and emotional needs. The integrative background, *sfondo integratore*, as developed by Canevaro and Zanelli, is presented as a contextualized methodology that fosters shared meaning-making and reduces barriers to learning and creates inclusive learning environments. Based on these analyses, the paper proposes a theoretical model that integrates gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background into a coherent educational framework. This model aims to support inclusive practices by promoting meaningful, differentiated learning pathways and improving participation and academic achievement for all learners. The study offers methodological insights for the design of inclusive teaching practices and reflects on the transformative potential of integrating

game-based, scaffolded, and narrative-driven learning strategies across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: Gamification, Scaffolding, Integrative background, Inclusive education, Personalized learning

Introduction

Inclusive education seeks to guarantee equal learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. As educational contexts become increasingly diverse, there is a growing need for methodologies that not only engage learners but also support them according to their specific cognitive and emotional profiles. Within this context, gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background method emerge as highly promising approaches.

Jerome Bruner's scaffolding (1976) emphasizes the role of guided support in enabling learners to achieve objectives that they could not reach independently. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underpins this notion, highlighting the critical role of more knowledgeable others in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978, 1987).

Gamification, defined as the application of game elements in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011), has gained traction for its capacity to enhance motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, the integrative background, formulated within Italian institutional pedagogy by Canevaro and Zanelli (1986; 1988), utilizes narrative frameworks to create emotionally resonant learning environments that facilitate inclusive education.

Recent studies (Della Volpe, 2024) suggest that an integrated application of these methodologies could foster both academic success and emotional well-being in learners with special needs.

This article investigates the theoretical interconnections among these three approaches - gamification, Bruner's scaffolding, and the integrative background - emphasizing their combined potential to support inclusive education. It further aims to identify effective and transferable instructional practices that foster personalized learning and equitable participation, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) across diverse educational settings.

Methods

Given the increasing academic and pedagogical interest in inclusive education and in the transformative potential of innovative teaching methodologies, this study adopted a qualitative and theoretical-critical research approach. The methodology is grounded in a systematic literature review and a conceptual analysis of three pedagogical approaches:

gamification, Bruner's scaffolding, and the Italian institutional pedagogy framework known as the integrative background. The research aims to explore the theoretical interconnections among these approaches and to identify transferable instructional strategies capable of supporting personalized and inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN).

The literature review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. A four-phase methodological process was followed: planning the review, conducting comprehensive database searches, analyzing the selected literature, and synthesizing the findings. The bibliographic search focused on peer-reviewed publications dated from 2010 to 2024. The academic databases Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, and IEEE Xplore were consulted to ensure the inclusion of highly relevant and recent contributions. The search terms combined keywords such as "gamification," "Bruner scaffolding," "integrative background," "inclusive education," "personalized learning," and "special educational needs."

Inclusion criteria for the literature selection required that sources: (1) explicitly address at least one of the three focal methodologies; (2) focus on inclusive education practices or the inclusion of students with SEN; and (3) demonstrate methodological rigor, whether theoretical or empirical. Exclusion criteria included articles lacking methodological clarity, those unrelated to the educational field, and those not addressing inclusivity. After the initial screening process and abstract review, a final sample of 142 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters was selected for full-text analysis.

The selected publications were examined using thematic coding to identify core pedagogical elements, theoretical synergies, and practical applications relevant to inclusive teaching. Coding categories emerged both deductively from the research questions and inductively from recurring themes in the literature. This dual coding process allowed for a robust cross-comparison of how gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background converge in support of inclusive practices. Articles were grouped according to key themes such as motivation and engagement, support for cognitive development, emotional scaffolding, use of narrative structures, and implementation in diverse classroom settings.

Particular attention was given to studies documenting the application of gamification techniques in inclusive classrooms. These contributions often highlight the use of game mechanics - such as point systems, badges, leaderboards, and adaptive challenges - as motivational tools that enhance student engagement and autonomy. When linked to user-centered design principles and supported by emerging technologies (e.g., virtual reality, artificial intelligence, educational robotics), gamification strategies

demonstrate significant promise in addressing the unique needs of SEN learners.

Additionally, empirical and conceptual studies on Bruner's scaffolding were reviewed to understand its contemporary interpretations and implementations. The literature illustrates how scaffolding has evolved beyond a purely cognitive construct to include emotional and metacognitive dimensions. The reviewed works consistently demonstrate the value of scaffolding in fostering student autonomy, particularly through gradual withdrawal of support as learners gain competence. These findings align with the inclusive education imperative of promoting self-regulated learning in heterogeneous classrooms.

The integrative background (*sfondo integratore*), developed by Canevaro and Zanelli within the Italian pedagogical tradition, emerged in the review as a powerful mechanism for creating emotionally resonant and contextually meaningful learning environments. Literature on the integrative background emphasizes the creation of shared class narratives that connect academic content to students' lived experiences. Such an approach fosters inclusion by allowing diverse learners to recognize themselves within the learning process and by reducing psychological and cultural barriers.

Cross-comparative analysis of the literature revealed multiple points of theoretical convergence. For instance, gamification's narrative and experiential dimensions resonate with the story-based nature of the integrative background, while the structure of reward-based learning aligns well with the progressive support mechanisms inherent in scaffolding. Furthermore, all three methodologies center the learner's active role in the educational process and emphasize flexibility, adaptability, and engagement - three pillars of inclusive pedagogy.

Methodologically, the review also incorporated citation analysis to identify influential authors, institutions, and publication trends within the research domain. Bibliometric indicators from Scopus and Web of Science were used to track the evolution of scholarship on each approach, identify interdisciplinary collaborations, and assess the geographical distribution of research outputs.

While no statistical or experimental data analysis was employed due to the qualitative nature of the study, the systematic and structured methodology enabled a deep conceptual synthesis. This conceptual mapping laid the groundwork for the proposed integrative model of inclusive education, which combines gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background into a unified framework.

The methodological design of this study not only allowed for the identification of effective inclusive teaching practices but also offered a meta-reflection on the epistemological underpinnings of each approach. This

included considerations of constructivism, social learning theory, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and narrative pedagogy. Each of these theoretical orientations contributes to understanding why and how the three methodologies under study align with the goals of inclusive education.

Ultimately, this methodological process yielded a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical affordances of gamification, scaffolding, and integrative background approaches. It also facilitated the identification of gaps in the current research landscape, such as the scarcity of longitudinal studies that measure the long-term impact of these methodologies on inclusion outcomes. Future empirical research is needed to further validate and refine the theoretical model proposed here, ideally through mixed-method or action-research designs conducted in real-world classroom contexts.

In summary, the methods employed in this study support the dual aims of answering the proposed research questions: (1) to map the theoretical interconnections among the three pedagogical approaches, and (2) to extract effective, transferable instructional practices for inclusive and personalized learning. The conceptual framework generated through this systematic and thematic review provides a foundation for the development of innovative teaching models that are both inclusive and responsive to the complex realities of contemporary classrooms.

To enhance transparency and provide an overview of the review process, Table 1 summarizes the key conceptual phases, their focus, and resulting contributions.

Table 1. Conceptual phases of the literature-based review

Phase	Description	Outcome
Conceptual Framing	Identification of the three core constructs: gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background, within the context of inclusive education.	Defined theoretical pillars guiding the review.
Source Selection	Manual selection of 22 relevant sources based on theoretical significance, methodological clarity, and relevance to inclusive practices (2010–2024).	A curated, high-quality bibliographic corpus.
Thematic Analysis	Thematic reading and categorization of literature focusing on key pedagogical functions, such as engagement, differentiation, and emotional support.	Identification of recurring educational themes across all three methodologies.
Comparative Synthesis	Analysis of conceptual overlaps and complementarities among the three approaches, highlighting their contribution to inclusive education when integrated.	Triadic framework linking motivation, scaffolding, and narrative meaning-making.
Model Formulation	The construction of a theoretical model integrating the three methodologies, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.	A conceptual triangle of inclusive pedagogy supporting personalized and equitable learning.

Results

The results of this study respond to the two central research questions: (1) identifying the theoretical interconnections among gamification, Bruner's scaffolding, and the integrative background, and their potential to support inclusive education; and (2) determining effective and transferable instructional practices that promote personalized learning and the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN) across diverse educational settings.

Theoretical Interconnections

The systematic review highlighted strong conceptual and practical synergies among the three pedagogical approaches under investigation. Gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background - though initially distinct - demonstrate converging educational aims and complementary mechanisms when applied in inclusive contexts.

Gamification emerged from the literature as a motivational tool with significant potential to function as a form of emotional and cognitive scaffolding. Through the integration of game elements such as points, levels, digital badges, adaptive feedback, and social collaboration, gamification supports students' engagement and perseverance (Kiryakova *et al.*, 2014; Daineko *et al.*, 2023; Jadán-Guerrero *et al.*, 2023; Baumuratova, *et al.*, 2024). Della Volpe (2024) notes that gamification offers emotionally rich, context-sensitive environments that act as scaffolding devices. These environments are particularly effective for students with special educational needs, as they help sustain attention and boost self-efficacy through positive reinforcement and repetition.

Bruner's concept of scaffolding remains foundational in inclusive education research. Originating from Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), scaffolding refers to structured pedagogical support that is gradually withdrawn as the learner becomes more autonomous. Bruner further develops the theoretical nuance in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986). This mechanism aligns closely with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) - the space where learners perform tasks with guidance that they could not yet accomplish independently (Wells, 1999; Moll, 1990). The literature consistently confirms that such contingent, fading support enhances teachers' ability to respond flexibly to students' cognitive and emotional readiness, making it especially effective in inclusive, diverse classroom environments (Tudge, 1992).

The integrative background, as originally conceptualized by Canevaro, Lippi, and Zanelli (1988), represents a pedagogical framework that adds a critical narrative and emotional dimension to inclusive education. It supports the construction of meaningful learning by anchoring instruction in students'

lived experiences, cultural contexts, and individual identities. This approach promotes a learning environment in which all students - particularly those with special educational needs - can see themselves reflected in the educational process, fostering both cognitive engagement and emotional belonging. Dainese (2019) further develops the theoretical foundations of the integrative background, emphasizing its role as a dynamic and inclusive scaffolding structure that interweaves personal stories, collective memory, and the symbolic dimension of the classroom. In this sense, the integrative background functions both as an organizational device and a semantic framework, capable of reducing educational barriers and enhancing participation through shared, emotionally resonant narratives. According to studies such as those published in *La Nouvelle Revue de l'Adaptation et de la Scolarisation* (Mäkinen, M., & Mäkinen, E., 2011), this methodology fosters a collective narrative that reinforces inclusion by allowing students to feel recognized and emotionally secure within the classroom space

The convergence of these three approaches becomes most evident when examined through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Each strategy contributes a unique layer: gamification provides engagement and motivation; scaffolding structures the learning process; and the integrative background embeds knowledge in emotionally relevant contexts. Della Volpe (2024) explicitly connects scenario-based learning with both the UDL framework and the principles of the integrative background, illustrating how shared narratives serve as containers for personalized scaffolding and motivational design. These scenarios mirror students' lived experiences, enabling meaningful participation and reducing learning barriers (Della Volpe, 2024).

Effective and Transferable Practices

The review also identified a wide range of practical strategies that combine these methodologies in support of inclusive education. One recurring theme is the use of educational digital games in classrooms with SEN learners. These games offer structured progression, immediate feedback, and safe spaces for trial and error - aligning closely with the principles of scaffolding (Chen & Law, 2016; Hou & Keng, 2021). By embedding narrative elements from the integrative background, these digital environments become emotionally resonant, reinforcing memory, motivation, and social belonging (Barzilai & Blau, 2014).

For example, games that incorporate student-generated stories or culturally relevant themes provide both cognitive and affective scaffolding. These activities allow learners to practice autonomy while remaining anchored to a familiar and meaningful context. The integration of game mechanics such as badges, digital rewards, or progress dashboards promotes self-awareness

and metacognition - key aspects of inclusive and personalized learning (Deterding et al., 2011).

Another effective practice includes collaborative learning tasks supported by gamified feedback systems. When paired with well-designed scaffolding - such as prompting questions, structured peer support, and gradual task difficulty - these experiences foster both inclusion and academic resilience. The literature also supports differentiated instruction models that leverage scaffolding techniques and narrative context to adjust complexity levels without excluding learners with specific challenges.

Importantly, the integrative background provides a framework for culturally sustaining pedagogy, emphasizing the role of school as a place of shared meaning-making. By inviting students to bring their personal narratives into the classroom, educators foster a sense of identity and relevance. This, in turn, reduces psychological barriers to participation, especially for learners from marginalized or diverse backgrounds (Canevaro et al., 1988).

In recent years, studies have documented the application of integrative background techniques in digital platforms, particularly through scenario-based gamified learning. These environments use branching narratives, role-playing elements, and collaborative missions to promote inclusion and personalize learning trajectories. Scenario-based learning tools, when informed by UDL and scaffolded design, enable educators to create differentiated pathways that respect each learner's pace and interests.

These findings align with those of Liasidou (2015), who argues that inclusive pedagogies must be flexible, relational, and responsive to learners' identities and needs. Moreover, gamified practices are increasingly supported by technologies such as educational robotics and virtual reality, which can be tailored to accommodate different sensory, cognitive, and motor needs. These innovations extend the scaffolding metaphor into multimodal spaces, allowing learners to engage through various channels.

The integrative model proposed in this study synthesizes these insights by positioning gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background as overlapping supports in a triadic framework. Gamification serves as the entry point for engagement, scaffolds the learner's journey, and the integrative background ensures emotional and cultural connection. Together, these approaches create an inclusive ecosystem where students with SEN can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Cross-study comparisons further reveal the adaptability of this model across educational contexts. Whether in primary schools, special education programs, or mainstream inclusive settings, the integration of these methods proves to be both effective and flexible. However, the review also indicates a lack of longitudinal data on the sustained impact of these strategies. Future research should therefore include longitudinal designs to assess how

integrated pedagogical models influence long-term academic outcomes, social integration, and learner autonomy.

In conclusion, the results of this study affirm that gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background are theoretically and practically compatible in fostering inclusive and personalized education. Their intersection offers a powerful strategy set to address the diverse needs of learners in real-world educational contexts. By centering the student experience, acknowledging cognitive and emotional diversity, and providing adaptive learning pathways, this triadic model represents a significant contribution to the field of inclusive pedagogy.

Discussion

The findings of this review suggest that gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background are not isolated didactic strategies but rather complementary methodologies that - when employed in an integrated manner - can powerfully support inclusive and personalized education. Each of the three approaches offers unique but synergistic contributions to the creation of engaging, differentiated, and emotionally resonant learning environments. Together, they construct a flexible pedagogical framework adaptable to the diverse needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN).

Gamification acts as an emotional and motivational bridge, scaffolding supports cognitive and metacognitive development, and integrative backgrounds provide a cultural and narrative framework for learning. Together, they allow educators to tailor instruction to the individual profiles of learners, promoting engagement, autonomy, and deep understanding.

The integration of these three methodologies aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which emphasizes flexibility, student agency, and multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. In the proposed model, each approach fulfills a UDL function:

Gamification → Enhances engagement and motivation
Scaffolding → Structures cognitive development and gradual autonomy
Integrative background → Anchors learning in emotional and cultural meaning

This triadic configuration supports personalized learning pathways, allowing students to advance at their own pace while engaging with content in ways that are emotionally relevant and cognitively accessible.

Below is a conceptual diagram summarizing the central contribution of this article:

The Inclusive Pedagogical Triangle



Figure 1. The Inclusive Pedagogical Triangle: Interactions among Gamification, Scaffolding, and Integrative Background

Such integration also encourages inclusive instructional design, where tasks are not only accessible but also personally meaningful. For instance, a gamified math lesson based on a culturally familiar story - with adaptive difficulty and real-time scaffolding - can support both struggling and advanced learners. This promotes individual growth without disrupting classroom cohesion.

Limitations of the current research include the relatively small number of empirical studies that explicitly combine all three methodologies. Moreover, successful implementation demands significant teacher training and curricular flexibility, which may not be uniformly available.

Nonetheless, these approaches align strongly with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and offer promising avenues for reducing educational barriers and improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

This triangle represents how the three approaches synergize to support personalized learning. At the center lies the goal of inclusive education, achieved through the interplay of motivational engagement (gamification), structured learning support (scaffolding), and emotional-cultural resonance (integrative background).

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that significant theoretical and methodological synergies exist among gamification, scaffolding, and the integrative background, and that these can be meaningfully integrated to construct a coherent and inclusive pedagogical model. Rather than operating in isolation, these three approaches offer complementary contributions that, when combined, create a robust framework capable of addressing the multifaceted needs of today's diverse classrooms.

Gamification, by promoting engagement through motivational mechanisms and emotional resonance, facilitates learner participation and persistence. Scaffolding ensures cognitive and metacognitive support through adaptable and gradually withdrawn guidance, enabling students to progress at their own pace toward autonomy. The integrative background adds a fundamental narrative and cultural dimension to learning, allowing students to see their identities reflected in the educational process and to connect more deeply with content.

Together, these methodologies form a triadic model that supports personalized learning and inclusive education, particularly for students with special educational needs (SEN). The model aligns well with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, reinforcing the idea that inclusive practices should be embedded from the outset in curriculum and instruction - not added as accommodations after the fact.

Despite the promising potential of this integrated approach, challenges remain. The lack of empirical research combining all three methodologies in a single educational intervention limits the generalizability of the model. Moreover, successful implementation requires systemic support, including teacher training, curricular flexibility, and access to appropriate technologies. These structural factors must be addressed to ensure that inclusive innovation becomes a sustainable reality in varied educational settings.

Future research should prioritize longitudinal and mixed-method studies to evaluate the effectiveness of this triadic model over time, especially in terms of academic achievement, social participation, and emotional well-being. In particular, further exploration is needed into how this model can be adapted to different age groups, subject areas, and cultural contexts. It is also crucial to develop teacher training frameworks and curricular tools that translate the theoretical model into daily classroom practices.

In conclusion, the integration of gamification, scaffolding, and an integrative background offers not only a conceptual contribution to inclusive pedagogy but also practical guidance for educators seeking to create learning environments that are accessible, equitable, and transformative. By centering learners' experiences, diversifying instructional strategies, and fostering deep engagement, this model paves the way for a more inclusive and meaningful future in education.

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Integrated Landscape Approaches: Definitions, Conceptualizations, Configurations, and Objectives through the Lens of Distributed Leadership Practices

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Abstract

While it is widely recognised that integrated landscape approaches are strategic management and leadership strategies used by project team leadership to design, develop, and implement projects within integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes, it is, however, less clear how they are defined, conceptualised, configured and operationalised to achieve desired outcomes. This study contributes to knowledge by providing a new configuration and conceptualisation of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes conceptual framework; the four principles of integrated landscape approaches - (1) Landscape Partnership, (2) Shared Understanding, (3) Vision and Planning, and (4) Taking Action - need to be seen as strategic management and leadership objectives of the activity systems. To achieve this, the relationship between the four principles of integrated landscape approaches - (1) Landscape Partnership, (2) Shared

Understanding, (3) Vision and Planning, and (4) Taking Action - as strategic management and leadership objectives is explored, drawing theoretical foundations from the four widely used distributed leadership practices: engaging, developing, enabling, and empowering. Data were collected through a survey instrument distributed to a sample of 420 participants, followed by statistical analysis using EFA and CFA to validate the model. The findings and implications of the results suggest the existence of a strong relationship between the integrated landscape approaches and the four practices of distributed leadership. It is revealed that (i) they draw from theoretical foundations; (ii) they operate independently of one another; (iii) they exhibit high levels of cross-loading; (iv) they can be integrated into a network of activity systems; (v) they require enactment in a specific order of primacy to function effectively; and (vi) they constitute a normative decision-making framework.

Keywords: Strategic Management and Leadership, International Development Financed Projects, Distributed Leadership Practices, Projects Leadership Teams, Integrated Transboundary Landscapes and Seascape, Integrated Landscape Approaches, Development Corridors

Introduction

The integrated landscape management approaches or principles have been widely adopted and applied as project team leadership's strategic management and leadership objectives for designing, developing, and implementing international development financed (IDF) projects especially those undertaken within integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes (Reed, Ickowitza, Chervierc, Djoudia, Moombea, Ros-Tonend, Yanoua, Yuliania, & Sunderlanda 2020), as well as development corridors (Gannon, Pettinotti, Conway, Surminski, Ndilanha, and Nyumba, 2022).

Two major streams have attempted to define, conceptualise, configure, and operationalise integrated transboundary landscape and seascape approaches. The first and initial attempts were made by Sayer, Sunderland, Ghazoul, Pfund, Sheil, Meijaard, Venter, Boedhihartono, Day, Garcia, Van Oosten, and Buck (2013), who proposed ten principles to support the implementation of a landscape approach by emphasising adaptive management, stakeholder involvement, and achieving multiple outcomes driven by multiple objectives. These scholars argued that these principles differ from more traditional sectoral and project-based approaches, suggesting that landscape approaches provide tools and concepts for allocating and managing land to achieve social, economic, and environmental objectives in areas where agriculture, mining, and other productive land uses compete with environmental and biodiversity goals.

The second stream emerged later and includes scholars such as Reed *et al.* (2020), who, from the ten principles, proposed five elements of integrated landscape management: (i) landscape partnership—developing a robust and stable coalition of organizations in the landscape across sectors and communities; (ii) shared understanding—building a common understanding of the state of the landscape, trends and forecasts, and one another’s interests; (iii) vision and planning—forging a long-term vision, strategy, evaluation protocols, and spatially targeted action plans; (iv) taking action—coordinating efforts, developing and financing an integrated landscape investment portfolio, and tracking and communicating implementation; and (v) learning and impact—measuring landscape impacts, capturing lessons learned, and using them to adjust the landscape strategy and action plan.

From these two streams, three main issues can be noted from both Reed *et al.* (2020) and Sayer *et al.* (2013). Firstly, these principles respond to increasing societal concerns about environment and development trade-offs, emphasizing the need to shift ways of thinking and perspectives from conservation-orientated views toward increasing integration of multiple development outcomes. Secondly, various constraints are identified, with institutional and governance concerns highlighted as the most severe obstacles to implementation. Thirdly, Reed *et al.* (2020, 2023) noted that while several attempts have been made to formulate guiding or design principles for integrated landscape approaches, less analysis has been devoted to uncovering the theoretical foundations of integrated transboundary landscapes and seascape approaches, how they are conceptualised, configured, and defined, the intended outcomes they aim to accomplish, and the means through which these outcomes are achieved.

To address these knowledge gaps, this paper focuses on the four principles of integrated landscape approaches: (1) landscape partnership, (2) shared understanding, (3) vision and planning, and (4) taking action. Drawing perspectives from integral theory (Graves, 1966), integrated transboundary landscape and seascape approaches are not new. The principles of integrated transboundary landscape approaches can be seen as value systems, ways of thinking, or worldviews (Beck & Cowan, 1995). Martinsuo (2020, p.1) suggests adopting and applying values or ways of thinking that promote coexistence and co-creation. Cheng and Fleischmann (2010, p.2) describe values as “guiding principles of what people consider important in life.”

The integral model proposed several levels describing how people think and behave (Nolan, Russell, Pickard, & Beasley, 2015). Merk, Schlotz, and Falter (2017) utilised the model to develop a Motivational Value Systems Questionnaire (MVSQ) that helps individuals identify their personal hierarchies of value systems and thus become more aware of what motivates and demotivates them in work-related contexts. According to an integral

model previously developed by Graves (1966, 1970, 1974), integrated value systems aim to: (i) develop common goals for a shared vision; (ii) develop shared values as mechanisms of cooperation; (iii) enhance the participation of multiple stakeholders (different actors) to achieve critical contributions with multiple integrated outcomes and; (iv) achieve sustainable outcomes through capacity development.

This study contributes to the literature on strategic management and leadership of international development financed (IDF) projects by conceptualising and theorising the dimensions for the integrated landscape approach conceptual framework, building on both Distributed Leadership (DL) and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). First, it expands on the perspective that the four principles of integrated transboundary landscape approaches bring shifts in ways of thinking and worldviews among multiple actors. Second, it explores the relationship between the four principles of integrated landscape approaches - (1) landscape partnership, (2) shared understanding, (3) vision and planning, and (4) taking action - as IDF project leadership team strategic management and leadership objectives (Alnoor & Wah, 2023; Altman et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Rivero et al., 2020; Vongswasdi et al., 2024). Third, it proposes the dimensions of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes conceptual framework, building on the theoretical constructs and dimension measures of the four distributed leadership practices (engaging leadership practice, developing leadership practice, enabling leadership practice, and empowering leadership practice) (Hairon & Goh, 2015; Mifsud, 2024), the leaders-Task-Context (LTC) from distributed leadership theory (Feng et al., 2017a; Spillane et al., 2006), as well as the six elements of activity systems described in the CHAT framework, which include: subject, tool, objectives, rules, community, and division of labor (Engeström, 2012).

In addition to contributing to the literature on project team leadership, the study also fits into the broader research agenda on theory integration (Reed et al., 2023). However, while this area has received extensive attention in terms of practices, it has received relatively little attention in terms of theory development and measurement scale development.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature and sets out the hypotheses; Section 3 describes the empirical strategy and data; Section 4 tests the hypotheses and presents the evidence; and Section 5 concludes.

Theoretical Review and Conceptual Framework

Both Distributed Leadership Theory (DL) and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) originate from theories of distributed cognition (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 2012; Spillane et al., 2001, 2004).

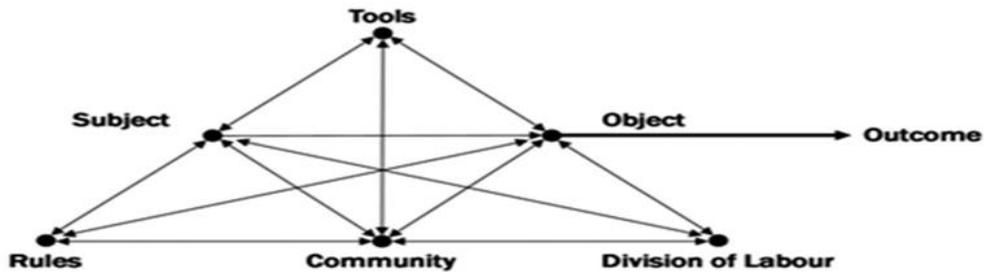
Theories of distributed cognition are theories of learning (Engeström, 2001, 2012). In the context of integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes, they offer theoretical and analytical frameworks that help in understanding the interactions of actors in their context (Evans et al., 2023; Margules et al., 2020). The key strength of theories of distributed cognition lies in their ability to facilitate the defining, conceptualising, configuring and operationalising of theory by introducing hybrid configuration as well as new conceptualisations, drawing dimension measures from other theories (Hamzeh, 2023; Hite et al., 2024).

Distributed Leadership Theory views leadership as distributed practices in the form of interactions among leaders, followers, and other actors in their context (Grønn, 2016; Spillane et al., 2004). Irvine (2021) argues that Distributed Leadership Theory is about practice rather than people and formal roles. Although there is no unanimous agreement on a definition of the term, Tian, Risku, and Collin (2016) define Distributed Leadership (DL) Theory as practice-based development programs or distributed leadership practices. They identify two schools of research around distributed leadership: (a) the descriptive-analytical paradigm and (b) the prescriptive-normative paradigm, which examines the practical applications of distributed leadership. Modeste, Hornskov, Bjerg, and Kelley (2020, p.5) define distributed leadership practice as “a set of tasks that occur within a given context or situation and require the work of a leader and a follower to carry it out.” Other scholars define DL-practice as a “pattern in the behaviour of a collective aimed at producing direction, alignment, and commitment in an overall collective goal” (McCauley & Palus, 2020, p.3). It is also viewed as “a product of the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation” (Liu et al., 2020, p.5). Hangartner and Svaton (2022) argue that the practices of distributed leadership depend on their context and governing conditions. Spillane (2005, p.144) articulated that “leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation.”

CHAT, on the other hand, is a social theory and also an analytical framework (Engeström, 2000). It is often used to study developments in work practices, organisations, and real-life contexts (Salloum & BouJaoude, 2023; Skipper, Nøhr, & Engeström, 2021). As an analytical framework, CHAT assumes that all activities are mediated by six elements: subject, tool, objectives, rules, community, and division of labour (Astudillo, Martín-García, & Acuña, 2020). CHAT also recognises that an activity system is objective-driven (Engeström, 2012). In the CHAT framework, the subject and objective form the central components of the activity system. The objective motivates the activity, and the activity focuses on turning the objective into an outcome. The subject's engagement with the activity is influenced by the rules of interaction, community, and division of labour,

which initially emerge as a result of the division of labour in collective activities (Yang & Kyun, 2022).

Figure 1. CHAT Framework



Source: Engestrom (2000, p.962)

Bringing DL and CHAT together, an activity system can be viewed as distributed leadership practices manifested through the interaction of leaders, followers, and other actors within their context. On the basis that an activity system is object-driven, this paper proposes a newly conceptualised and configured framework for integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes. The framework builds on the Leaders-Task-Context (LTC) model developed by Feng et al. (2017), which was originally designed to understand the different dimensions of team leadership. The LTC framework emphasises the interrelationship between team characteristics, task characteristics, and contextual factors (Modeste et al., 2020, p.5). This paper expands on LTC model by incorporating attributes of the Leader (subject), Task (division of labour), and Context (tool, rules, and community) drawing from the six elements of the CHAT framework (Engeström, 2012). It further argues that these attributes moderate the relationship between objectives and their outcomes.

In this configuration of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes conceptual framework, the four principles of integrated landscape approaches - (1) landscape partnership, (2) shared understanding, (3) vision and planning, and (4) taking actions - are positioned as strategic management and leadership objectives of activity systems. These objectives are defined, conceptualised, configured, and operationalised to achieve four specified outcomes. The theoretical foundation and dimension measures are drawn from the four distributed leadership practices: engaging leadership practice, developing leadership practice, enabling leadership practice, and empowering leadership practice (Alnoor & Wah, 2023; Altman et al., 2023; Snihur & Bocken, 2022). Extant literature suggests that engaging leadership practice promotes the achievement of common goals and a shared vision (Kohnen et al., 2024); developing leadership practice establishes shared values as

mechanisms for cooperation (Bryant & Walker, 2024; Ealy, 2024); enabling leadership practice fosters participation and collaboration among diverse actors (Bäcklander, 2019; Langley, 2019); and empowering leadership practice enhances the achievement of sustainable outcomes (Wang, 2024).

Mifsud (2023) notes that the four distributed leadership practices: (i) draw from theoretical foundations; (ii) operate independently of one another; (iii) exhibit high levels of cross-loading; (iv) can be integrated into a network of activity systems; (v) require enactment in a specific order of primacy to function effectively; and (vi) constitute a normative decision-making framework. Hamzeh (2023), however argues that although distributed leadership practices support theory conceptualisation and configuration, deeper analysis is required to uncover their effects.

Building on these relationships between the strategic management and leadership objectives of distributed leadership and the objectives of integrated transboundary landscapes, this paper advances a conceptual framework in which distributed leadership practices function as independent variables, while the Leaders-Task-Context construct operates as a moderating variable. This framework provides a basis for developing a governance and accountability model for landscapes and seascapes with corresponding scales and dimension measures. It is proposed as a tool to support the design, development, and implementation of International Development Financed (IDF) projects. The framework is further positioned as a strategic management and leadership tool, as well as a workplace learning and analytical framework. While conventional perspectives suggest that project team leaders should adopt leadership approaches best suited to their preferences and contexts, this paper adopts an interventionist stance. It argues that the four distributed leadership practices, as strategic management and leadership activities, cannot be applied in isolation (Engeström & Pyörälä, 2021; Spinuzzi, 2020). To achieve desired outcomes, project leadership teams must enact all four practices in a sequential and integrated manner. These practices form a primacy-based normative decision-making framework that bridges different temporal, contextual, and spatial dimensions (Harris et al., 2022, 2023).

The Effects of Engaging Leadership Practice on Achievement of IDF Project Outcomes

Van Tuin, Schaufeli, van Rhenen, and Kuiper (2020) define engaging leadership as a concept which aims explicitly to identify leadership behaviors that may induce work engagement through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Omar, 2020; Liu, 2020; Rahmadani *et al.*, 2020; Shen *et al.*, 2020). Engaging practice draws its theoretical foundations from Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT is a positive leadership style that fosters employees' work engagement through a

specific psychological mechanism which leads to positive project outcomes (Rahmadani *et al.*, 2020).

The engaging leadership practice uses common goals for a shared vision as a basic psychological motivator to inspire multidisciplinary and multicultural team members to lead one another towards the common goal through shared–leadership processes (Van Tuin, Schaufeli, van Rhenen, & Kuiper, 2020; Omar, 2020; Liu, 2020; Rahmadani *et al.*, 2020; Shen *et al.*, 2020). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between engaging leadership practice and achievement of IDF project outcomes.

The Effects of Developing Leadership Practice on Achievement of IDF Project Outcomes

Leadership development is referred to as leadership preparation and development (Woods *et al.*, 2020). Leadership development draws its theoretical foundations from both the relational theory and self-determination theory (Van Tuin *et al.*, 2020). The relational theory views leadership as a 21st century strategy for addressing succession, retention, growth, and expansion needs through offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualised support, and modeling appropriate values and practices (McCauley & Palus, 2020; Printy & Liu, 2020).

Shared values are used as mechanisms for team cooperation. Developing leadership uses shared values as motivations for modeling appropriate mechanisms of cooperation (rules or guidelines) for the project team leadership (Woods *et al.*, 2020; Van Tuin *et al.*, 2020; McCauley & Palus, 2020; Printy & Liu, 2020). The established mechanisms of cooperation motivate project leadership team members to lead one another through shared–leadership processes towards the achievement of project outcomes. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between developing leadership practice and achievement of IDF project outcomes.

The Effects of Enabling Leadership Practice on Achievement of IDF Project Outcomes

Schulze and Pinkow (2020, p.2) describe enabling leadership as “a third leadership style (in addition to transactional and transformational leadership) that combines exploration and exploitation across all hierarchy levels”. Other scholars see enabling leadership as part of empowering leadership, with the distinction that while enabling leadership draws its foundation from traditional empowering leadership perspectives, empowering

leadership draws its foundation from psychological empowerment, which is addressed in the next section. Tang, Zhang, and Wang (2020, p.4) claim that enabling is one of the four dimensions of empowering leadership, which includes: consulting, delegating, enabling, and informing. Enabling leadership practices draw their foundations from the Job Characteristic Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and the Job Demands-Resources theory (Bakker & de Vries, 2021).

The objective of enhancing participation of different actors is defined as enabling leadership practice (Flood *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Modeste *et al.*, 2020). Enabling leadership practices use participation as an empowerment motivation for individuals, organisations, and community actors to enact self-leadership towards the achievement of project outcomes (Grošelj *et al.*, 2020; Schulze & Pinkow, 2020). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between enabling leadership practice and achievement of IDF project outcomes.

The Effects of Empowering Leadership Practice on Achievement of IDF Project Outcomes

Empowering leadership has its foundations in psychological empowerment, which is defined as “intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting an individual’s orientation to his or her work role: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact” (Grošelj *et al.*, 2020, p.5). Psychological empowerment is achieved through spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relationships, and institutionalised practices (McGuinness & Taysum, 2020). Psychological empowerment motivates individuals and teams to enact self-leadership or self-influence towards achievement of project outcomes (Shen *et al.*, 2020).

The objective of achieving sustainable development is defined as empowering leadership practice (Brown, Flood *et al.*, 2020). Empowering leadership promotes communication and collaboration as psychological empowerment for teams to enact self-leadership or self-influence towards achievement of project outcomes (Grošelj *et al.*, 2020; Shen *et al.*, 2020). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a positive relationship between empowering and achievement of IDF project outcomes.

The Moderating role of The Leaders-Task –Context (LTC) in the Relationship between DL Practices and IDF Project Outcomes

The Leader-Task-Context (LTC) construct builds from the distributed perspective in Distributed Leadership Theory, which articulates that “leadership practice is a product of the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation” (Spillane, 2005; Feng *et al.*, 2017). In this formulation, the Leaders-Task-Context (LTC) construct intends to integrate the object(s) and the project outcome. Furthermore, the “Leaders” denotes the subject (which includes individuals, organisations, and communities), the “Task” includes the division of labour, and the “Context” includes tools and rules.

This study seeks to assess how the Leader-Task-Context (LTC) moderates the relationship between DL practices and the achievement of IDF project outcomes. In consideration of the identified gaps with CHAT, this study intends to propose attributes and scale measures for the Leader-Task-Context (LTC). A moderating variable is a qualitative or quantitative variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relationship between an independent and dependent variable. In order to infer that a variable is a moderating variable, there must be a significant statistical interaction between the predictor and the moderator (i.e. $p < .05$) (Echebiri, 2020; Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Kustanto *et al.*, 2020).

This study provides a summary of attributes and scale measures for the Leader-Task-Context (LTC) construct. The attributes and scale measures intend to provide clarity on the definition, descriptive, and explanatory power of CHAT. This study integrates measures and scales from Campion *et al.* (1993, 1996), while measures and scales for individual, organisational, and community-level outcomes were developed based on organisational studies (England, 1967; Enz, 1988; Scott, 2002). The Campion *et al.* (1993, 1996) model is based on the studies of Gladstein (1984), Hackman (1987), and Guzzo and Shea (1992). This is because these scales examine what managers perceive as important and significant aspects of their work and thus a priority for achieving outcomes.

This study notes that there is existing interdependence, e.g., task interdependence, context interdependence, goal interdependence, interdependent feedback and rewards. These interdependences suggest that the attributes of Leaders-Task-Context (LTC) have equal priority and thus, there is no attribute which has primacy over another (Christensen-Salem *et al.*, 2020; Hagemann *et al.*, 2020). Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5a: The Leader-Task-Context (LTC) positively moderates the relationship between Engaging Leadership Practice and IDF project outcomes.

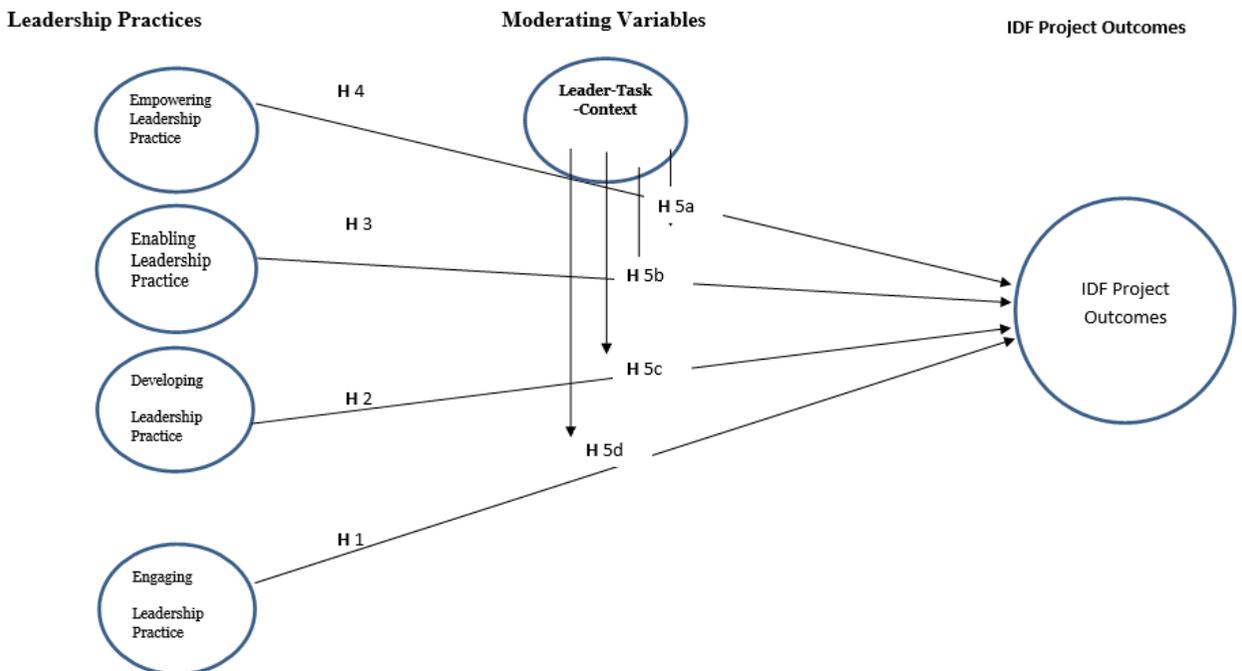
H5b: The Leader-Task-Context (LTC) positively moderates the relationship between Developing Leadership Practice and IDF project outcomes.

H5c: The Leader-Task-Context (LTC) positively moderates the relationship between Enabling Leadership Practice and IDF project outcomes.

H5d: The Leader-Task-Context (LTC) positively moderates the relationship between Empowering Leadership Practice and IDF project outcomes.

Ultimately, the above discussion suggests that not all distributed leadership practices contribute to the achievement of the same IDF outcomes. Due to differences in underpinning theories, some contribute towards the achievement of individual outcomes, others towards organisational outcomes, while others significantly contribute to the achievement of community outcomes. The rest of the paper investigates the above hypotheses, starting with a discussion of the empirical strategy and data in the following section.

Figure 2. The Study Conceptual Framework



Source based on Synthesis of Literature Review (2022)

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Strategy

This paper advanced a new configuration and conceptualisation of the dimensions of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes conceptual framework, building on the four principles of integrated landscape approaches: (1) landscape partnership, (2) shared understanding, (3) vision

and planning, and (4) taking actions, derived from Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and Distributed Leadership Theory after being validated through Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Sample and Data Collection Methods

Data were collected and analysed over a two-year longitudinal study with 420 individual participants selected through stratified random sampling, employing a positivist philosophy. Data collection procedures followed Jennings (2012), who warned researchers to follow required 'rules', procedures, or guidelines that are embedded in philosophical backgrounds. Random sampling was used to guide the distribution of the survey instrument. The instrument was distributed to small groups between 20 and 50 participants during the planned and agreed training sessions, which took about two years to cover all 420 participants. The cohort of 420 participants was obtained through stratified random sampling, where participants were divided into subgroups or strata based on landscapes, seascapes, community-based organisations, projects, conservation themes, targets, age, and communities as suggested by Hayes (2022). Researchers followed Lynn's (2019) guidance, ensuring that invitation letters for the capacity-building session included information to the participants about the purpose of this study. In addition, researchers ensured that all participants were older than 18 years.

As the survey instrument and its dimension measurement scale were to be used as a landscape and seascape governance and accountability framework, the use of a longitudinal study for workplace learning and change was suitable, as it ensured that participants were engaged in a participatory design project, as suggested by Augustsson (2021). The learning and development were evident, ensuring participants were fully engaged in the design and review processes of the analytical tools and grasping the problem at a preliminary conceptual framework before arriving at the final framework.

Furthermore, researchers emphasised the importance of following rules and procedures, as noted by Jennings (2012), because the data collected were based on participants' perceptions, feedback, attitudes, and survey responses. The collected data were significant, as the participants formed a validation group for this study's conceptual framework and study tool. The participants represented people who typically experience the same event at a given point in time. This approach helped the researcher to easily access participants and collect data at the same point in time, and it was cost-effective. Participation in the present study was motivated because the successful establishment of the governance and accountability framework for the landscapes and seascapes would (i) enhance the governance and accountability structure, (ii) promote the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities, (iii) facilitate robust information flow systems, and (iv)

establish an effective decision-making process (Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Lyu *et al.*, 2023).

Survey Instruments and Materials

The new configuration and conceptualisation of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes conceptual framework and its theoretical constructs and dimension measures were used as the survey questionnaire method for collecting standard data and information from participants. The questionnaires were administered online using Google Forms. Respondents used smartphones, tablets, laptops, or desktop computers to answer questions, thus utilising tools convenient for answering an online survey. This framework adopted the Likert-type descriptors suggested by Nykyforchyn (2022, p.3), which measure five levels of development using a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree (Embryonic - almost absent or at a very basic stage of development); 2 = Disagree (Developing - present but rudimentary); 3 = Average (Moderately developed- progress made but requiring significant strengthening); 4 = Agree (Well developed - high level achieved, though further improvement is possible); and 5 = Strongly Agree (Highly developed - reflects best practice at the maximum level of development).

Table 1 provides a summary of the dimension measures and scale item instruments. Due to the multidimensional nature of theoretical constructs, this study developed sub-scales, making the 30 composite variables of the landscape and seascape governance and accountability framework from 78 indicators. The large number of questions was to ensure that many details and aspects were captured, providing a meaningful explanation of the sub-scales. The sub-scale consisted of four (4) items for the independent variables, eight (8) items for the moderating variables, and a total of 18 items for the dependent variables (consisting of 3 items for individual outcomes, 10 items for organisational outcomes, and 5 items for community outcomes).

The scale reflects the complexity, multi-level nature, and multi-dimensionality of the landscape and seascape governance and accountability framework. Composite indicators were developed to help summarise complex or multi-dimensional issues and make them easy to interpret, as they reduce the size of a set of indicators to a manageable limit, which makes it easier to communicate and promote accountability.

Independent Variables (Distributed Leadership Practices)

The scale instrument for independent variables consisted of 4-item scales drawing from the four dimensions of distributed leadership, which include bounded empowerment, developing leadership, shared decision and collective engagement (Hairon & Goh, 2015). Questions in this section

examined the levels of autonomy among different leaders regarding making independent and transparent decisions at different stages of the approval process, including: i) developing common goals for a shared vision; ii) developing shared values as mechanisms of cooperation; iii) enhancing the participation of multiple stakeholders (different actors) to achieve critical contributions which have multiple integrated outcomes; and iv) achieving sustainable development outcomes through capacity development.

Moderating Variables (Attributes of the Leaders-Task-Context)

The second section consisted of 8-item scales, examining the moderation variables, focusing on understanding existing interdependencies such as team interdependence, task interdependence, and context interdependence among individuals, organisations, and communities (Grabner, Klein, & Speckbacher, 2022; Lázaro, Del Barco, Polo-Del-Río, & Rasskin-Gutman, 2020; Marinov, 2023; Meuris & Elias, 2022; Wong & van Gils, 2022). Specifically, this section sought to understand the levels of interaction amongst individuals, organisations, and communities and their context at local, national, regional, and even global levels during the IDF projects' design, development, and implementation (Angelstam et al., 2020; Reed et al., 2020; Welling et al., 2021). The proposed attributes intended to facilitate effective management of the reciprocal influence (Jambo & Hongde, 2020; Lyu *et al.*, 2023) and address conflicts amongst multiple actors (Grabner *et al.*, 2022; Wong & van Gils, 2022).

Dependent Variables (IDF Project Outcomes)

The third section consisted of 18-item scales for the dependent variables, measured at three levels: individual (3), organisational (10), and community outcomes (5). The dependent variables suggest the existence of interdependence, i.e., goal interdependence, interdependent feedback, and rewards among individuals, organisations, and communities (Grabner, Klein, & Speckbacher, 2022; Lázaro, Del Barco, Polo-Del-Río, & Rasskin-Gutman, 2020; Marinov, 2023; Meuris & Elias, 2022; Wong & van Gils, 2022). Oliver (1999) reviewed England's Personal Values Questionnaire, which includes 66 value items grouped under five categories: business goals (e.g., high productivity, industry leadership, organisational growth); personal goals (e.g., achievement, money, power); groups of people (e.g., unions, customers, shareholders); personal characteristics (e.g., honor, aggressiveness, conformity); and general topics (e.g., competition, religion, emotions). Following Oliver's (1999) suggestions, this study adopted value-based instruments because they integrate different perceptions of values, including personal values, organisational values, and community values. The dependent variables are assessed based on how existing organisational policies,

regulations, or guidelines support individual outcomes, such as personal goals, career goals, professional goals, contribution to organisational goals, and contribution to community goals. The organisational outcomes examine how existing policies, regulations, or guidelines support the organisation as a trusted partner, improve financial sustainability, and strengthen communication capacity (England, 1967; Enz, 1988), while the community outcomes includes honest communication, respect for property, respect for life, respect for religion, and respect for justice (Scott, 2002).

Control Variables (Position, Gender, and Age)

Control variables included position, gender, and age (i.e., under 25, 25–35, 35–45, 45–55, over 55). Hayes (2022) and Lynn (2019) suggested stratification, which benefited this study in two ways: first, it allowed researchers to obtain a sample of leaders that represented the entire population of interest; second, it ensured that each subgroup was represented, making it easier to compare landscapes, seascapes, communities-based organisations, age, and position. This was important for ensuring the training session gave equal opportunities regardless of gender, age, religion, education, affiliations, etc.

Table 1 presents the study variables, which include the independent variables (the four practices of Distributed Leadership Practices), the moderating variables (The Leaders-Task-Context), and the dependent variables (IDF Project Outcomes), which were analysed using Generalised Structural Equation Modeling.

Table 1. Summary of Composite Measurement Instruments and Items used in this study

Sources	Variable Measured	Items used	Measurement	Items used
Hairon and Goh (2015)	Distributed Leadership Practices	1	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Engaging Leadership Practice Common goal for a shared vision
		1	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Developing Leadership Practice shared values
		1	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Enabling Leadership Practice Stakeholders' participation
		1	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree and 5=Strongly Agree	Empowering Leadership Practice Achieve Sustainable Development Outcomes
England (1967)	Dependent Variables	3	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Individuals Outcome Personal development, career development, professional development

Enz (1988)		10	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Organisations Outcome Increased funding, revenues, profitability, customers, partners, adaptability, communication, sustainability, Technology, productivity
Scott (2002)		5	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Community Outcome Respect for Life, Respect for Property, Respect for Justice, Respect for Biodiversity, Respect for Information
Campion, Medsker, and Higgs (1993, 996) and Campion <i>et al.</i> , (2020; 2001)	Moderating Variables	2	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Leaders Self-Leadership Shared-Leadership
		2	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Task Self-managed teams and Cross functional teams
		4	Ordinal scale 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Average, 4 = Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree	Context Impact, innovation, collaboration, communication

Source: Researcher 2022 based on literature review

Analysis and Results

The data were analysed in two primary stages. First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal components extraction and varimax rotation was applied to the data. The objective was to make a fair and consistent comparison between the psychometric properties of the Landscape and Seascape Governance and Accountability measurement scale framework for IDF Projects and the results from the previous three sub-scales. Second, in an effort to examine the extent to which the Landscape and Seascape Governance and Accountability measurement scale framework for IDF Projects effectively represents the Theory, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model was tested through an analysis of covariance structures using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Cross-Loading Criterion

Table 2 below, presenting the rotated component matrix, indicates the factor loading on the host factor. The strong correlation indicates the dynamic interactive influence process among the individual items in the group. All the factor loadings are > 0.4, indicating an acceptable level of Indicator Reliability (Hulland, 1999, p. 198). Other scholars suggest that as part of confirmatory

factor analysis, none of the factor loadings below ($< .50$) should be removed. In this study, these indicators were not removed, as the model-fit measures were assessed based on the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA), and all values were within their respective common acceptance levels (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

The Analysis of the Measurement Model

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed using AMOS to test the full measurement model (Figure 3 – Measurement model). The model-fit measures were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit (CMIN/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and RMSEA) and all values were within their respective common acceptance levels (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The 30 factors represent the full scale, and when tested they all yielded a good fit (Figure 4.8) for the data: CMIN/df = 4.168, GFI = .809, AGFI = .751, NFI = .694, RFI = .627, IFI = .749, CFI = .744, TLI = .688, SRMR = , and RMSEA = .088, according to Hu and Bentler (1999; 1998).

The Validity and Reliability of the Full Measurement Model

This study addressed issues of reliability and validity according to suggestions by Awang (2011), who advised researchers to determine unidimensionality, validity, and reliability of latent constructs. To achieve unidimensionality, the researcher first ensured that all measuring items have a factor loading of at least 0.5 for their respective latent construct and that all factor loading is positive, as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2014). In this study, most of the conditions were met, indicating that unidimensionality was achieved, thus opening the door for validity and reliability testing.

These latent variables were developed based on the Bollen *et al.* (2022) suggested criteria for good scaling indicators. The criteria for a good scaling indicator include high face validity, high correlation with the latent variable, factor complexity of one, no correlated errors, no direct effects with other indicators, a minimal number of significant over-identification equation tests and modification indices, and invariance across groups and time. Bollen *et al.* (2022) note that it is common practice for psychologists to specify models with latent variables to represent concepts that are difficult to directly measure.

Table 3 below shows that all Item Loadings were $>$ than 0.4, indicating Indicator Reliability (Hulland, 1999, p. 198); all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were $>$ 0.5, indicating Convergent Reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981); all Composite Reliability (CR) values were $>$ 0.7, indicating Internal Consistency (Gefen, *et al.*, 2000); and all Cronbach's alpha values were $>$ 0.7, confirming Indicator Reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2. Rotated Factor Matrix of the Measurement Model

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	DL Practices	Organisation Growth Criteria	Context	Task	Community	Organisation Systemic Criteria	Organisation Systemic Criteria	Community	Individuals	Leaders
Enabling	0.951									
Developing	0.801									
Empowering	0.636									
Engaging	0.600									
Profitability		0.838								
Growth		0.736								
Funding		0.617								
Productivity		0.505								
Thought Leadership										
Collaboration			0.881							
Innovation			0.668							
Communication			0.666							
Impact				0.866						
SMTteams				0.720						
CTTeams				0.552						
Respect information					0.760					
Respect Biodiversity					0.757					
Technology										
Visibility						0.860				
Partnerships						0.474				
Adaptability							0.950			
Respect Property										
ProfDevGoals										
Respect Health								0.791		
Reputation								0.541		
PersonalGoals									0.699	
Respect Beliefs									0.594	
CareerGoals									0.533	
Self Leadership										0.556
Shared Leadership										0.401

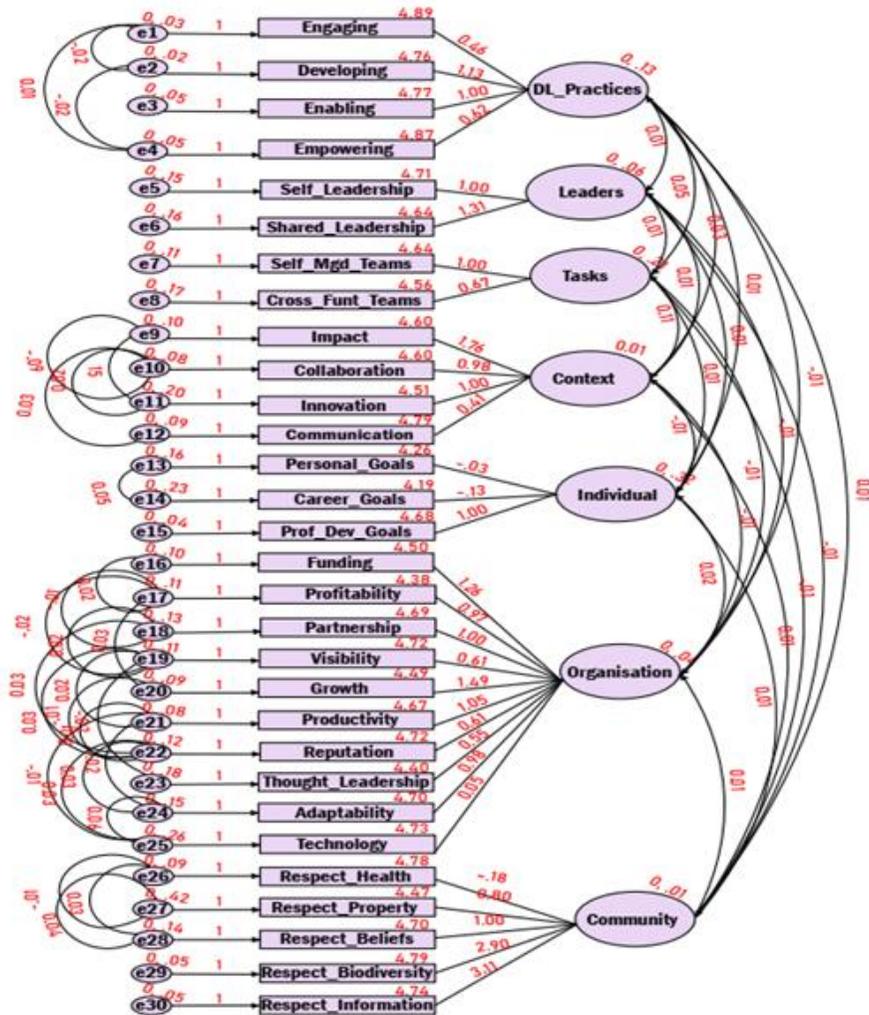
Extraction Method: Generalized Least Squares

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations

Source: Field data (2022)

Figure 3. Composite – Measurement Model



Source: Field Data (2022)

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Construct Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
			CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Leaders			0.896	0.535851	0.854
Task-Context					
Leaders	Shared Leadership	0.635			
Leaders	Self Leadership	0.542			
Context	Innovation	0.674			
Context	Collaboration	0.809			

Context	Impact	1.116			
Context	Communication	0.473			
Tasks	CTTeams	0.591			
Tasks	SMTeams	0.814			
IDF Project Outcomes			0.832	0.3167	0.713
Individual	ProfDevGoals	1.076			
Individual	CareerGoals	-0.155			
Individual	PersonalGoals	-0.047			
organisation	Partnerships	0.508			
organisation	Profitability	0.529			
organisation	Funding	0.64			
organisation	Visibility	0.364			
organisation	Growth	0.718			
organisation	Productivity	0.603			
organisation	Reputation	0.353			
organisation	Thought Leadership	0.265			
organisation	Adaptability	0.474			
organisation	Technology	0.021			
Community	Respect Beliefs	0.228			
Community	Respect Property	0.109			
Community	Respect Health	-0.053			
Community	Respect Biodiversity	0.733			
Community	Respect information	0.764			
DL Practice			0.866	0.6233	0.829
DL Practices	Engaging	0.65			
DL Practices	Developing	0.933			
DL Practices	Enabling	0.846			
DL Practices	Empowering	0.696			

Source: Field Data (2022)

Discussion of the Results

The discussion focuses on elucidating the possible meanings and explanations of the ten dimensions within the context of IDF projects that are designed, developed, and implemented in integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes. The findings provide evidence of the dimensionality of the integrated transboundary landscape and seascape construct (See Table 2, Rotated Factor Matrix). The exploratory factor analysis revealed ten dimensions of the integrated transboundary landscapes and seascapes approach conceptual framework, which build upon the four principles of integrated landscape management and the moderating variables represented by the Leaders-Task-Context. These findings support early theoretical conceptualisations in the literature that transboundary landscape and seascape approaches are multi-dimensional constructs (Reed et al., 2023). Recognising

this multidimensionality sharpens the understanding of the integrated transboundary landscape and seascape approach and enhances its application in the design, development, and implementation of IDF projects.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2 is derived from the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed. A conceptual framework typically contains variables or key factors that indicate presumed relationships between them and is presented either graphically or narratively (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). In this study, the constructs and dimension measures were applied both as a governance and accountability framework and as a learning framework to support the design, development, and delivery of IDF projects in line with integrated transboundary landscape and seascape approaches (Reed *et al.*, 2020, 2023).

The perception indicators in the framework are value-based measures that promote integrated transboundary landscapes and seascape approaches aimed at addressing the deterioration of work standards and fostering higher levels of coexistence and interdependence. These indicators build on human values drawn from the integral model developed by Graves (1966, 1970, 1974). Martinsuo (2020, p.1) highlights the importance of adopting values and ways of thinking that promote coexistence and co-creation, while Cheng and Fleischmann (2010, p.2) describe values as “guiding principles of what people consider important in life.”

This framework also incorporates the Likert-type descriptors suggested by Nykyforchyn (2022, p.3), which measure five levels of development using a five-point scale: 1= Strongly Disagree (Embryonic - almost absent or at a very basic stage of development); 2 = Disagree (Developing - present but rudimentary) 3 = Average (Moderately developed – progress made but requiring significant strengthening); 4 = Agree (Well developed - high level achieved, though further improvement is possible); and 5 = Strongly Agree (Highly developed - reflects best practice at the maximum level of development).

Within this conceptual framework, the independent variables are represented by four distributed leadership practices (Hairon & Goh, 2015): engaging, developing, enabling, and empowering leadership. The dimension measures are as follows: engaging leadership promotes achievement of common goals and a shared vision (Kohnen *et al.*, 2024); developing leadership fosters shared values as mechanisms for cooperation (Bryant & Walker, 2024; Ealy, 2024); enabling leadership promotes participation and collaboration among diverse actors (Bäcklander, 2019; Langley, 2019); and empowering leadership enhances the achievement of sustainable outcomes (Wang, 2024).

The Leaders-Task-Context serves as a moderating variable. Here, “Leaders” denote individuals from groups, organisations, and communities;

“Task” reflects the division of labour; and “Context” encompasses tools, rules, and communities. This study argues that the attributes of the Leaders-Task-Context positively moderate the relationship between distributed leadership practices and IDF project outcomes. Specifically, the indicators include self-leadership and shared-leadership for Leaders; self-managed and cross-functional teams for Task; and impact, collaboration, innovation, and communication for Context. These indicators are based on Campion *et al.*'s (2001; 2020) team model.

When adopted, these structures, systems, and processes lead to interconnected IDF project outcomes such as sustainable development and global benefits that support people, nature, and economies while promoting equitable sharing of benefits among individuals, organisations, and communities. At the highest level (Level 5, “Highly developed”), the Leaders-Task-Context attributes are expected to foster: (i) effective governance and accountability structures, (ii) clearly defined roles and responsibilities, (iii) robust information flow systems, and (iv) effective decision-making processes.

Martinsuo (2020, p.1) further argued that project outcomes are shaped by management values as exercises in sense making, negotiation, and co-creation, where beliefs are adjusted to transform practices and outcomes. This perspective is adopted in the present study to ensure the effective management of interdependencies at individual, organisational, and community levels.

Oliver (1999) reviewed England's Personal Values Questionnaire, which includes 66 value items grouped under five categories: business goals (e.g., high productivity, industry leadership, organisation growth), personal goals (e.g., achievement, money, power), groups of people (e.g., unions, customers, shareholders), personal characteristics (e.g., honor, aggressiveness, conformity), and general topics (e.g., competition, religion, emotions). Following Oliver's suggestion, this study employed value-based instruments to capture perceptions of personal, organisational, and community values (England, 1967; Enz, 1988; Scott, 2002).

At the individual level, three perception measures were identified: personal development, career development, and professional development, drawing from Akgunduz *et al.* (2020, p.2). They investigated the effects of rewards and proactive personality on the meaning of work and turnover intention, focusing on three components: valence, expectancy, and instrumentality. Data were collected through a survey of 224 hotel employees in Turkey. The results indicated that both financial and non-financial rewards negatively influence turnover intention, while proactive personality and financial rewards positively affect the meaning of work.

At the organisational level, ten perception measures were used to assess organisational effectiveness and performance, based on Enz (1988):

increased funding, revenues, profitability, customers (thought leadership), partners, adaptability, communication, sustainability, technology, and productivity. Enz (1989) found that perceived value congruity between department members and top managers influenced the ability of departments to shape strategic issues.

At the community level, five perception measures of social impact were adopted from Scott's (2002) organisational moral values model: honest communication, respect for property, respect for life, respect for religion, and respect for justice. However, this model was criticised by Shadnam, Bykov, and Prasad, (2021) for its weak theoretical connection between sociology, morality, and business ethics.

Conclusion

Integrated landscape approaches to project team leadership draw on distributed leadership practices. From this foundation, they provide governance and accountability structures, support the clarification of roles and responsibilities, establish effective decision-making systems, and facilitate robust information flows. These features are essential for enabling participation and collaboration among diverse actors at local, national, regional and global levels.

The results suggest that integrated landscape approaches encompass four leadership practices that: (i) draw from theoretical foundations; (ii) operate independently of one another; (iii) exhibit high levels of cross-loading; (iv) can be integrated into a network of activity systems; (v) require enactment in a specific order of primacy to function effectively; and (vi) constitute a normative decision-making framework.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances theoretical understanding of distributed leadership in IDF projects within integrated transboundary landscapes. It enriches knowledge of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), linking work-based practice with development-oriented research.

Practical Implications

The findings provide guidance for project team leadership by emphasising the development of growth models, normative decision-making frameworks, multi-stakeholder decision-making frameworks, and governance and accountability systems that ensure clear roles, robust communication, and effective decision-making. The framework highlights organisational change as multi-voiced, decentralised, and driven by contradictions, where emancipation of actors and protected spaces foster the potential of multi-voicedness amid asymmetric power relations.

Policy Implications

Policies should promote: (i) effective governance and accountability structures, (ii) clearly defined roles and responsibilities, (iii) robust information flow systems, and (iv) effective decision-making processes. When these distributed leadership practices are applied within IDF projects, they ensure that projects deliver growth that is both green and inclusive, benefiting people, nature, and economies, while also supporting equitable distribution of economic gains.

Study Limitations and Future Research

The four leadership practices were measured quantitatively. To gain deeper insights into their adoption, application, and emotional dimensions, future research should employ mixed- methods approaches combining qualitative and quantitative measures.

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Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

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Applying Quality Management Tools to Improve the Customer's Journey at Beauty Salon

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper focuses on assessing and improving the quality of services provided at Beauty Salon in Saudi Arabia. The evaluation covers the entire customer journey, starting from reservation and visiting, through to payment, and finally, providing services. **Design, Methodology, Approach:** A mixed-method approach was utilized, combining qualitative data from interviews with clients and salon staff, and quantitative data collected through customer satisfaction surveys. Quality Management Tools were applied to analyze the collected data, identify gaps in service delivery, and propose a structured improvement plan tailored to customer expectations. **Findings:** Service-related issues were categorized into eight main dimensions: facilities, appointment scheduling, price and value, staff professionalism, responsiveness, human resources, cleanliness, and services. The House of Quality was used to prioritize the top 22 solutions, with relative weights ranging from 2% to 8%. The integration of the voice of the customer and the voice of the staff provided a holistic view of current challenges and improvement opportunities. **Originality/Value:** This study contributes to the limited literature on applying Quality Management Tools in the beauty and personal care sector in Saudi Arabia. By integrating SERVQUAL dimensions with quality tools, it offers practical guidelines for salon businesses to enhance

service delivery and customer satisfaction. It demonstrates how a customer-centric approach can elevate the competitive positioning of salons in the local market through targeted quality interventions.

Keywords: SERVQUAL, Customer satisfaction, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

The beauty sector is one of the most significant and profitable industries in Saudi Arabia, offering vast opportunities for growth and development. The industry is currently experiencing rapid growth.

The empowerment of Saudi women, shifting lifestyles, global trends, and the rise of social media, along with increased workforce participation, are key drivers of the industry's rapid growth. As a result, major Saudi cities have seen a significant increase in women's beauty salons. This thriving industry is also expected to continue attracting more investors and entrepreneurs.

As reported by Statista (2024), the beauty and personal care market in Saudi Arabia is projected to see steady growth from 2025 to 2030, with total revenue expected to rise by USD 1.1 billion, a 17.68% increase. By 2030, this growth would mark the tenth consecutive year of expansion, reaching a record high of USD 7.36 billion. This trend continues a pattern of consistent revenue increases in recent years.

According to (Munsha'at report, these salons offer a wide range of services, including facial care, hair care, nail treatments, and more. Various societal, cultural, and tourism-related factors that have shaped Saudi Arabia in recent years have contributed to the growing demand for beauty salon services, particularly for women.

The quality of services in beauty salons is closely tied to customer satisfaction, especially in environments that emphasize personalized service. In such settings, Customers closely assess the salon atmosphere, which significantly influences their interactions with staff (Kampani & Jhamb, 2020).

Many studies in the beauty industry have focused on assessing the quality of services provided in salon environments. For example, a study by Tjandra & Suhartono (2023) The study used the SERVQUAL method, which measures five key dimensions of service quality, to identify gaps between customer expectations and their actual experiences in salon services. The results revealed notable discrepancies, especially in areas such as comfort, cleanliness, responsiveness, and consistency, indicating a clear need for targeted improvements in these aspects. Another study by Sultana & Islam (2016) aimed to evaluate customer satisfaction in beauty parlors in Chittagong using the SERVQUAL model, and found that tangibility had the

highest impact on customer satisfaction, indicating that visible and physical aspects of service are key drivers of client perception.

In this context, the SERVQUAL model serves as an effective tool for assessing service quality, consisting of five specific, measurable dimensions that help evaluate the functional aspects of service delivery; the five dimensions of service quality are reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. Reliability refers to employees' ability and dedication to delivering services as promised (Balinado et al., 2021). Responsiveness, as a dimension of service quality, reflects a company's ability to offer well-structured and diverse programs, minimize customer waiting time, deliver prompt service, and provide accurate, comprehensive information. Assurance encompasses elements such as competence, courtesy, and reliability. A company demonstrates strong assurance when it ensures customer security, protects the confidentiality of customer data, and delivers services professionally. Empathy involves building strong customer relationships through effective communication, accessibility, and a clear understanding of customer needs (Setiono & Hidayat, 2022).

Satisfaction refers to the emotional response, either positive or negative, that arises when a product's perceived performance is compared to expectations. If the performance falls short, the customer feels dissatisfied, while meeting expectations leads to satisfaction or contentment (Baquero, 2022).

With the company aiming for expansion, this project focuses on deepening the understanding of customer needs and expectations by engaging with their feedback before initiating large-scale growth. It also assesses and seeks to enhance the customer journey from the point of entry to the fulfillment of their requirements. To better understand customer insights and satisfaction, this project employed a mixed-method approach, conducting focus group interviews for qualitative data and distributing surveys for quantitative data. The findings were then analyzed using Quality Management Tools to create an action plan and provide recommendations aimed at improving both the customer experience and overall satisfaction.

Methods

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted involving three customers and three organization representatives. The discussion lasted approximately 60 minutes and centered on understanding customer expectations regarding salon services, which are key to achieving customer satisfaction. The conversation specifically focused on areas such as promotions, human resources, service quality, the products used within the salon, and the facilities available inside the store.

Survey

Designing a survey

The customer questionnaire was developed based on data gathered from the focus group discussions, as well as the SERVQUAL dimensions introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988). A five-point Likert scale was applied to all questions, and responses ranged from “1” (strongly disagree) to “5” (strongly agree). After being translated, the scale was approved and peer-reviewed by both scholars and others who work in the industry for both its face and content validity. After the team reviewed the questionnaire, it was sent to the project director for more feedback, corrections, and final sign-off so it could be used.

Afterward, a pilot study was held to see if the questionnaire was reliable and valid. Cronbach’s alpha was used to evaluate reliability since it is a commonly used method to measure consistency of a questionnaire (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). According to general guidelines for reliability statistics, Cronbach’s alpha values should exceed 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014) and Nunnally (1994).

Regarding the validity of the questionnaire, correlation analysis was employed to assess construct validity, as it involves examining the relationships between variables (MacKenzie, 2012). All questionnaire items were retained, as the results showed satisfactory levels of correlation between each item and its respective construct, indicating that every item made a meaningful contribution to the overall validity of the instrument. Furthermore, the Cronbach’s alpha values across the main dimensions were notably high, particularly for Tangibles (0.935) and Assurance (0.931). These results suggest that the items consistently measured the intended constructs (see Table 1). In addition, the researchers developed a separate questionnaire to capture the perceptions of internal and external customers, ensuring that insights were gathered from both perspectives involved in the service experience.

Table 1: Measuring reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Main Factor: Tangibles			
Code	Dimension / Question Area	Cronbach's Alpha	Total Correlation
TA1	The salon's location is convenient and easy to access	0.935	0.453
TA2	The salon has modern equipment and facilities.		0.684
TA3	The salon provides an easy-to-use booking system (online, phone, or in-person)		0.692
TA4	There is a comfortable and well-equipped waiting area.		0.484
TA5	The salon has a good and sufficient area for coffee and snacks.		0.457
TA6	There is enough parking space near the salon.		0.353
TA7	In general, the physical facility in the salon is visually appealing.		0.598
TA8	There is an internet connection accessible in the salon.		0.282

TA9	The air conditioning works well and provides a comfortable atmosphere.		0.682
TA10	The salon has a pleasant and refreshing fragrance.		0.629
TA11	The lighting in the salon is adequate and comfortable.		0.775
TA12	The salon ensures that all equipment (towels, clippers, combs, etc.) is clean and well-maintained		0.732
TA13	The salon is always clean, including the care area, hair washing station, waiting room, and restrooms.		0.731
TA14	The employees maintain a neat and professional appearance.		0.733
TA15	The treatment rooms are well-equipped and comfortable.		0.794
TA16	The salon uses high-quality products and modern equipment for treatments.		0.781
Main Factor: Reliability			
RE1	The salon starts my appointment on time	0.909	0.412
RE2	The waiting time at the salon is reasonable.		0.66
RE3	The services match the descriptions in the menu.		0.866
RE4	Every time I visit the salon, I receive the same quality service, even with the change of specialists.		0.692
RE5	The salon uses high-quality products every time.		0.816
RE6	The salon staff follow my specific requests accurately during the service.		0.817
RE7	The salon keeps accurate records of customer invoices.		0.808
Main Factor: Responsiveness			
RS1	The salon responds quickly to appointment requests	0.926	0.699
RS2	It is easy to contact the salon to book or change an appointment.		0.639
RS3	The salon informs me if my service, such as a change in appointment time or service type.		0.734
RS4	The salon staff answers my questions quickly.		0.758
RS5	Employees respond quickly to solve any problem.		0.785
RS6	The salon tries to meet special requests when possible.		0.74
RS7	The staff is available to help when I need them.		0.718
RS8	The payment process at the salon is easy and fast.		0.678
Main Factor: Assurance			
AS1	The staff gives clear information about services and prices	0.931	0.592
AS2	The employees of the salon are trustworthy.		0.742
AS3	The staff's skills and behavior increase my confidence in their service.		0.762
AS4	The staff is polite and respectful toward customers, even during high-pressure situations.		0.82
AS5	I feel safe and comfortable at the salon.		0.835
AS6	The staff advise me about the best services according to customer needs.		0.853
AS7	Staff provide the same level of service to all customers, regardless of social status.		0.725
AS8	The salon's ads and promotions on social media accurately reflect the services provided		0.802
Main Factor: Empathy			

EM1	The staff understands my needs and provides personalized attention	0.91	0.725
EM2	The salon prioritizes my needs and best interests.		0.677
EM3	The staff is patient and listens carefully to my concerns.		0.741
EM4	The salon operates at hours convenient to the customer.		0.822
Main Factor: Additional Services			
AD1	I hope the salon provides home services	0.783	0.666
AD2	I would like the salon to introduce membership or loyalty programs with special benefits.		0.73
AD3	I wish the salon provided exclusive VIP services for regular customers.		0.496
Main Factor: Satisfaction			
SA1	The provided services of the salon are excellent and professional	0.915	0.779
SA2	I consider this salon my first choice.		0.525
SA3	My overall experience with the salon satisfies me.		0.739
SA4	I recommend this salon to people who seek my advice.		0.757
SA5	The price of services is appropriate and suitable for the quality of the service provided		0.583
SA6	I am completely satisfied with the salon's complaints system.		0.837
SA7	I am completely satisfied with the compensation system in case of damage or dissatisfaction with services.		0.821

Distributing the survey

The target population for this study consists of customers seeking beauty salon services. The survey was distributed electronically via an online link, as well as through printed QR codes that were displayed within the salon. A simple random sampling method was employed, ensuring that every customer had an equal chance to participate in the survey (Fleiss et al., 2013). In total, 144 fully completed responses were collected and used for further analysis. In addition, a total of 14 responses were obtained from the employee survey.

Customer journey map

The Customer Journey Map is a technique used to monitor and assess the customer experience, as well as to evaluate the quality of a service or process. It is defined as a time-sequenced, linear depiction of the key stages a customer passes through when engaging with a business or service (Mangiaracina & Brugnoli, 1970). Customer experience is primarily understood as a process that begins at an initial entry point and moves toward an endpoint, shaped by the customer's intentions, motivations, and objectives. Customer Journey Mapping breaks this experience into several distinct stages. By analyzing user behavior, each stage is examined to identify specific goals, intentions, touchpoints, tools, and potential challenges. Ultimately, the focus

extends to the relationships and interactions between the different stages (Mangiaracina & Brugnoli, 1970).

Figure 1 below illustrates the customer experience at the salon, which is structured into five key stages: Reservation, where the customer books an appointment; Visiting, when the customer enters the salon; Service Request, where the customer communicates their preferences for the service; Payment, where the customer settles the bill before receiving the service; and Serving, which represents the actual salon treatment or service provided.

Figure 1: Customer Journey Map. Developed by the authors

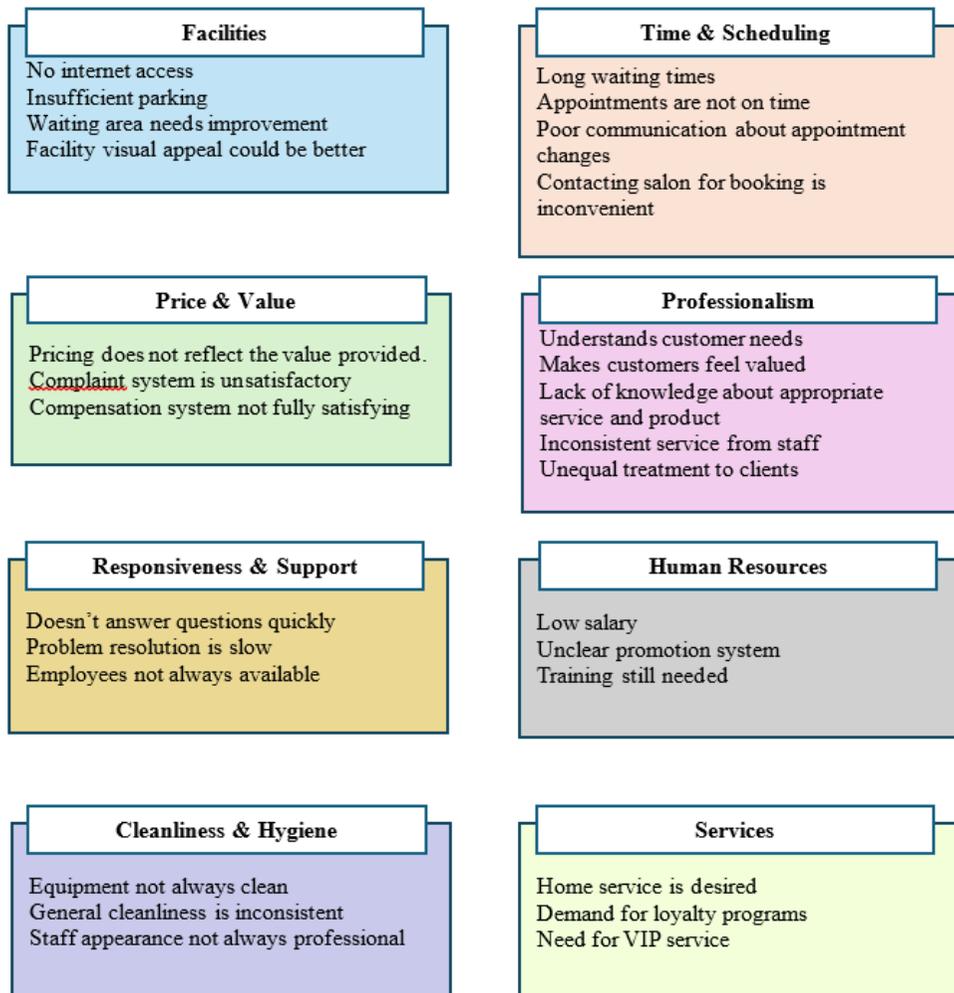
Customer Journey Map at Salon						
Stage		Reservation	Visiting	Requesting	Payment	Serving
Responsibility Department	Call Center					
	Customer Service / Reception					
	Operations / Stylists					
	Accounting / Admin					
	Supervision					
Customer feeling						
Overall Rating		3.04	3.28	3.25	3.20	3.30
Gap\Opportunities		- No electronic booking system available - slow response from the call center	- Poor waiting area - long waiting time. - No free Wi-Fi -Unclean environment	-Weak communication - Lack of personalized service	- perception of high prices compared to the service value. - No loyalty system -No clear refund policy	- Inconsistent quality -Unequal treatment - Poor response to issues - Staff not always available
Recommended Solutions		- Allow 24/7 booking online or via app	- Upgrade interior design	-Train staff in efficient communication	-introduce value bundles or loyalty discounts	- Set clear SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced appointment management system - Train staff in communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send reminders to clients and staff - Send updates via SMS, email, or WhatsApp - Upgrade internet package - Use high-quality sanitizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train staff on cultural sensitivity and inclusivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to enhance perceived value. - Create a VIP membership program with exclusive perks - Empower frontline staff to give small compensations quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> s) for all services - Check for skill gaps - Reward staff meeting standards - Train staff on cultural sensitivity and inclusivity - Offer raises or bonuses based on performance. - Increase staff during peak hours - Train staff regularly on products and services
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Quality management tools

Affinity Diagram

The affinity diagram is a vital tool in quality management and planning, designed to organize dispersed ideas such as those from brainstorming, interviews, or open-ended surveys into coherent, thematic categories (Awasthi & Chauhan, 2012). This structured approach helps uncover patterns, identify key insights, and minimize redundancy. In this study, data gathered from focus groups, interviews, and questionnaire responses were synthesized into eight core categories, as illustrated in Figure 2.



Interrelationship diagram:

The Interrelationship Diagram serves as a critical extension of the affinity diagram by taking the grouped ideas and mapping out the directional cause-and-effect relationships among them. Rather than merely clustering related concepts, this tool enables teams to analyze how individual elements influence or are influenced by others within a complex issue. As Marinescu et al. (2010) emphasize, it is particularly effective in transforming qualitative insights into a structured network of logical connections, helping identify key drivers that contribute to the root causes of a problem. By visualizing these interactions, the diagram supports a more strategic approach to prioritization and decision-making in multifaceted environments. The following relationships were derived based on the logical linkages identified among the grouped elements in this study, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Lack of Human Resources and Lack of Professionalism: Many customers find that the staff is not skilled or professional enough, and this affects their customer experience. Poor training and fewer chances for staff development have created problems with staff talking to each other and dealing with customers. Also, not paying employees well and providing unclear paths for advancement decreases motivation, which makes providing the same high level of service a challenge. So, to boost both professionalism and satisfy customers, companies should introduce training and offer improved incentives to their employees.

Lack of Human Resources and Lack of Responsiveness and Support: Many customers are upset because employees are slow to pay attention to their issues and provide support, which makes the service experience worse. It mostly arises because of poor training and low employee motivation. When there are not enough human resources, there are poor payment schemes, confusing options for advancement, and insufficient training, which make staff care less and perform poorly. In turn, employees might not assist customers in a timely or satisfactory way, which makes the customers upset. Hence, providing higher compensation, clear progression paths, and extra staff training ensures they can respond better to customers and do their jobs well.

Lack of Human Resources and Lack of Cleanliness: Customers often find the food places are dirty, with messy equipment, bad hygiene everywhere, and insufficient staff to provide proper service. A major part of this issue is the combination of poor wages and unclear promotions, which lowers workers' dedication to cleanliness. In addition, because training is lacking, staff do not realize how important sticking to cleaning habits and looking appropriate can be. Thus, customers have a less positive experience, so the company must raise salaries, make career advancement clearer, and provide hygiene and appearance training.

Lack of Human Resources and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: Recruiting additional team members, conducting routine training, and rewarding people based on how they perform may be a heavy expense for the business. Because of these extra costs, companies usually need to raise their service fees. While these investments aim to boost service quality, some of these improvements are not always clearly seen or understood by everyone right away, which could cause customers to think the price is too expensive. As a consequence, more people feel that what they pay for medical services is not reasonable. Companies need to focus on both their employees' and customers' perceptions of better quality in efficiency, responsiveness, and behavior.

Lack of Additional Services and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: When things such as home service, loyalty programs, or special treatment for VIPs are not included, customers feel they are not receiving all they paid for. Pricing

something fairly is about the specifics of the offer, but also about how users view the benefits and conveniences included. If there aren't extra incentives or flexible services, the experience feels the same as any other company, no matter how much customers pay. This means that the missing perks diminish the way customers see value and fairness in the pricing, and the service appears weaker in comparison to companies that include these extra services. Lack of Professionalism and Delays, and Scheduling Issues: If staff members are careless, it often results in wasting time, poor organization, and mistakes in service delivery. If staff do not have confidence, proper training, or attention to detail, it becomes hard to stick to correct appointment times or service the clients as promised. Failure to understand what customers require might cause appointments to take place at inconvenient times and communicate poorly, causing appointments to not be fully taken advantage of and the queue to be lengthier. As a result, the trust customers have in you weakens, and their dissatisfaction grows because of inefficiency.

Lack of professionalism and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: Customers compare prices with the level of service they experience, such as how good and steady it is. If staff lack training, fail to treat all clients fairly, or make customers feel unappreciated, it can still result in clients judging the value of the service to be lower, as long as the cost is reasonable. If companies do not notice or satisfy customer needs well enough, their service is insufficient, and this may persuade customers that the price is not worth it, making them doubt if the service is fair.

Lack of Professionalism and Lack of Responsiveness and Support: When staff do not feel confident, knowledgeable, or responsible, there are more challenges in communication, and response times get longer. Because of this, customers have to wait longer for assistance, their questions remain unanswered, and support is not very effective. Professionalism includes listening, feeling empathy, and acting right away. When team members fail to do this, customers feel ignored, frustrated, and receive little support during interactions.

Lack of Responsiveness and Support, delays, and Scheduling Issues: If customer inquiries and booking requests are handled slowly, there will be delays in scheduling. When there are not enough team members and responses are slow, confirming appointments, rescheduling times, and dealing with problems often get disrupted. Therefore, schedules can become disordered, people need to wait longer, and they miss valuable chances for being on time. This means responsiveness failures lead to delays in tasks and make service delivery last longer, which decreases customer trust and satisfaction.

Lack of Responsiveness and Support, and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: Value is linked to the main service and all aspects of the customer experience, including how quickly their concerns get sorted out. When

problems continue and clients' questions go unheard, they feel neglected and have reduced respect. It lowers people's trust in fairness, as they feel they need to cover both the service and what they think should be included - support and responsiveness. If companies do not deliver what they offer, people might feel there is no reason for their prices, which can lower customer loyalty.

Lack of Facilities and Delays and Scheduling Issues: Lack of enough parking, slow or no internet, and uneasy places to wait can lead to problems with the way services are run. If customers can't get parking or get stuck on the booking process, this will cause service delays. If waiting areas are not large enough, it can confuse and make it hard to handle customer traffic. Because of these environmental constraints, tasks take more time, which causes both delays in appointments and longer waiting periods for the clients.

Lack of Facilities and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: The environment in which a service is offered adds to the way people judge its value. If the customer finds the location lacking, such as with no internet, an unappealing design, or uncomfortable seats, they may feel that paying more is not worth it. If someone is travelling and notices that many amenities are missing, the quality of the service does not feel as good as the price they paid, and the customer sees the costs as unfair.

Lack of Cleanliness and Lack of Fair Pricing and Value: Cleanliness is a fundamental component of perceived service quality. When customers encounter dirty equipment, unclean environments, or poorly groomed staff, they instinctively question the value of what they are paying for. No matter how skilled the service may be, a lack of cleanliness creates a sense that standards are low, which weakens the customer's sense of fairness and satisfaction with the pricing. Customers expect hygiene to be a given; its absence makes any price feel unjustified and the experience feel unworthy of the cost.

Lack of Cleanliness and Lack of Professionalism: A clean, well-maintained environment and professional staff appearance are essential indicators of organizational professionalism. When these are lacking, it signals carelessness, poor management, or a lack of employee training. Customers interpret untidy spaces or unkempt employees as signs that the business does not take pride in its work or respect its clientele. Cleanliness directly reflects how seriously a company approaches service delivery, and its absence undermines the professional image of the brand.

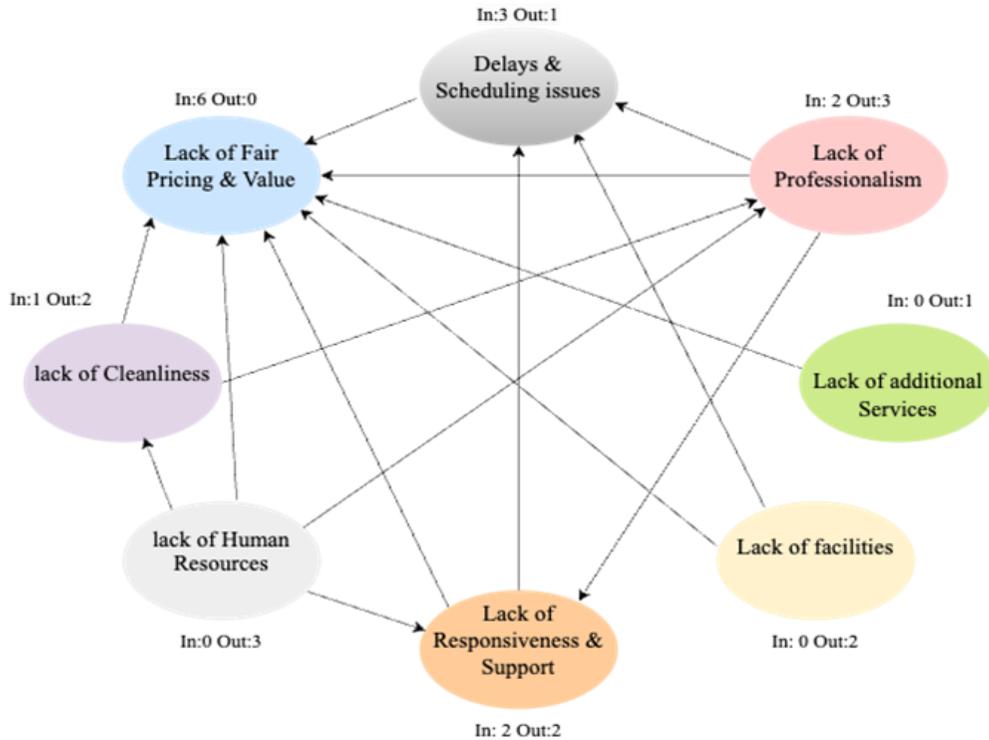


Figure 3: Interrelationship Diagram (Developed by Authors)

Tree diagram

This approach is considered one of the most effective ways to plan tasks or solve problems. It organizes events in a branching structure that maps out the necessary steps to reach a goal or deeply analyze the root causes of an issue. It's especially useful when the core problem is known, but no solution strategy exists yet, or when a task initially seems simple but becomes difficult to execute. Especially if serious consequences can happen, it is useful to use this method for reviewing various approaches, guiding complicated steps, finding interdependencies, and pinpointing ways to improve the process (Al Thnayan et al., 2001). As the next step, a tree diagram was built to further investigate and break down the reasons detected by the customer feedback collected through focus groups, surveys, and an affinity diagram.

Process Decision Program Chart (PDPC)

The Process Decision Program Chart (PDPC) serves as a planning tool in modern management to spot possible failures before they occur in the plan. Risks are addressed by finding solutions that can either stop them or reduce their effect. At the PDPC, participants make sure the plan is updated to avoid difficulties and plan the best ways to handle them if they should happen

(Amartya & Mahbubah, 2022). The goal is to explain that focusing on prevention usually helps more than resolving problems when they crop up. PDPC is used mainly to outline each step in completing a process and to deeply analyze it (Gooding, 2018). Its primary goal is to conduct a detailed investigation into the process and identify areas where failures might happen.

In this research, 28 primary causes were derived from eight key issues identified through the tree diagram. The PDPC diagram incorporated 20 of these primary causes, each linked to one of the eight main issues. Subsequently, the team generated multiple solutions addressing these causes and assessed the potential risks associated with their implementation. Following the risk assessment, alternative solutions were proposed to mitigate these risks. In total, the team proposed 32 solutions, 33 identified risks, and 33 corresponding alternative solutions.

Matrix diagram

The matrix serves as a core component among the seven management tools, primarily aiming to illustrate the connections between outcomes and causes or goals and methods, while also assessing their relative importance and the direction of their influence through coded indicators (Tsironis, 2018). Additionally, the diagram assists in identifying potential causes behind particular results. It is particularly useful when dealing with two separate groups of factors or methods that might not initially seem connected, or when a cumulative numerical evaluation is necessary to compare two items. Factors are systematically organized into a chart with rows and columns, and the intersections highlight the relationship and its intensity, forming the groundwork for decision-making and problem-solving (Pramono et al., 2018). Data represented within the matrix is utilized in matrix data analysis to structure and quantify information.

In this context, the relationships between customer requirements and alternative quality attributes are categorized into three levels: strong, moderate, and weak. The paper evaluated the solutions derived from the PDPC to analyze the link between causes and solutions. A strong relationship is marked with the symbol (●) and assigned a value of 9, a moderate relationship is indicated by (○) with a value of 3, and a weak relationship by (▽) with a value of 1, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Matrix Diagram Symbol Value

Symbol				▼
Value	9	3	1	
Relationship	Strong	Medium	Weak	No relationship

Prioritization Matrix

The tool called the Prioritization Matrix lets you organize and decide which actions to take by systematically evaluating them. Sorting the tasks by how they fit with operational and improvement factors gives a quick and straightforward way to find which tasks should be dealt with first (Shahin et al, 2010). After drawing up a matrix to monitor the pairings of causes and solutions, this research used a prioritization matrix to arrange the solutions according to how important they were.

It is commonly accepted that this framework helps organizations sort issues in order to resolve the most serious ones initially. It is useful no matter how big or small a project is, which is why individuals and organizations use it. When added to established criteria, some call it a Criterion or Priority Matrix, which allows teams to measure options by looking at their strategic importance, what they could bring in terms of value, and chances of success (Alshahrani et al, 2023). Usually, in a matrix structure, each technical requirement or strategy is written vertically and given a score and rank indicating its significance. This way, the scores help set priorities by ranking the tasks from most to least urgent, and the overall score provides an easy way to find the most urgent tasks for each team or department. Action strategies that were given priority were given to the proper departments based on the action plan.

To further validate the prioritization results and assess the salon's competitive position, a weighted gap analysis was conducted. This analysis compares the performance of the studied salon against two local competitors across key service factors. The purpose is to identify relative weaknesses and opportunities for improvement that align with customer expectations.

Quality Function Deployment

Quality Function Deployment (QFD) is one of the tools used in Total Quality Management (TQM) to help meet and fulfill customer needs and expectations. QFD is a process that helps find out customer expectations and weaves them into the production of new products (Karanjekar et al., 2021). Researchers collect what customers require by doing surveys, watching them interact, or analyzing field data. After collecting data, it is arranged in a product planning matrix that allows translating what customers are looking for (Muslimin et al, 2023).

A main benefit of QFD in improving quality is that it helps to change customer needs into specific requirements for products and services (Park, 2021). Here, the researchers found the House of Quality (HOQ) to be the most significant part of QFD. At the beginning, the voice of the customer was organized into eight domains obtained from the Affinity Diagram, making a few adaptations to add facilities, human resources, services, pricing,

professionalism, scheduling, responsiveness, and cleanliness. Under each category, a total of 26 requirements were identified based on customer feedback.

Each of these requirements was rated on a scale from 1 to 5 to determine its relative importance. Furthermore, technical requirements were obtained from the PDPC, which initially yielded 65 proposed solutions. These were subsequently narrowed down to 22 requirements based on scoring results. The relationship dimension between customer needs and technical requirements was brought in from the prioritization matrix tool. Each technical requirement was assigned a score; the highest score, 352, was attributed to increasing staff during peak hours, while the lowest score, 114, corresponded to keeping cleaning supplies accessible.

A competitive analysis was also conducted, involving the company under study and two competitors operating within the same customer segment. Services were evaluated based on customer requirements before the implementation of proposed improvements, using a scale from 0 to 5. The roof of the HOQ diagram was used to determine whether technical requirements positively (+) or negatively (-) influence one another in the implementation process. In conclusion, the HOQ tool enabled the strategic application of management tools to design optimal solutions that align with customer needs and requirements while enhancing competitiveness within the market (Figure 4).

Areas of Improvement

Time and scheduling

One important area for improvement at the Beauty Salon is the management of time and appointment scheduling. Clients have frequently reported issues such as delays, extended waiting times, and inconsistent appointment handling. These concerns often lead to dissatisfaction and impact the overall client experience. Additionally, the current booking system is not always convenient or accessible, making it difficult for clients to manage or reschedule their appointments easily. Effective time management and improved communication are essential to enhance operational flow, build trust, and ensure a more professional and pleasant experience for every customer. Therefore, the following recommendations have been made:

- Implement an advanced appointment management system to ensure efficient scheduling and reduce waiting times.
- Offer express beauty services for clients who are short on time.
- Send automated appointment reminders and updates via SMS, WhatsApp, or email to both clients and staff.
- Assign a dedicated staff member, such as a front desk coordinator, to manage the daily schedule and follow up on delays or changes.
- Enable 24/7 online booking through a mobile-friendly website or app.
- Use chatbots or simple booking forms to allow quick appointment requests via social media or website.
- Include booking links on Salon's Instagram, Snapchat, and other social channels.
- Allow clients to view, confirm, or reschedule appointments online with ease.

Value and responsiveness:

The business is dealing with major issues with its services at the moment, which is affecting how customers feel. Many customers find that they receive responses late, which makes them think the business is not concerned about their questions. The process for problem resolution is also slow or confusing, as there is usually no regular sharing of updates, which leaves customers feeling lost.

Also, when people are away from their jobs, such as during evenings or other peak periods, this makes it hard for customers to resolve their issues since employees might not be trained to handle different job functions at the same time. In addition, the compensation system is unclear and unfair when things go wrong. Not everyone knows their rights, and employees at this level are usually unable to speedily settle small complaints, making the situation

worse for everyone. As a result, customers trust the company less, are less loyal, and their opinion about its quality services is lower.

- Implement a structured and proactive communication system to ensure timely, clear, and helpful customer responses.
- Train staff in communication best practices and use digital tools to automate and streamline responses.
- Establish a formal, accessible complaint system with defined processes for tracking and resolving issues.
- Introduce real-time tracking and escalation mechanisms to address recurring problems effectively.
- Optimize staff scheduling and availability, especially during peak times, to reduce wait times and ensure service consistency.
- Cross-train employees and explore remote support options to maintain high service standards.
- Develop a fair, transparent compensation policy for service issues, including clear rules for refunds, redos, or discounts.
- Empower staff to offer immediate, minor compensations and communicate these policies to build customer trust.

Staff issues

As a result of the interview and focus group, it becomes clear that the salon is having issues with its Human Resources (HR) systems due to salaries that do not match industry standards, unclear ways for employees to advance, and limited training available. Such problems lead to lower staff engagement and job satisfaction, block career advancement, and result in a lot of staff leaving the organization.

- Enhance compensation and benefits to align with employee needs and market standards.
- Introduce a transparent and attractive rewards system to support motivation and retention.
- Establish a clear and fair promotion process to guide career growth and boost employee engagement.
- Develop a structured career development plan to support long-term ambition and retention.
- Strengthen the training framework to address real skill gaps and future organizational needs.
- Provide engaging, relevant learning opportunities to improve performance and adaptability.

VIP services and loyalty programs

The Beauty Salon does not have any subscriptions, memberships, or loyalty programmes. Customers are, however, expected to receive this service.

Frequent clients have expressed, through questionnaires and focus group discussions, their expectation that such services should be offered. The following recommendations are proposed to enhance the service:

- Launch a points-based loyalty program with tiered rewards (Bronze, Silver, Gold) based on visit frequency.
- Offer perks like birthday discounts and referral bonuses.
- Create a VIP membership program that includes personal consultations, exclusive product access, priority booking, and a direct line to preferred stylists.
- Promote these benefits via email, SMS, or app notifications, keeping clients engaged and informed.

Action plan:

Priority	Action Plan	Difficulty	Start Date	Due Date	Responsible Department	Support Needed	Challenges
1	Increase staff during peak hours	Normal	01/08	31/08	HR / Operations	Human / Financial	Financial cost / Human availability
1	Send reminders to clients and staff	Easy	01/08	16/08	IT / Customer service	IT / Human	Technical / Customer's reaction
1	Implement an advanced appointment management system	Hard	03/09	03/10	IT	IT / Financial	Technical / Financial cost
1	Train staff in efficient communication	Normal	04/09	10/09	HR	Human / Official arrangement	Lack of commitment
1	Send updates via SMS, email, or WhatsApp	Easy	05/08	19/8	IT / Customer service	IT / Human	Customer's reaction
1	Allow 24/7 booking online or via app	Hard	08/09	07/12	IT / Customer service	IT / Financial	Technical / Customer adoption
1	Check for skill gaps	Normal	09/06	08/10	HR	Managers/ Supervisor	Lack of commitment
2	Create a VIP membership program with exclusive perks	Hard	10/08	24/11	Marketing / Sales	Financial / Marketing	Customer's reaction / Financial cost
2	Train staff on cultural sensitivity and inclusivity	Normal	10/10	10/11	HR	Human / Official arrangement	Lack of commitment / Cultural challenges
2	Reward staff meeting standards	Easy	12/12	30/12	HR / Management	Financial / Human	Financial cost / Fairness

2	Empower frontline staff to give small compensations quickly	Normal	13/06	12/07	Management / Customer service	Human / Financial	Misuse risk
2	Train staff regularly on products and services	Normal	14/08	13/10	HR	Human / Official arrangement	Turnover / Time constraints
2	Respond to all complaints within 24–48 hours	Normal	15/08	14/09	Customer service	Human	Technical /High complaint volume
2	Track complaints in real time	Hard	16/08	30/08	Customer service	Human	Peak time
2	Empower staff to resolve issues	Normal	17/08	16/09	Management /Customer service	Human / Official arrangement	Lack of commitment / Misuse risk
3	Upgrade internet package	Easy	18/09	17/11	IT	Financial / Technical	Technical / Financial cost
3	Set clear SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) for all services	Normal	19/03	02/05	Management / HR	Official arrangement	Lack of commitment/ Flexibility, and Innovation
3	Expand service delivery options to include home-based services	Hard	20/06	19/12	Management / Marketing	Financial / Human	Logistical complexity / Quality control issues
3	Use high-quality sanitizing solutions	Easy	21/08	21/08	Operations / Procurement	Financial	Financial cost / Product availability
3	Offer anonymous ways to report bias	Normal	22/08	05/11	HR	Human / Official arrangement	Lack of trust in anonymity
3	Offer raises or bonuses based on performance	Normal	01/12	30/12	HR / Management	Financial / Human	Financial cost / Fairness
3	Keep cleaning supplies accessible	Easy	01/08	31/08	Management	Logistics / Human	Overuse of supplies

Recommendations and conclusion

Researchers conducted the present study to test the service quality of the beauty salon sector through the combination of the SERVQUAL model with Quality Function Deployment (QFD), with the assistance of seven quality management tools. Although the rather real gains of this practice are unquestionable (e.g., better customer satisfaction, loyalty, operational

efficiency), there should be emphasis on the theoretical implications of the given dual-framework approach. The use of SERVQUAL led to the systematic identification of the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions that were assessed on major dimensions of services. Such diagnostic capability provides a sound, theoretically-informed basis of knowledge about such intangible quality aspects of services. Nonetheless, SERVQUAL in and of itself is not very helpful in assisting in how to translate customer expectations into service design requirements. Here, the theoretical prowess of QFD comes out.

QFD, especially through its key tool, the House of Quality, closes this gap by materializing the abstract customer needs by operating on the final service features and the internal processes. This duality pushes towards a more multidimensional and balanced approach to management of service quality that combines the qualitative intuition (SERVQUAL) with planning and prioritization, and execution (QFD). Not only does the synergy between the two frameworks enhance the empirical rigor of service quality evaluations, but it also gives a theoretical roadmap of continuous service innovation, being based on a customer-focused design.

Furthermore, the application of such supportive tools as the Affinity Diagram, Interrelationship Digraph, and Prioritization Matrix makes the process more methodological and replicable and helps to strengthen the legitimacy of the combined framework. Such systemic articulation of the customer voice and service design ideals is also generalizable to other service-intensive industries in addition to the beauty salon business and presents a theoretically based and reproducible model towards quality enhancement. To sum up, the combination of the SERVQUAL and QFD is not only a convenient set of practical tools in the field but also a theoretically safe method that improves the sphere of service quality management. It propels our knowledge of diagnosing, prioritizing, and solving service quality problems in a manner that is customer sensitive and feasible to implement. Such studies can be advanced further in order to examine the subsistence of this framework in more industries as well as its effects on long-term organization learning and innovation.

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A Resource-Based View of Human Capital and Performance in Deposit-Taking Saccos in Kirinyaga County, Kenya

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Abstract

Deposit-taking savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs) in Kirinyaga County continue to grapple with challenges such as low profitability, high staff turnover, and limited technological adoption, factors that undermine their financial sustainability and operational efficiency. This study applies the Resource-Based View (RBV) to examine the relationship between human capital and the performance of these SACCOs. A descriptive research design was adopted, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires administered to SACCO managers and employees, alongside secondary data from financial reports. Ten SACCOs were purposively selected for analysis, and statistical techniques were employed to assess the influence of internal resources on performance outcomes. The findings indicate that while human capital, particularly well-trained and experienced staff, is recognized as a valuable resource, its practical impact on performance is often constrained by inconsistencies in human resource practices. The study concludes that strategic investment in human capital is essential but must be accompanied by coherent policies in recruitment, training, motivation, and performance management to yield sustainable benefits. By highlighting the centrality of human resources within the RBV framework, the study offers actionable insights for SACCOs seeking to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen competitive advantage, and contribute more effectively to regional economic development.

Keywords: Resource-based, SACCOs, organizational performance, resources, credit

Introduction

Organizational performance is a crucial factor for the progress and expansion of any nation's economy. The public has raised questions about SACCOs, primarily due to members losing money. The task of enhancing performance while navigating the shifting regulatory landscape, competitive landscape, and accelerating technological development has been placed before the institutions' administrations. The management wants to see measurable results and a good return on investment from specific activities, and they may object if they feel "there is a lack of comprehension of how a particular activity affects performance" (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

The initial function of savings and credit cooperative organizations (SACCOs) was to provide members with access to credit and financial services. However, as time passed, they evolved and now offer a broader range of products. They have aided in the country's enhanced socioeconomic development. They have been crucial in the financial intermediation process and constitute a significant indicator of how society's welfare would improve. They have continued to face fierce rivalry from other actors in the financial industry, such as commercial banks, microfinance, shylocks, and other investment groups, despite their contribution to growth (Okomu & Oyugi, 2016). In 2020, deposit-taking SACCOs had a penetration rate of 12.18% of the global financial market (World Council of Credit Unions Report, 2020). Out of the six continents, Africa has the most credit societies, totalling 40,570, and Oceania comes last with only 237 credit societies. The credit societies are only in 118 countries worldwide, with some nations having only one credit society. In Africa, Ethiopia leads with 20851 credit societies, and Kenya comes second with 8966, with only 175 being deposit-taking savings and credit societies.

SACCOs have continued to gain popularity since 1846 in Germany and have spread to Canada, the US, Europe, and primarily on the African continent. According to the 2020 and 2021 credit union community and economic impact reports, SACCOs in Canada serve 5.9 million Canadians, holding a market share of 17.2% compared to chartered banks and other deposit-taking institutions, which have a market share of 82.8%. The profitability of Germany SACCOs deteriorated in 2018, decreasing significantly by 31.2% before tax and 39.2% after tax. The net interest income remained below its long-term average, while administrative spending remained roughly constant (Deutsche Bundesbank report, 2019).

Research Problem

Although many researchers have demonstrated in the literature that organizational resources can help organizations improve performance (Hoq & Chauhan, 2011; Gakenia, 2015), little is understood about how human resources can help deposit-taking SACCOs enhance their performance. This problem highlights the need for additional research to address the existing knowledge gaps, as numerous academics have only partially and individually explored the relationships between the variables of the current study in various situations (Baryamureeba, 2014; Moura & Lengler, 2010; Muthui, 2013; Ndiege, Haule, & Kazungu, 2013). For instance, Baryamureeba (2014) found a strong and positive association between technology and service delivery among SACCOs in Rwanda. Additionally, Ndiege, Haule, and Kazungu (2013) found a strong correlation between funding sources and the spread of SACCOs in Tanzania.

The current research fills in conceptual gaps because only a few of the aforementioned empirical investigations have merged the variables under consideration. Additionally, researchers have produced both positive and negative findings regarding the relationship between explanatory and response variables, necessitating the current investigation to resolve these discrepancies. Although several studies were limited to specific circumstances, the results of the current investigation cannot be generalized to all circumstances.

There is a need for additional research to address the methodological gaps, as the procedures used in each study, including sampling designs, sample selection, respondent characteristics, and data processing methods, are subject to validity and reliability concerns. Additionally, conflicting results regarding the association between the current study's variables are evident in existing empirical studies (Gakenia, 2015; Raduan, Haslinda, & Alimin, 2011), necessitating further research to fill these knowledge gaps. The current study examines the impact of human resources on the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya, aiming to address these gaps.

Objectives and Significance of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of human resources on the performance of deposit-taking cooperatives in Kirinyaga County. Specifically, it examined the impact of human resources on the profitability levels of deposit-taking cooperatives in Kirinyaga County. The results of this study significantly advance theory, policy, and strategic management practice, while also benefiting academics and researchers. By providing a clear explanation of how human resources can be leveraged to enhance the performance of deposit-taking cooperative societies in Kirinyaga County, the information contributes to the body of knowledge. These results

will help policymakers develop organizational resource-based policies that enhance the performance of deposit-taking cooperatives. Managers and administrators of deposit-taking SACCOs will use the results to inform decisions that enhance the performance of these institutions. These results serve as a resource for academics and researchers.

Empirical Review

Unger et al. (2011) examined the relationship between human capital and entrepreneurial success within Ghana's lodging and tourism accommodation sector. Framed within the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study emphasized that both entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and firm-specific resources are central to organizational performance. Using an explanatory survey design, the study sampled 113 of 142 registered facilities. Findings showed high levels of proactiveness among managers but limited competitive aggressiveness and risk-taking—critical dimensions of EO. The study concluded that while EO dimensions such as innovation and autonomy contribute marginally to financial performance, competitive aggressiveness significantly affects firm success. This study is relevant to the current research on SACCOs, as both contexts underscore the role of strategic human capital in organizational outcomes. By highlighting the importance of managerial behavior and resource configuration, it complements the present study's focus on how human resources shape SACCO performance within a resource-based framework.

Cania (2014) defines human resources as individuals who contribute both mental and physical labor to an organization. Black and Boal (2010) argue that firms investing in their workforce are more likely to gain a competitive edge. Bamel and Bamel (2018) further support the view that high-performing organizations treat employees as strategic assets and invest in capacity building to meet organizational objectives. Similarly, Bakri (2017) insists that leadership should orient policies toward continuous employee development rather than solely organizational outcomes. Other scholars, such as Mohamed and Bett (2018), maintain that trained and experienced employees enable firms to implement strategies, adopt technologies, and build collaborative networks. Raduan, Haslinda, and Alimin (2011) emphasize that understanding employee competencies is fundamental to strategic management. Nyberg et al. (2014) and Ali and Ngu (2019) suggest that firms must regularly upskill staff and foster a supportive environment to unlock their full performance potential. Together, these studies reinforce the RBV's premise: that human capital is a core, inimitable resource critical for sustained competitive advantage.

Deposit-Taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County, Kenya

SACCOs are regarded as a people's collection for a common goal (Mathuva et al., 2016). Members of a SACCO may have a social or economic purpose. The history of cooperative societies dates back to the 1840s in England, during the Industrial Revolution. The SACCOs aimed to promote and protect the interests of the English working class during the Industrial Revolution (Muthui, 2013). Later, in the 1980s, groups of farmers were motivated to establish the Agricultural Cooperative Savings and Credit Society to facilitate the acquisition of farm inputs and market their farm produce (Muriuki, 2016). Since the establishment of cooperative Savings and Credit in the 1840s in Britain, the concept has continued to gain popularity not only in developed nations but also in developing states.

In Kenya, the first Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization was registered in 1964 after independence (Njuguna, 2015). In 1969, the Kenyan Government encouraged the registration of more cooperative societies, which aimed to provide credit facilities to working-class people with common objectives. In 1966, the Cooperative Societies Act was enacted by Parliament, introducing new regulations to control the operations of cooperative societies. Since 1973, significant developments have occurred in the SACCO sector, culminating in the registration of numerous SACCOs. Since 1975, the number of SACCOs in Kenya has immensely increased, resulting in 3.7 million members of SACCOs. From 1990 to date, it is estimated that SACCOs have mobilized deposits of more than Ksh. 170 billion and disbursed credit above Ksh. 120 billion to members (SACCO Societies Regulatory Authority, 2017). Among the 47 counties of Kenya is Kirinyaga County, which covers an approximate area of 1,478.1 km². Notably, Kirinyaga County borders Nyeri, Muranga, and Embu Counties. From the capital city, Nairobi, Kirinyaga County is approximately 138 Kilometers away. Out of the 175 licensed SACCOs by SASRA to operate in the year 2022, only 6 SACCOs are from Kirinyaga County, with only 2 SACCOs having branches across the county and the other 4 SACCOs having a single branch in the entire county. Commercial banks continue to hold a larger market share in Kirinyaga County and lend money to a broader group in the county compared to SACCOs.

Over the years, members have continued to voluntarily withdraw from SACCOs. The non-performing loan portfolio has continued to increase each year, with interest on deposits for members remaining stagnant in certain SACCOs while declining in others. According to the SASRA report 2020, among the SACCOs in the large tire deposit-taking SACCOs, two are from Kirinyaga county; the entities recorded a decline in growth rates of total assets. One declined from 12.95% to 6.66%, while the other declined from 16.68% to 13.93%. The decline in the performance of SACCOs within Kirinyaga County has formed the basis of this study; hence, the research will seek to

investigate whether resources, in terms of human labor, finance, and technology, can lead to outstanding performance of SACCOs.

Resource-Based Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a dominant framework in strategic management that explains organizational performance through the lens of internal resources (Talaja, 2012). Originally articulated by Penrose (1959) and later expanded by Barney (1991, 1995), the theory posits that organizations achieve sustained competitive advantage by effectively deploying resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Nyberg et al. (2014) assert that variations in firm performance are largely attributable to differences in how organizations utilize their internal resources. Colbert (2014) and Barney (1995) highlight that developing difficult-to-replicate capabilities, such as employee expertise, culture, and tacit knowledge, can drive long-term performance gains.

RBV is especially relevant to this study, which investigates how human resources affect SACCO performance. Human capital, encompassing skills, knowledge, motivation, and leadership ability, is not easily replicated or substituted making it a strategic asset within SACCOs. Ruivo, Oliveira, and Neto (2015) support the view that RBV provides a practical lens for evaluating how firms allocate and leverage key internal resources. Accordingly, this study adopts RBV to examine the extent to which human resource practices—such as recruitment, training, promotion, and motivation contribute to SACCOs' operational efficiency and sustainability. By aligning with RBV, the study positions human capital as a critical enabler of value creation and competitive advantage in the cooperative sector.

Methods

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, which is suitable for capturing and analyzing data at a specific point in time. According to Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2015), descriptive research provides a detailed account of existing conditions, making it suitable for examining real-world phenomena. Liamputtong (2019) emphasizes that descriptive research is valuable for analysing current trends and relationships within a given context. This design was selected due to its ability to accommodate multiple variables while remaining cost-effective. Furthermore, the descriptive research design allowed for the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the causal relationships between study variables. The use of a descriptive survey approach was particularly relevant given the nature of the research, which sought to provide a resource-based

view of human capital and performance in deposit-taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County.

Sample

The units of analysis for this study were individuals holding key managerial positions in deposit-taking SACCOs within Kirinyaga County. The target population consisted of 91 professionals, including chief executive officers (CEOs), chief financial officers (CFOs), sales managers, credit control managers, and executive directors, drawn from the seven registered and operational deposit-taking SACCOs in the county. These specific roles were selected because they are instrumental in policy formulation, financial oversight, credit management, and strategic decision-making, making them the most relevant sources of data for the study. The inclusion of executive directors is further supported by the SACCO Societies Act of 2008, which mandates that boards consist of 5–9 members, with at least four of these members being executive directors. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure each eligible respondent had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Study Procedure

To inform the respondents from the participating SACCOs about the study, the researcher made contact with them. The researcher delivered the surveys to the SACCO location on the designated day. We employed the drop-off and pick-up strategy. Respondents were given one week to complete the surveys. Due to their hectic schedules as department heads, the sampled respondents only had one week to complete their responses. After that, the questionnaires were picked up on the scheduled date. Secondary data were obtained from the financial reports of participating SACCOs, which were accessed through their websites or magazines.

Data Collection

The study utilized both secondary data and primary data collected. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Lindlof and Taylor (2017) report that surveys can describe the study's objectives and provide clarification on any unclear items. The use of semi-structured questionnaires facilitated the collection of data from a large number of respondents. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were included in the surveys. Notably, a tightly ended survey directed respondents to provide precise responses. In contrast, an open-ended survey allowed respondents to express their ideas and opinions freely, providing suggestions without restriction.

The SACCOs' audited yearly financial reports were used to gather secondary data. To enable the realization of the study's aims, the researcher employed various tests to ascertain not only the validity of the research instruments but also their reliability. To ensure that the research tools are dependable and consistently measure the variables intended to be measured, validity and reliability tests are essential.

Data Analysis

A scrutiny of the gathered information was done. The process of removing erroneous or faulty records from a dataset is known as data cleaning. To determine whether the data adheres to the fundamental assumptions of using important analytical techniques, such as regression analysis, diagnostic tests were performed. Excel was used for regression analysis. After categorizing the data according to the study's goals, regression analyses yielded descriptive statistics. In addition, the analyses yielded inferential statistics.

The features of the study's key variables were described using descriptive statistics. The statistics considered were measures of central tendency, such as the mean, and measures of dispersion, such as the standard deviation. Additionally, the analysis included percentages and frequency distributions. The study employed correlation analysis in tandem with linear regression analysis as part of the investigation's inferential statistics. A regression model of the kind listed below was used in this investigation. Below is the presentation of the regression model.

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

Where:

Y = Organization performance

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Coefficient of human resources

X_1 = Human Resources

ε = error term

Results

Table 1: Response Rate

Rates	Frequency	Percent
Response	91	100.00%
Non-Response	0	0.00%
Total	91	100.00%

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The study achieved a 100 % response rate (see Table 3.1), with all 91 distributed questionnaires being completed and returned. This indicates excellent engagement and participation from the target respondents,

suggesting that the data collected is comprehensive and representative of the population under study. In the context of the project, this high response rate strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings, as it eliminates the potential for non-response bias (Morrison & Roese, 2011). Such a response rate is critical for ensuring that conclusions drawn about the impact of organizational resources on the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County are well-supported by empirical evidence.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha
Human Resources	0.795
Market Share	0.852
Total Assets Turnover Ratio	0.834
Return on Equity	0.876

Source: Field Study (2024)

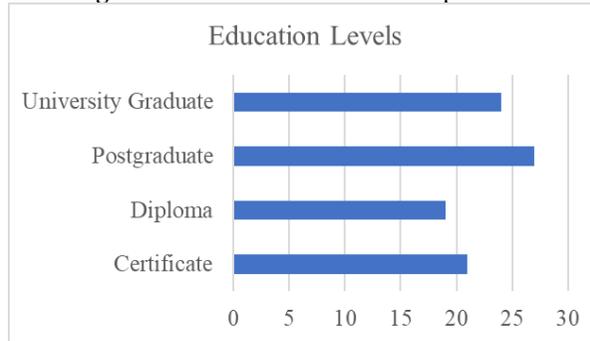
The human resources Cronbach's alpha of 0.795 is a good indicator of reliability, suggesting that the items used to measure human resources are consistent and reliable in assessing their impact on SACCO performance (see Table 3.2). The market share variable shows a very high reliability of 0.852, indicating that the items measuring market share are highly consistent, reflecting strong internal consistency. The reliability score for the total assets turnover ratio is 0.834, indicating that the measures used effectively and reliably represent the total assets turnover ratio. The Cronbach alpha of 0.876 for the return on equity demonstrates the highest reliability among the set, confirming that the return on equity items are exceptionally consistent and dependable in reflecting the construct. All variables exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for Cronbach's Alpha, indicating strong internal consistency across the measures (Sijtsma, 2009). This result suggests that the survey instrument and the collected data are reliable for examining the impact of human resources on SACCO performance.

Demographic Information

To ensure the reliability of the research findings, personal information about members and employees of deposit-taking Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) in Kirinyaga County was systematically collected. This comprehensive data collection encompassed various demographic and professional attributes of the respondents, including their gender, educational level, length of employment, and their respective positions within the Organization.

Level of Education

Figure 1: Education Levels of Respondents



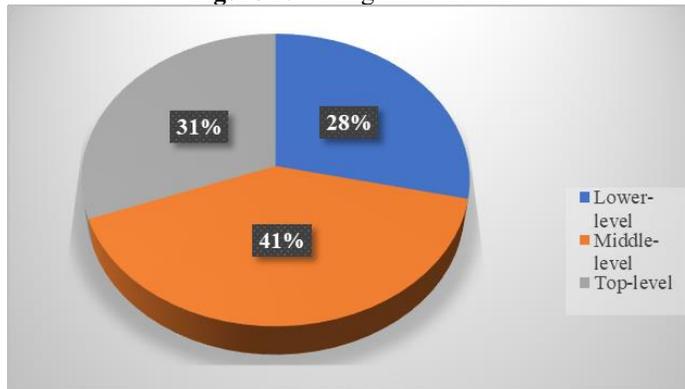
Source: Field Study (2024)

Figure 3.1 illustrates the distribution of respondents by education level, revealing a diverse mix of academic qualifications among SACCO employees in Kirinyaga County. There were 21 certificate holders, representing the entry-level qualification and reflecting a significant proportion of employees who likely handle foundational or technical roles within the SACCOs. There were 19 diploma holders, which forms a slightly smaller group but is crucial, likely contributing to mid-level management and operational activities.

There were 24 university-graduate respondents. They represent a significant segment, reflecting a higher level of academic expertise. They are likely involved in supervisory, managerial, or analytical roles within the SACCOs. The highest number of respondents, 27, were postgraduate degree holders, indicating a strong presence of advanced academic qualifications. These individuals likely occupy senior management as well as specialized roles, contributing to strategic decision-making and driving performance in the SACCOs.

Management Levels

Figure 2: Management Levels

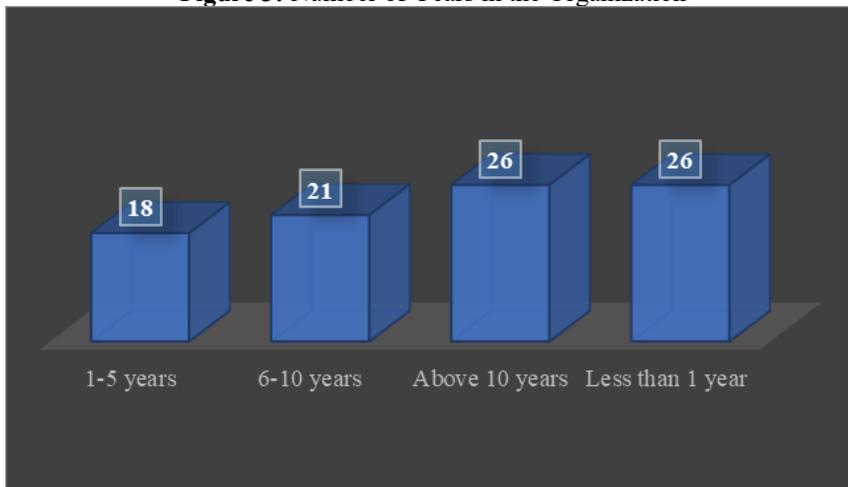


Source: Field Study (2024)

Data from Figure 3.2 suggests that most respondents are at the middle level (40.66%), followed by the top level (30.77%), and a smaller portion is at the lower level (28.57%). The majority of the respondents were middle-level employees, followed by top-level workers. Middle-level employees represent the core operational and management staff in SACCOs and are often instrumental in allocating resources and making decisions. On the other hand, the top-level indicates leadership, whose influence is critical for setting the strategic direction. Likewise, the lower-level involves staff involved in day-to-day operations, who play a key role in executing the plans and policies developed at higher levels. This distribution affects how resources are allocated within these SACCOs and their subsequent impact on performance.

Number of Years in the Organization

Figure 3: Number of Years in the Organization



Source: Field Study (2024)

A high proportion of respondents (28.57 %) have been with the SACCO for more than 10 years or less than 1 year, suggesting a mix of experienced members and recent additions (see Figure 3.3). This could indicate varying levels of familiarity with the SACCO's operations, which may affect their perspective on organizational resources and performance. The 23.08% with 6-10 years' experience is the middle group, likely more knowledgeable and experienced than those with less than 1 year, but still relatively newer compared to those with over 10 years' experience. The 19.78 % with 1-5 years' experience may represent individuals who are still building their understanding of the SACCO's culture and operations. The distribution suggests that the respondents span across different stages of their SACCO involvement, which could provide valuable insights into how organizational resources affect both experienced and newer employees.

Human Resources and Performance of Deposit-Taking SACCOs

Table 3: Influence of Human Resources on the Performance of a SACCO

Extent of influence	Frequency	Percentage
Great extent	16	17.58 %
Little extent	22	24.18 %
Moderate extent	17	18.68 %
No extent	21	23.08 %
Very great extent	15	16.48 %
Grand Total	91	100.00 %

Source: Field Study (2024)

Respondents believe that human resources have a significant influence on the performance of their entity, but opinions on the degree of influence vary. The distribution of responses suggests that a moderate portion of respondents (24.18%) believe that human resources have a limited influence on performance. This observation could suggest that while human resources play a role, other factors may be more significant in driving performance. A smaller proportion (18.68%) perceives human resources as influencing performance to a moderate extent, indicating a middle ground where human resources are important but not the sole driving force (see Table 3.3). Fewer respondents (17.58%) believe that human resources influence performance to a great extent, while an even smaller group (16.48%) thinks it influences performance to a very great extent. This indicates that while human resources are recognized as important, few respondents consider them the primary driver of performance. On the other hand, 23.08% of respondents believe that human resources have no influence, suggesting that these respondents might perceive other factors, such as financial or operational resources, as more critical to the performance of their SACCOs.

Table 4: Human Resources

Human Resource and Performance	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
We strive to recruit our staff to make them committed internally	91	1	5	3.033	1.524
We inspire our employees to embrace more on-the-job training sessions to hone their skills	91	1	5	2.835	1.500
To be eligible for promotion, staff must demonstrate that they satisfy the minimum criteria set out.	91	1	5	3.077	1.344
The employer has adopted motivation strategies that ensure that employees are always aligned with the Organization's goals	91	1	5	2.868	1.500
Our company emphasizes personnel expertise during recruitment	91	1	5	3.077	1.335
We encourage teamwork amongst all the departments to achieve the organization's goals	91	1	5	2.868	1.431
We motivate our staff with competitive compensation	91	1	5	2.780	1.444
Employees receive salary increments annually	91	1	5	3.187	1.374
The Organization has both financial and non-financial incentives to motivate staff.	91	1	5	3.220	1.405

Source: Field Study (2024)

The participants were neutral on whether internal recruitment fosters employee commitment. This result was evidenced by a mean score of 3.033 with a standard deviation of 1.524. However, the relatively high standard deviation implies considerable variation in opinions, indicating that some employees strongly agreed while others strongly disagreed that internal recruitment would improve the level of commitment among SACCO staff. On-the-job training was rated with a mean of 2.835 and a standard deviation of 1.500, suggesting that employees slightly disagreed with the assertion that training is actively encouraged within their organizations. The substantial standard deviation highlights diverse perspectives, possibly reflecting differences in training opportunities across different SACCOs. The diverse perspectives may reflect differences in training opportunities across different SACCOs.

Regarding promotion eligibility, the statement that employees must satisfy minimum criteria before receiving a promotion received a mean of 3.077, indicating a general agreement. The standard deviation of 1.344 suggests that responses were somewhat varied but not excessively dispersed, indicating a moderate level of consistency in responses. To be eligible for promotion in Kirinyaga SACCOs, staff must prove that they satisfy the minimum criteria set out.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of motivation strategies in aligning employees with organizational goals was rated with a mean of 2.868, indicating slight disagreement among respondents. The high standard deviation of 1.500 suggests significant variations in perceptions, possibly due to inconsistencies in motivation strategies across different SACCOs. It implies that Kirinyaga SACCOs might be using diverse motivation approaches, resulting in differing opinions.

Emphasis on personnel expertise during recruitment received a mean score of 3.077, indicating that respondents generally agreed that qualifications and expertise are prioritized in hiring decisions. The standard deviation of 1.335 indicates moderate dispersion in responses, implying that while some SACCOs emphasize expertise, others may not do so consistently. As a result, qualifications and expertise were prioritized in hiring decisions of most SACCOs in Kirinyaga.

At the same time, the encouragement of teamwork across departments scored a mean of 2.868, reflecting a neutral stance, with employees neither strongly agreeing nor disagreeing. However, the standard deviation of 1.431 suggests a relatively high variation in responses, indicating differing experiences with teamwork initiatives in various SACCOs. The neutral stance on encouragement of teamwork implies different experiences with teamwork initiatives in various SACCOs.

Competitive compensation as a motivational tool received a mean rating of 2.780, signifying mild disagreement that salaries are competitive enough to motivate employees. The standard deviation of 1.444 suggests varied opinions, possibly due to disparities in compensation levels across different SACCOs. For this reason, competitive compensation is a great motivational tool, though a few SACCO employees insisted that their salaries were not modest enough to inspire them.

The study also found that salary increments are provided annually, with a mean of 3.187, indicating general agreement among respondents. However, the standard deviation of 1.374 shows some dispersion in responses, suggesting that while many SACCOs adhere to this practice, some may not implement it consistently. This result indicates the need for SACCOs that have not implemented annual salary increments to do so starting immediately.

Additionally, the availability of both financial and non-financial incentives to motivate staff had the highest mean score of 3.220, indicating that most respondents agreed with this statement. The standard deviation of 1.405 suggests some variation in responses, likely due to differences in how incentives are structured across SACCOs. Although there are both financial and non-financial incentives to motivate staff, some SACCOs have yet to implement them.

Whereas some aspects of human resource practices, such as promotion criteria, salary increments, and incentive structures, were viewed positively, other factors, like on-the-job training, motivation strategies, and competitive compensation, received mixed or slightly negative responses. The standard deviations indicate considerable variation in employee experiences, pointing to inconsistencies in HR policies across different SACCOs.

Regression Model

The marginal effects of the explanatory factors, which include human resources, technological resources, and financial resources, were assessed on the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County using the multiple regression technique. Evidence of the outcomes relating to the variables' effect on the explained factor was displayed in Table 3.5.

Table 5: Regression Model

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	0.3168455	0.0550554	5.7550268	1.272E-07	0.2074169	0.4262741
Human	0.0060528	0.0101955	0.5936741	0.5542705	-0.0142118	0.0263173

Considering the estimated parameters in Table 4.10, the stated regression equation that was estimated is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 0.3168455 + 0.0060528 \text{ Human Resources}$$

The intercept coefficient 0.3168 indicates the baseline level of SACCO performance when all explanatory factors are held constant (see Table 3.5). Its p-value 1.272E-07 is highly significant, suggesting the intercept is statistically significant and different from zero. The Coefficient for Human Resources is 0.0061, which suggests a positive but negligible effect of human resources on SACCO performance. Its p-value 0.5543 is not statistically significant, indicating that the relationship between human resources and performance is not statistically meaningful in this model.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis

	Performance	Human Resources
Performance	1	
Human Resources	0.053376794	1

The correlation coefficient between performance and human resources was 0.053376794, suggesting a weak positive relationship between these variables (see Table 3.6). In other words, as human resources' skills increase, they improve the performance of the companies in which they work.

Table 7: ANOVA Table

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	3	0.04064519	0.013548397	0.733591026	0.534750061
Residual	87	1.60676799	0.018468598		
Total	90	1.64741319			

The ANOVA table showed an F-statistic of 0.733591026 with a p-value of 0.534750061 (see Table 3.7). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that human resources are insignificant. This observation suggests that human resources have a small and insignificant impact on the performance of SACCOs.

Qualitative Analysis

The 91 respondents provided several recommendations to enhance the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County. A significant majority (47%) suggested improving governance structures within SACCOs. This observation includes ensuring transparency and accountability in financial management, as well as establishing robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating SACCO operations. Respondents emphasized that well-trained and ethical leadership is crucial for maintaining member trust and promoting financial stability.

Another 29% of the respondents recommended increasing financial literacy among SACCO members. They noted that equipping members with knowledge about saving, borrowing, and investing would empower them to make informed financial decisions and contribute to the SACCO's growth. Furthermore, 14 % of the participants proposed diversifying the range of

financial products and services offered by SACCOs. They highlighted the need to introduce innovative products, such as digital loan platforms, insurance options, and savings plans tailored to the needs of different demographics, particularly youth and small business owners.

Lastly, 10 % of the respondents emphasized the importance of improving technology adoption within SACCO operations. They suggested leveraging advanced financial software and digital platforms to streamline processes, enhance member access to services, and reduce operational inefficiencies. Collectively, these recommendations underscore the need for SACCOs to adapt to changing financial landscapes while maintaining a member-centric approach.

The respondents also identified specific gaps in this study that could serve as areas for future research. A notable proportion (36 %) highlighted the lack of a detailed examination of external factors, such as economic and regulatory environments, which significantly influence SACCO performance. They suggested that a deeper exploration of how government policies and macroeconomic trends impact SACCOs could provide more comprehensive insights.

Another 27 % of the respondents noted the absence of member-specific data, such as demographic characteristics and financial behaviors, which could better explain member participation and satisfaction levels. Additionally, 21 % pointed out the limited focus on non-financial performance indicators, such as social impact and member empowerment, which are essential metrics for evaluating the overall success of SACCOs. Finally, 16 % felt that the study did not sufficiently address the role of collaboration among SACCOs and other financial institutions in fostering growth and innovation. These identified gaps highlight areas that future studies could address to build on the findings of this research.

Discussion

The educational composition of respondents in Kirinyaga SACCOs suggests a workforce with substantial knowledge and skill diversity. The dominance of degree and postgraduate holders indicates a strategic preference for high-skill employees, aligning with Ngugi (2014), who posits that a well-educated workforce enhances organizational adaptability and decision-making. From an RBV perspective, this educational depth reflects a valuable internal resource capable of sustaining competitive performance. Most respondents affirmed that human resources significantly influence SACCO performance. While some acknowledged other influencing factors—such as financial capital or external regulations—the strong emphasis on HR supports Black and Boal's (2010) assertion that firms investing in people gain a

performance edge. However, perceptions of HR effectiveness varied, indicating inconsistencies in implementation across SACCOs.

On internal recruitment, opinions were split. Chigozie, Aga, and Onyia (2018) contend that internal hiring strengthens institutional memory and employee commitment, especially in environments emphasizing continuous learning. This divergence suggests that some SACCOs may lack well-structured internal recruitment frameworks, limiting their ability to exploit this strategic advantage. Promotion policies appeared consistent across SACCOs, with advancement tied to minimum criteria. This mirrors findings by Chuang, Liu, and Chen (2015), who argue that merit-based promotion enhances organizational performance by motivating skill development—another resource-aligned practice under RBV.

Motivation strategies were diverse, and the lack of consistency may explain why some respondents were indifferent or dissatisfied. Competitive compensation was recognized as important, though not universally applied. According to Meichang, Winching, and Dan (2017), fair remuneration is essential to employee motivation, a key determinant of performance under RBV. SACCOs that fail to offer adequate compensation risk underutilizing their human capital potential.

Teamwork received mixed responses, possibly due to different team structures or organizational cultures. While Karanja, Muraguri, and Kinyua (2018) support teamwork as a profitability driver, its effectiveness depends on how well it is integrated into organizational practices. Overall, while SACCOs in Kirinyaga recognize the value of human capital, inconsistent HR practices limit the full realization of these benefits. These findings underscore the RBV's assertion that not all resources are equally valuable unless managed strategically.

Conclusion

This study explored the influence of human resources on the performance of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kirinyaga County, guided by the Resource-Based View. The findings suggest that while SACCOs acknowledge human resources as central to achieving performance goals, inconsistent implementation of HR practices limits their strategic value. Recruitment of skilled personnel, employee training, and motivational strategies emerged as potential performance enablers. However, disparities in training opportunities, promotion standards, compensation structures, and team engagement dilute the effectiveness of human capital as a competitive resource. The study concludes that human resources, when strategically managed, can serve as a core capability that sustains SACCO performance. However, without coherent HR policies aligned with RBV principles, such as rarity, value, and non-substitutability, SACCOs risk underutilizing this critical asset. Future policy

and management efforts must prioritize the structured development, motivation, and retention of employees to ensure that human capital contributes meaningfully to operational efficiency, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, there is a need to strengthen recruitment practices. SACCOs should adopt merit-based recruitment to attract and retain top talent. Second, there is a need to enhance on-the-job training. Regular training sessions should be institutionalized to equip employees with the skills needed to navigate industry changes. Third, SACCOs should implement cross-departmental collaboration initiatives to promote teamwork. Fourth, SACCOs should implement effective motivation strategies. A combination of financial and non-financial incentives should be implemented to align employee efforts with organizational objectives. Fifth, there is a need to invest in compatible systems. SACCOs should conduct needs assessments before acquiring new technologies to ensure compatibility with organizational goals. Sixth, SACCOs should improve user training. Regular training sessions should be conducted to ensure that employees fully understand and utilize technological systems effectively. Seventh, there is a need to enhance automation. Processes across all SACCOs should be automated to increase efficiency and reduce operational costs.

Suggestions for Further Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the impact of human resources on the performance of deposit-taking Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) in Kirinyaga County, several areas remain for further exploration. Future research could investigate the impact of external factors, including government policies, economic conditions, and technological advancements, on the performance of SACCOs. These factors might provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics affecting SACCOs.

Additionally, this study primarily focused on Kirinyaga County. Expanding similar research to other regions in Kenya or even across East Africa could reveal comparative insights and regional variations. Such studies could also explore the role of cultural and demographic factors in shaping the effectiveness of human resources. Another promising area for future research would be to delve deeper into the impact of specific types of resources, such as human capital and technology, on SACCO performance. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to analyse the long-term effects of organizational resources on performance.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

This study aims at investigating **ORGANIZATION RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE OF DEPOSIT TAKING SACCOS IN KIRINYAGA COUNTY KENYA**. The questionnaire is devised to assemble data on the study variables. All responses will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used for any other motive apart from that indicated. Please answer all the questions in the sections as indicated by either ticking or filling in the blank space provided.

Section A: Background information

1. Please indicate your present highest level of education.

- Certificate
- College diploma
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

2. In your organization's hierarchical structure, please point out your management level.

- Top level
- Middle level
- Lower level

3. For how long have you been in this organization?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- Above 10 years

Section A: Human Resources and Performance of Deposit Taking SACCOs

4. In your own opinion, to what extent does human resources influence performance of your entity?

- No extent
- Little extent
- Moderate extent
- Great extent
- Very great extent

5. On a scale of 1-5, rate your position on the below enumerated concepts of human resources in reference to your organization.

Scale: 1=strongly disagree (SD), 2=disagree (D), 3=undecided (U), 4= agree (A) and 5= strongly agree (SA).

Human Resource and Performance	1	2	3	4	5
We strive to internally recruit our staff to make them committed					
We inspire our employees to embrace more on-job training sessions to hone their skills					
To be eligible for promotion, the staff has to demonstrate that they satisfy the minimum criterion set out.					
The employer has adopted motivation strategies that ensure that employees are always aligned with the organization's goals					
Our company put emphasizes on personnel expertise during recruitment					
We encourage teamwork amongst all the departments to achieve the organization goals					
We motivate our staff with competitive compensation					
Employees receive salary increments annually					
The organization has both financial and non-financial incentives to motivate staff.					

SECTION B: Performance of Deposit Taking SACCOs

10. This segment requires you to populate data on market share, turnover growth and return on shareholders' equity as measures of performance of your SACCO.

Performance of Deposit Taking SACCOs	
Market share (Number of customers in a SACCO / Total number of all deposit taking SACCOs)	
Profitability (Turnover = Net profit/ Total Assets)	
Return on shareholders' equity = Net profit / Shareholders Equity	

11. What recommendations would you give towards bettering the performance of the SACCO?

.....

 ..

12. In the space provided please give any more information that you consider relevant to the study but which may have not been captured.

.....

The Mediating Role of Engagement and Culture in the Relationship Between Paternalism, Organizational Identification and Voice Behavior

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Abstract

This study investigates the mediating effects of work engagement and organizational culture in the relationship between paternalistic leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior within the context of Jordanian industrial shareholding companies. The research sample was drawn from a population of 3,612 managers occupying top and mid-level positions across 239 companies, as listed by the Jordanian Ministry of Industry and Trade. For the purposes of this research, large firms were classified as those with a workforce of 500 employees or more. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to enhance sample representativeness, resulting in a calculated minimum sample size of 347 respondents. From the 400 questionnaires distributed, 347 were returned, of which 318 were deemed suitable for statistical analysis, corresponding to a valid response rate of 79.5%. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS software to test the hypothesized relationships. The results revealed that paternalistic leadership has a significant and direct positive effect on both organizational identification and voice behavior. Similarly, organizational culture demonstrated a substantial positive influence on these outcomes. Moreover, work engagement was found to be positively correlated with organizational identification and voice behavior. Importantly, the analysis

confirmed the mediating roles of both organizational culture and work engagement. Specifically, organizational culture mediated the relationship between paternalistic leadership and both organizational identification and voice behavior. Additionally, work engagement served as a mediator in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and these two dependent variables. These results highlight the pivotal role of internal organizational dynamics - namely culture and employee engagement - in strengthening leadership effectiveness and fostering constructive employee behavior in industrial organizations operating in Jordan.

Keywords: Paternalistic leadership, voice behavior, engagement, culture, organizational identification

Introduction

The dynamics between paternalistic leadership, organizational identification, employee engagement, and voice behavior have become a significant area of research, particularly in contexts where hierarchical and collectivist cultures dominate. Paternalistic leadership, characterized by a leader's authoritarian yet benevolent approach, has been recognized for its impact on employee behavior and organizational outcomes, especially in collectivist societies (Cheng et al., 2004). In regions like Jordan, where hierarchical structures are prevalent in many organizations, particularly in shareholding industrial companies, paternalistic leadership is often seen as a guiding force that not only dictates rules but also demonstrates concern for employee well-being, thus fostering loyalty and identification with the organization (Gelfand et al., 2017).

Recent theoretical and empirical developments emphasize the central importance of organizational identification, which refers to the extent to which employees perceive themselves as psychologically aligned with their organization's values, goals, and identity (Pellegrini et al., 2010; Ötken & Cenkci, 2012). This sense of identification strengthens employees' emotional connection to the organization and encourages them to engage in discretionary behaviors that support organizational advancement - most notably, voice behavior. Voice behavior involves the voluntary communication of constructive ideas, concerns, or suggestions intended to improve organizational functioning (Morrison, 2014).

However, the influence of paternalistic leadership on voice behavior is typically indirect. Research indicates that this relationship is often mediated by factors such as employee engagement and cultural context (Shin & Choi, 2022; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Gelfand et al., 2017). Employee engagement - defined as an individual's emotional and cognitive commitment to their job and organization - plays a crucial role in facilitating voice. Highly

engaged employees tend to exhibit a stronger sense of accountability and proactivity, which increases their likelihood of contributing ideas and feedback aimed at organizational improvement. In contrast, low engagement is frequently linked to silence, withdrawal, and reduced innovative input (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Cultural values serve as another essential mediating construct. They shape employees' beliefs about the appropriateness of voicing concerns or ideas, especially within hierarchical and authority-sensitive organizational contexts (Detert & Burris, 2007). Cultures that emphasize openness, participation, and psychological safety encourage employees to speak up without fear of reprisal. In contrast, environments that prioritize deference to authority and conformity may suppress voice behavior, regardless of leadership intentions (Gelfand et al., 2017).

In the context of Jordanian industrial shareholding companies - often characterized by centralized decision-making structures and hierarchical authority - paternalistic leadership assumes a particularly nuanced role. On one hand, such leadership can cultivate a familial, supportive work climate, thereby enhancing employees' sense of belonging and engagement. On the other hand, if paternalistic behaviors are perceived as authoritarian or patronizing, they may hinder employees' willingness to share insights, stifling voice behavior and innovation (Gupta & Kumar, 2023).

Understanding the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification, and how it influences voice behavior, requires examining key mediating variables such as employee engagement and organizational culture. Organizational identification - especially within collectivist cultures like Jordan - is closely linked to employee loyalty, emotional attachment, and the alignment of personal and organizational goals (Pellegrini et al., 2010; Ötken & Cenkci, 2012).

In the context of Jordanian industrial shareholding companies, both paternalistic leadership and organizational identification are deeply rooted in prevailing cultural norms and influence levels of employee engagement. By aligning leadership approaches with cultural expectations and strategic goals, leaders can nurture a more cohesive and committed workforce. Importantly, balancing the nurturing characteristics of paternalistic leadership with sufficient autonomy and developmental opportunities enhances employees' identification with the organization and contributes to a healthier workplace environment.

Voice behavior, which entails the voluntary expression of constructive feedback, concerns, or ideas aimed at improving organizational functioning, plays a pivotal role in driving innovation and responsiveness in competitive markets (Wu & Tsai, 2012). Within Jordan's industrial sector, encouraging

voice behavior can help organizations adapt more effectively to environmental changes (Cheng & Wang, 2015).

Employee engagement - conceptualized as the degree of an employee's enthusiasm, dedication, and psychological investment in their job - emerges as a key predictor of proactive behaviors in the workplace (Guchait et al., 2016). Engaged employees are more likely to extend themselves beyond formal role expectations and contribute actively to organizational goals. This is especially vital in Jordanian industrial enterprises, where maintaining competitiveness and long-term sustainability requires an agile, committed, and innovative workforce (Göncü et al., 2014).

Therefore, to achieve optimal organizational performance, it is essential to understand the interrelationships among paternalistic leadership, organizational identification, employee engagement, and voice behavior. These interconnected variables influence the internal climate of the organization and significantly affect employees' motivation to participate meaningfully. Leaders who adopt a paternalistic style can enhance employees' psychological attachment to the organization by creating a supportive and respectful work environment. This, in turn, strengthens identification with the organization and promotes a culture of open communication and initiative-taking.

In this regard, fostering a workplace culture that values engagement, identification, and open expression is critical for leadership success in Jordanian industrial companies. When these elements are harmonized, organizations are more likely to benefit from improved innovation, employee satisfaction, and overall performance. Leaders must, therefore, implement strategies that strengthen engagement and cultivate a deep sense of organizational belonging to reinforce employees' motivation to act in the organization's interest.

Organizational culture - comprising the shared assumptions, values, and norms that influence behavior within the organization - also plays a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of leadership styles (Zhang et al., 2015). In Jordanian industrial settings, which often operate within hierarchical frameworks and collectivist traditions, culture plays a central role in how leadership behaviors are perceived and how employees connect with their roles and the organizational mission. Cultural context can either amplify or inhibit the positive effects of paternalistic leadership, depending on how well leadership behaviors resonate with local norms.

Recognizing and integrating these cultural nuances is essential for the effective implementation of paternalistic leadership in Jordan. Leaders must carefully balance assertiveness with supportiveness, while fostering innovation, autonomy, and openness. Tailoring leadership practices to match cultural expectations can significantly enhance employee identification and

engagement, which, in turn, encourages voice behavior and supports sustainable organizational development (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012).

This research, therefore, seeks to explore how employee engagement and organizational culture mediate the influence of paternalistic leadership on organizational identification and voice behavior within Jordanian shareholding industrial companies. Through this inquiry, the study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how leadership styles, cultural factors, and employee attitudes interact to shape organizational effectiveness in the Jordanian industrial sector.

Problem Statement

In the dynamic context of Jordanian shareholding industrial companies, a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among paternalistic leadership, organizational identification, voice behavior, employee engagement, and organizational culture is essential for cultivating a positive organizational climate and enhancing overall effectiveness. While these constructs have been extensively examined in isolation, their integrative dynamics - particularly the mediating roles of employee engagement and cultural values - remain underexplored within the Jordanian cultural and industrial landscape.

Paternalistic leadership, a leadership style rooted in a blend of authority, discipline, and personal concern for subordinates, positions leaders as both figures of guidance and protectors of employee welfare (Aycan, 2006). In return, leaders often expect loyalty and compliance. Within the Jordanian context - characterized by collectivist values and hierarchical structures - this leadership approach may significantly shape how employees perceive their roles, responsibilities, and psychological affiliation with the organization (Alqhaiwi, 2023). While this leadership style has the potential to foster trust and open communication, it may also inhibit expression if perceived as excessively authoritarian. This duality is particularly relevant to voice behavior, which refers to the voluntary expression of constructive feedback, suggestions, or concerns aimed at improving organizational functioning (Khan & Gul, 2020).

A concept closely aligned with this discussion is organizational identification, which refers to the degree to which individuals internalize their affiliation with the organization as part of their self-identity, experiencing a deep emotional connection to its mission and core values (Judeh, 2020). When employees exhibit a strong sense of identification, they tend to demonstrate greater organizational commitment, loyalty, and proactive engagement. Such individuals are also more inclined to exhibit voice behavior, as they view the organization's success as intimately linked to their own personal fulfillment and accomplishments (Mohammad et al., 2022).

Another important mechanism in this dynamic is employee engagement, which encompasses the emotional, cognitive, and physical energy employees invest in their work and organizational life. Engaged employees are typically more motivated, resilient, and aligned with organizational goals. Their heightened sense of responsibility and purpose often translates into greater willingness to express ideas and participate in improvement initiatives (Judeh, 2020; Khan & Gul, 2020). Therefore, employee engagement may serve as a mediating pathway through which paternalistic leadership enhances organizational identification and stimulates voice behavior.

Equally important are the cultural values embedded within the organizational environment. Organizational culture encompasses the collective norms, values, and underlying assumptions that influence employee behavior, attitudes, and workplace interactions. In Jordan - a society characterized by collectivist orientations that prioritize social harmony, hierarchical respect, and interdependence - cultural context significantly shapes how leadership styles are perceived and how employees react to managerial actions (Suifan et al., 2020; Alqhaiwi, 2023). These cultural frameworks can either amplify or constrain the effectiveness of paternalistic leadership, ultimately shaping its influence on both employee engagement and voice behavior. Thus, organizational culture may function as either a mediating or moderating variable in the interplay among leadership, identification, and employee expression.

Despite the theoretical importance of these constructs, empirical investigations into how paternalistic leadership manifests in Jordan's industrial sector remain limited. In particular, insufficient attention has been directed toward the mediating roles of engagement and culture, and how these factors collectively shape outcomes such as voice behavior and organizational identification. Considering the cultural dynamics that influence leadership perceptions and employee conduct in the Jordanian context, addressing this gap is essential for the development of contextually appropriate management strategies.

Consequently, this study aims to examine the mediating effects of employee engagement and cultural values on the relationship between paternalistic leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior within Jordanian shareholding industrial firms. By analyzing these interrelated variables within an integrated conceptual model, the research aspires to generate practical insights for leaders and policymakers. The outcomes are expected to support the formulation of culturally congruent leadership practices that foster greater employee expression, strengthen identification with the organization, and ultimately enhance innovation and organizational performance.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification among managers in companies?
2. What is the impact of Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior among managers in companies?
3. What is the impact of cultural values on organizational identification among managers in companies?
4. What is the impact of cultural values on voice behavior among managers in companies?
5. What is the impact of work engagement on organizational identification among managers in companies?
6. What is the impact of work engagement on voice behavior among managers in companies?
7. Do Cultural values mediate the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior among managers in companies?
8. Does work engagement mediate the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior among managers in companies?

Objectives of The Study

- 1) To investigate the impact of Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification among managers in companies.
- 2) To examine the impact of Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior among managers in companies.
- 3) To investigate the mediating role of cultural values on the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior among managers in companies.
- 4) To investigate the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification, and voice behavior among managers in companies.

Literature Review

The Effect of Paternalistic Leadership and Organizational Identification

Extant literature offers robust theoretical and empirical evidence supporting the positive linkage between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification, especially within collectivist cultures where values such as hierarchy, loyalty, and social cohesion are emphasized. For instance, Cheng et al. (2004) found that the combination of authoritative and benevolent leadership traits - hallmarks of the paternalistic style - strengthens emotional connections between employees and their organizations, thereby enhancing organizational identification. This relationship is particularly

pronounced in cultural contexts where obedience and interpersonal dependency are culturally reinforced.

Expanding on this premise, Jia et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of the benevolent and moral dimensions of paternalistic leadership in cultivating an ethical and supportive organizational climate. Their research suggests that these dimensions foster psychological safety and a sense of collective purpose, both of which intensify employees' emotional investment in the organization. Similarly, Gupta and Kumar (2023) concluded that paternalistic leadership promotes organizational identification by encouraging employee engagement and fostering an organizational culture rooted in fairness, loyalty, and reciprocal trust.

Kim and Choi (2023) provided further empirical validation, demonstrating that within collectivist environments, paternalistic leadership facilitates ethical congruence between individual and organizational goals. Their findings underscore how mutual respect, a fundamental characteristic of paternalistic leadership, enhances organizational identification by aligning employees' personal values with institutional objectives. Additionally, Van Dick et al. (2018) argued for a more differentiated understanding of paternalistic leadership, given its three distinct dimensions - authoritarian, benevolent, and moral. While the authoritarian aspect may potentially undermine identification, the benevolent and moral components have been shown to positively reinforce employees' social identity within the workplace.

Despite the increasing scholarly attention to these dynamics, empirical investigations into the effects of paternalistic leadership on organizational identification within Jordan's industrial sector remain scarce. Given the central role of cultural values in shaping leadership perceptions and organizational behavior, it is essential to further explore these relationships in the Jordanian context. Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Paternalistic Leadership has a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

The Effect of Paternalistic Leadership and Voice Behavior

Cheng et al. (2004) found that paternalistic leadership significantly enhances employees' propensity to voice their ideas and concerns, particularly when leaders demonstrate both benevolence and ethical behavior. Employees who perceive their supervisors as just, caring, and principled are more likely to engage in voice behavior - voluntarily offering suggestions or raising concerns for the benefit of the organization. In a similar vein, Jia et al. (2021) highlighted that paternalistic leadership contributes to the creation of a supportive organizational climate that encourages open communication,

particularly when leaders embody moral integrity, fairness, and mutual respect. Such an environment cultivates interpersonal trust, which is essential for employees to feel psychologically safe when expressing their views.

Empirical findings across different organizational contexts reinforce this association. Research by Nal (2020), Liu and Wang (2023), and Özyılmaz and Oral Ataç (2019) consistently reports a positive relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior. These studies indicate that when leaders exhibit the core dimensions of paternalism - authoritative guidance, benevolent support, and moral leadership - employees are more inclined to communicate their ideas and participate in organizational dialogue. This leadership style nurtures a sense of psychological safety, empowering employees to contribute meaningfully to workplace improvement. As a result, such leadership enhances organizational learning, innovation, and problem-solving capacity. In light of this body of evidence, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Paternalistic Leadership has a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

The Effect of Cultural Values on Organizational Identification

Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) highlighted the significant influence of cultural values on the development of organizational identification. Their study revealed that employees are more likely to form a strong sense of identification with their organization when they perceive its cultural environment as inclusive, supportive, and aligned with their personal values. Similarly, Schein (2010) emphasized the foundational role of organizational culture in fostering identification, suggesting that the extent to which individual and organizational values are aligned directly impacts the depth of an employee's identification. Building on this perspective, Alvesson (2012) demonstrated that cultural norms and values play a vital role in shaping how employees understand their roles, navigate workplace relationships, and ultimately cultivate a sense of belonging within the organizational setting.

Further empirical support is provided by Jin and Lee (2020), who investigated cultural values in the context of a multinational corporation and found that a workplace culture emphasizing trust, collaboration, and shared purpose significantly enhanced organizational identification among managerial staff. Similarly, Harrison et al. (2008) examined service-based organizations and reported that cultures characterized by fairness, transparency, and inclusivity were associated with elevated levels of employee identification. Their results reinforce the notion that congruence between personal and organizational values cultivates a deeper psychological attachment and commitment to the organization.

In light of these insights, organizations that intentionally foster and uphold cultural values aligned with employee beliefs are more likely to strengthen organizational identification. This alignment not only supports higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction but also contributes to improved retention and overall organizational effectiveness. Accordingly, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Cultural values have a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

The effect of Cultural values on Voice Behavior

A growing body of research highlights the pivotal role of cultural values in shaping employees' voice behavior. Avey et al. (2009) indicated that when organizational culture is grounded in values such as empowerment, collaboration, and transparency, employees are more inclined to express their ideas and concerns. In such environments, particularly those emphasizing trust and inclusivity, managers tend to feel psychologically safe, which enhances their willingness to contribute constructive input aimed at organizational improvement.

Morrison (2011) further underscored that cultures fostering openness, encouragement, and innovation create conditions conducive to voice behavior. She argued that when employees perceive the organizational environment as supportive of feedback and solution-oriented dialogue, they are more likely to take initiative and engage in voice-related activities. This relationship appears particularly relevant for managerial roles, where the capacity to influence decisions is closely linked to cultural endorsement of participatory practices.

Complementing these insights, Burris (2012) examined voice behavior within hierarchical settings and found that supportive cultural norms - where managers are respected, trusted, and empowered - significantly increased their likelihood of speaking up. The presence of such cultural values was associated with more proactive communication, especially in contexts requiring critical feedback and strategic input. Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Culture has a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

The Effect of Work Engagement on Organizational Identification

The existing body of research highlights that employees are more likely to contribute effectively to organizational success when they develop a strong sense of organizational identification. Employees who strongly identify with their organization typically demonstrate positive attitudes toward it and

show higher levels of engagement in their tasks (De Roeck et al., 2016; Gozukara & Simsek, 2015). A profound sense of belonging fosters the perception that employees are integral and valued members of the organization (Abdullah et al., 2017; Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). Empirical evidence further supports a positive link between organizational identification and employee commitment (Davila, 2012; Chan, 2006). Importantly, commitment is conceptually aligned with the notion of work engagement and is often considered a component of state engagement, which forms a subdimension within the broader framework of employee engagement (Klein et al., 2009; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Drawing on this theoretical foundation, the present study proposes that organizational identification positively influences employees' work engagement. Employees who strongly identify with their organization are likely to display higher emotional and cognitive involvement in their roles (De Roeck et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Zhao et al., 2019).

Furthermore, research suggests a reciprocal relationship in which heightened work engagement strengthens organizational identification (De Roeck et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Zhao et al., 2019). Engaged employees tend to internalize organizational values, missions, and objectives, reinforcing their sense of belonging and loyalty. This dynamic not only supports employee well-being but also enhances organizational performance. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 5: Work engagement has a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

The Effect of Work Engagement on Voice Behavior

A substantial body of empirical evidence consistently affirms that work engagement significantly and positively affects employees' voice behavior (Korkmaz et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2020; Nal, 2020). Work engagement is defined as a psychological condition marked by energy, dedication, and immersion, capturing employees' enthusiasm and deep involvement in their professional roles. Individuals who are highly engaged are more inclined to offer constructive input, including suggestions and feedback, as part of their proactive efforts to support organizational improvement.

This proactive communication - commonly conceptualized as voice behavior - serves to strengthen internal communication mechanisms, facilitate problem-solving, and drive innovation, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance. Accordingly, fostering work engagement through enabling leadership styles and supportive organizational practices is critical in nurturing an environment that values employee voice.

In support of this relationship, studies by De Roeck et al. (2016), Schaufeli et al. (2002), and Zhao et al. (2019) have shown that engaged employees often develop a heightened sense of psychological ownership and accountability toward their organizations. This emotional and cognitive bond enhances their readiness to engage in organizational initiatives, including the articulation of creative ideas and constructive concerns. Based on this theoretical grounding and empirical validation, the study advances the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Work engagement has a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

The relation between culture, Paternalistic Leadership, and organizational identification

Previous studies indicate that paternalistic leadership, characterized by a blend of authority, care, and guidance, positively affects employees' organizational identification (Shahzad et al., 2022). This influence is particularly pronounced when the organization's cultural values closely resonate with employees' personal beliefs and goals, thereby fostering a shared value system that strengthens their identification with the organization (Suifan et al., 2020).

The literature also underscores the mediating role of cultural values in the link between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification (Shahzad et al., 2022; Suifan et al., 2020; Yeşiltaş et al., 2022). Paternalistic leadership merges authoritative decision-making with benevolence and moral integrity, presenting a leadership style that harmonizes control with genuine concern. Within this framework, cultural values act as a crucial mechanism through which paternalistic leadership cultivates employees' emotional bonds and loyalty toward the organization.

By fostering and maintaining a culture grounded in supportive and constructive values, leaders can significantly boost employees' feelings of belonging and commitment, thereby strengthening organizational unity and enhancing overall organizational performance. Based on these theoretical insights and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 7: Cultural values mediate a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification among managers in companies.

The relation between culture, paternalistic leadership, and voice behavior

Paternalistic leadership, which combines authoritative control with benevolent care, is significantly shaped by cultural values, particularly within

collectivist and high power distance societies. Leaders employing this style often leverage prevailing cultural norms to cultivate trust and loyalty among employees, thereby fostering an organizational climate that encourages voice behavior. Ayca (2006) emphasized that cultural dimensions such as collectivism influence employees' perceptions of paternalistic leadership, strengthening its positive impact on behaviors like the expression of constructive suggestions. Similarly, Morrison (2011) argued that employees' propensity to engage in voice behavior is contingent upon cultural congruence, where alignment of values enhances psychological safety and trust within hierarchical organizational structures.

Cultural values function as an essential mediating factor in the process through which paternalistic leadership influences managers' voice behavior. Empirical research indicates that when leadership behaviors align with prevailing cultural norms, employees are more inclined to view their leaders as supportive, which encourages proactive participation. For example, Farh et al. (2008) demonstrated that collectivist cultural values and respect for authority strengthen the positive association between paternalistic leadership and employee voice. Similarly, Chen and Farh (2021) emphasized that leadership effectiveness in multicultural settings is enhanced when cultural congruence acts as a mediator, fostering greater trust and loyalty that motivate employees to express their viewpoints openly.

Together, these findings highlight the pivotal mediating role of cultural values in shaping the relationship between leadership approaches and employee behaviors across varied organizational contexts. The mediation underscores that shared cultural norms and values influence how paternalistic leadership is perceived and enacted, which, in turn, affects employees' readiness to engage in voice behavior without fearing adverse repercussions. Building on this theoretical and empirical groundwork, the present study formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8: Cultural values mediate a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, voice behavior among managers in companies.

The relation between work engagement, paternalistic leadership, and organizational identification

While direct empirical evidence on the mediating role of work engagement between paternalistic leadership and employees' voice behavior remains sparse, related studies offer important insights. Paternalistic leadership, characterized by a combination of authority and benevolence, has been shown to positively impact both employees' voice behavior and their engagement levels at work (Korkmaz et al., 2018; Nisar et al., 2020; Nal, 2020). This leadership style fosters an organizational environment where

employees feel appreciated, supported, and motivated to share their ideas and suggestions aimed at organizational enhancement.

Simultaneously, work engagement - which reflects the extent of employees' enthusiasm, commitment, and absorption in their tasks - has been consistently associated with a higher propensity for voice behavior (Huang & Yin, 2024; Ensari et al., 2020). Engaged employees typically experience increased feelings of empowerment and intrinsic motivation, which encourage them to proactively communicate constructive feedback and innovative proposals.

Grounded in these theoretical and empirical perspectives, this study proposes that work engagement mediates the positive relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification among managerial staff.

Hypothesis 9: Work engagement mediates a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification among managers in companies.

The relation between work engagement, paternalistic leadership, and voice behavior

Empirical evidence indicates that employees who exhibit high levels of work engagement are more inclined to participate in proactive voice behavior, offering ideas, suggestions, and concerns that promote organizational advancement (Öge et al., 2018). When employees perceive their contributions as valued and acknowledged, they help cultivate a workplace culture characterized by openness and innovation, thereby enhancing overall organizational effectiveness (Ashfaq & Siddiqui, 2020).

Accordingly, work engagement functions as a vital mediating factor in the connection between paternalistic leadership and employee voice behavior. By fostering greater engagement, paternalistic leaders can create a psychological environment where employees feel safe, supported, and empowered to express their perspectives and actively engage in decision-making processes within the organization (Zhang et al., 2015). This process contributes to improved communication flows, more informed managerial decisions, and heightened organizational performance (Ensari et al., 2020; Huang & Yin, 2024). Based on these theoretical and empirical insights, the current study advances the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 10: Work engagement mediates a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership and voice behavior among managers in companies.

The research model is given below:

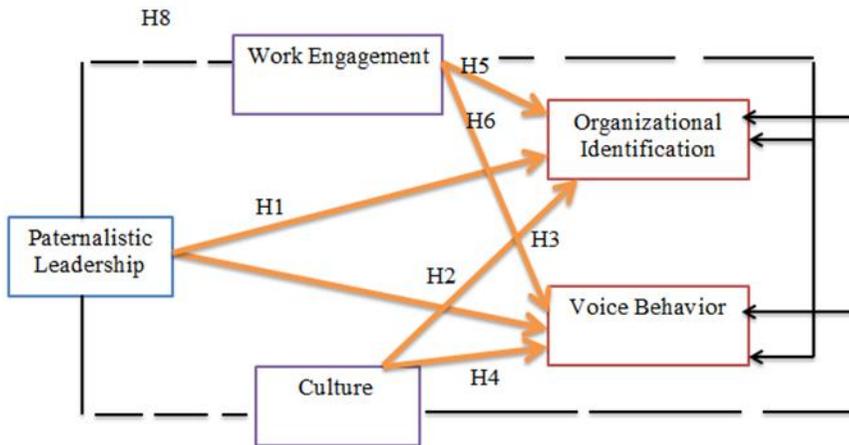


Figure 1: Research Model

Research Approach and Design

The primary data sources for this research encompass a comprehensive array of scholarly materials, including academic textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, periodicals, official reports, and relevant prior studies directly pertinent to the research topic. To augment these traditional sources, the researcher has also utilized credible and authoritative online resources, ensuring a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the subject matter. The integration of these diverse sources provides a robust scientific foundation and adheres to rigorous academic standards throughout the study.

A carefully designed structured questionnaire was developed to gather empirical data, ensuring strong alignment with the study's hypotheses and theoretical foundation. This tool aimed to precisely measure the core variables of interest and support the rigorous examination of the hypothesized relationships. The data collection process involves directly administering the questionnaire to the selected participants.

The sampling unit comprises managers from various organizational levels within Jordanian companies, representing a range of educational qualifications and professional experiences. This heterogeneity within the managerial sample aims to provide a comprehensive and representative insight into the studied phenomena, thereby enhancing the external validity and generalizability of the study's conclusions.

Research Population

The study population includes top and middle managers in Jordanian shareholding industrial companies. The population data is obtained through the Jordanian Ministry of Industry and Trade. A large company is defined as

one with 500 or more employees. The research population comprises 239 companies (Jordanian Ministry of Labor, 2023; ASE, 2023). The number of directors in the study population is 3612 managers. A sample will be taken from the study population.

Sampling

The study employed a proportional stratified random sampling technique to ensure representative coverage of the managerial population across companies of varying sizes. This sampling method was selected to account for differences in company size - measured by the number of employees - and to guarantee that the sample accurately reflects the distribution of managers within these companies. Proportional stratified sampling systematically divides the population into homogeneous strata based on relevant characteristics, thereby enhancing sample representativeness and improving the generalizability of the findings.

Within each stratum, simple random sampling was employed to select individual managers, guaranteeing that every member of the population had an equal chance of being chosen. This method helps reduce selection bias and enhances the validity of generalizing findings to the larger managerial population (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The overall population comprised 3,612 managers in top and middle management roles across 239 firms listed on the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE, 2023). The sample size was calculated based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendations, which suggest a sample of approximately 350 for a population of this size. To mitigate the effects of non-response bias - known to reach rates as high as 80% in mail surveys (Khan et al., 2016) - the sample size was accordingly adjusted. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula was applied to ensure sufficient statistical power and robustness of the study's results.

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size.
S is sample size.

Source: (Krejcie and Morgan 1970)

Validity Test

The questionnaire was sent to experts in the field of study. They were invited to validate the measurements because the items were adapted from many sources, and thus some of the measurements changed significantly to suit the context of this study. A total of ten experts participated in the validation processes. The feedback of the experts was used to alter the measurements so that they can better suit the context of this study. All the feedback and comments were addressed accordingly. The table shows the comments that were given by the experts and the responses to each comment.

Table 1: Experts participated in the validation processes

Expert	University
Prof. Ikhlas Al Tarawnah	Amman Arab University
Prof. Khalid Bani Hamdan	Amman Arab University
Prof. Zakaria Azzam	Zarqaa University
Prof. Aktham Al Saraira	Balqa Applied University
Prof. Mohammad Awwad	Mutah University
Dr. Ahmed Al – Omari	Yarmouk University
Dr. Ashraf Rajoub	Balqa Applied University
Dr. Euad Al Rawshdah	Tafila Technical University
Dr. Ahmad Al Rfou'	Tafila Technical University
Dr. Ahmad Abu Zaid	Mutah University

Response Rates

The research population consisted of top- and middle-level managers working within Jordanian shareholding industrial firms, identified through official records from the Jordanian Ministry of Industry and Trade. Data were collected over a two-month period, spanning February to April 2024. The total population comprised 3,612 managers employed across 239 companies listed on the Amman Stock Exchange. Employing a stratified random sampling method, the minimum sample size required was established at 347 managers according to Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) guidelines. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the selected participants, with 347 completed forms returned, resulting in an 86.8% response rate. Following data screening and cleaning procedures, 318 responses were deemed valid for subsequent analysis, reflecting an effective usable response rate of 79.5%. These statistics are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Response Rate

"Response Rate"	Respondents No
"Questionnaires Distributed"	400
"Returned"	347
"Not Returned"	53
"Returned and Unusable"	29
"Returned and Usable"	318
"Response Rate"	79.5%

Direct Effect

H1. Paternalistic Leadership has a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

Table 3: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership_ -> Organizational Identification	0.947	0.947	0.006	152.715	0.000	accept

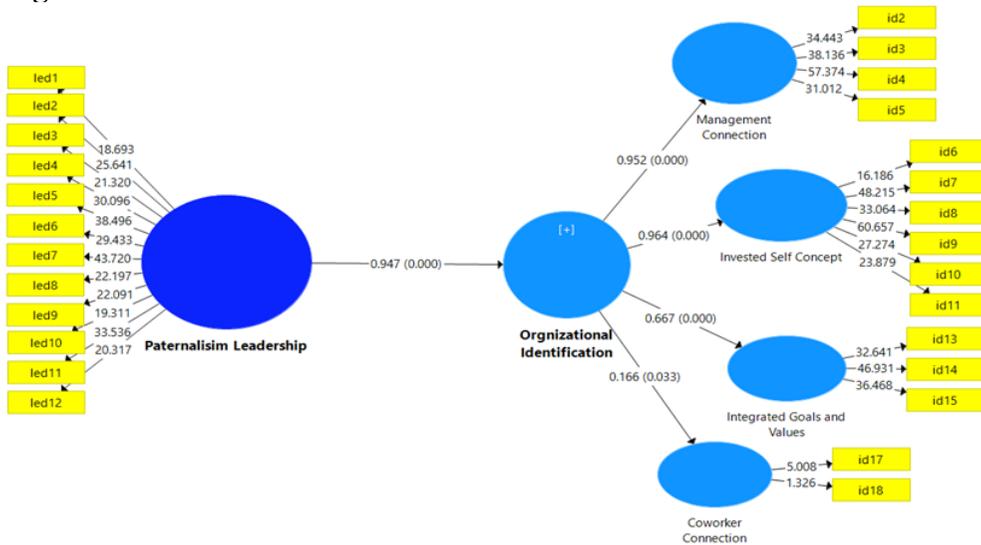
Table 3 demonstrates that paternalistic leadership has a strong and positive impact on managers’ organizational identification, as evidenced by a significant coefficient ($B = 0.947$, $p < 0.001$). Among the four dimensions of organizational identification assessed, the invested self-concept ($B = 0.964$) and management connection ($B = 0.952$) show the strongest relationships with paternalistic leadership. This suggests that managers influenced by paternalistic leadership are more likely to view themselves as deeply integrated within the organization and maintain a close rapport with senior leadership.

Additionally, there is a noteworthy positive association between paternalistic leadership and the alignment of integrated goals and values ($B = 0.667$), indicating that this leadership style promotes an environment where managers’ personal objectives harmonize closely with those of the

organization. While the effect on coworker connection is weaker ($B = 0.166$, $p = 0.033$), it remains statistically significant, suggesting that paternalistic leadership primarily strengthens identification with the organization and its leaders rather than peer relationships.

The high T-values observed across most dimensions further confirm the reliability and robustness of these findings. Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 1 (H1), confirming that paternalistic leadership plays a critical role in fostering organizational identification among managers by enhancing their personal commitment and alignment with organizational values.

Figure 2 shows path analysis test (t) for Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification



H2 Paternalistic Leadership has a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

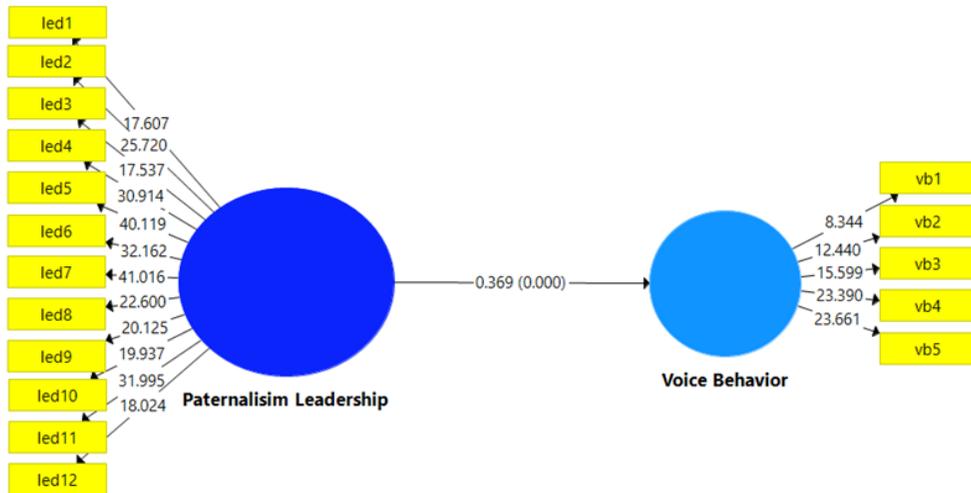
Table 4: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership->voice behavior	0.369	0.383	0.043	8.602	0.000	accept

Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing regarding the influence of paternalistic leadership on the outcome variable, voice behavior. The analysis utilized a decision rule based on the t-statistic, where the null hypothesis is rejected if the associated p-value is less than 0.05. In this study, all tested relationships produced p-values below this cutoff, indicating that the findings are statistically significant. Accordingly, the results confirm a

positive and direct impact of paternalistic leadership on managers' voice behavior.

Figure 3 shows the path analysis test (t) for Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior



H3 Culture values have a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

Table 5: Coefficient “cultural values on organizational identification”

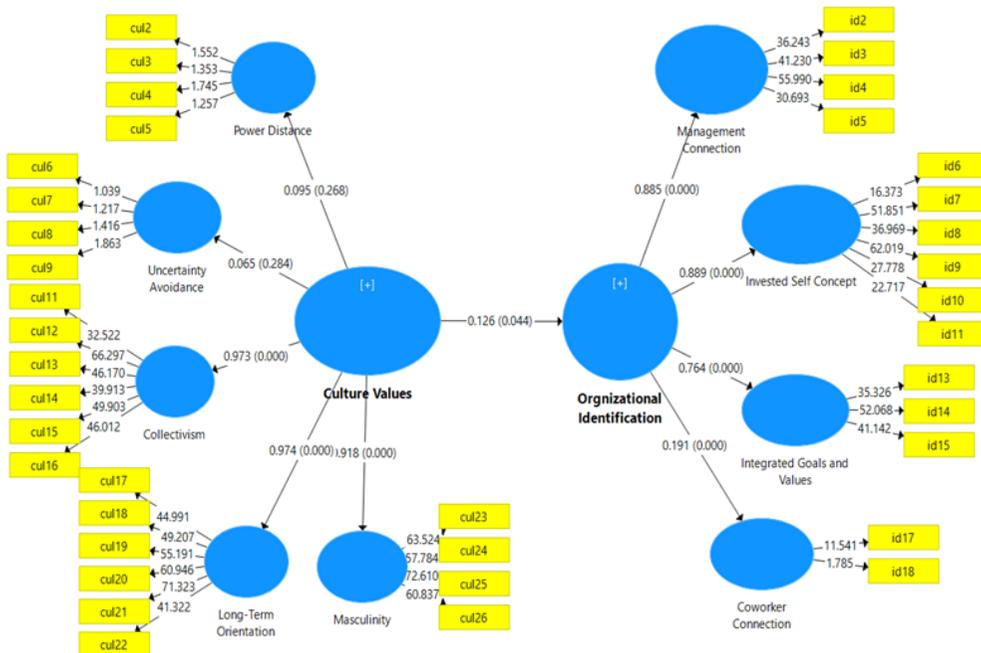
Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Culture vales -> Organizational Identification	0.126	0.129	0.063	2.016	0.044	accept

Table 5 presents the findings regarding the influence of cultural values on organizational identification among managers. The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between cultural values and organizational identification (B = 0.126, p = 0.044), although the magnitude of this effect is comparatively modest relative to that of paternalistic leadership. Specifically, the dimensions of management connection (B = 0.112, p = 0.043) and invested self-concept (B = 0.112, p = 0.044) exhibit comparable levels of influence, indicating that cultural values foster a sense of connection to leadership and contribute to managers' perception of themselves as integral members of the organization.

Additionally, the impact of cultural values on the integration of goals and values (B = 0.097, p = 0.048) is significant, albeit slightly weaker, suggesting that alignment with organizational culture supports managers in harmonizing their personal objectives with the company's mission. Conversely, the effect of cultural values on coworker connection (B = 0.024, p = 0.122) is not statistically significant, implying that cultural values alone may not substantially enhance peer relationships among managers.

These findings indicate that while a robust organizational culture reinforces managers' identification primarily through alignment with leadership and personal investment, it does not necessarily strengthen interpersonal bonds among colleagues. Overall, the evidence supports the acceptance of Hypothesis 3 (H3), with the exception of the coworker connection dimension, underscoring the nuanced role of cultural values in shaping organizational identification.

Figure 4 shows path analysis test (t) for cultural values on organizational identification



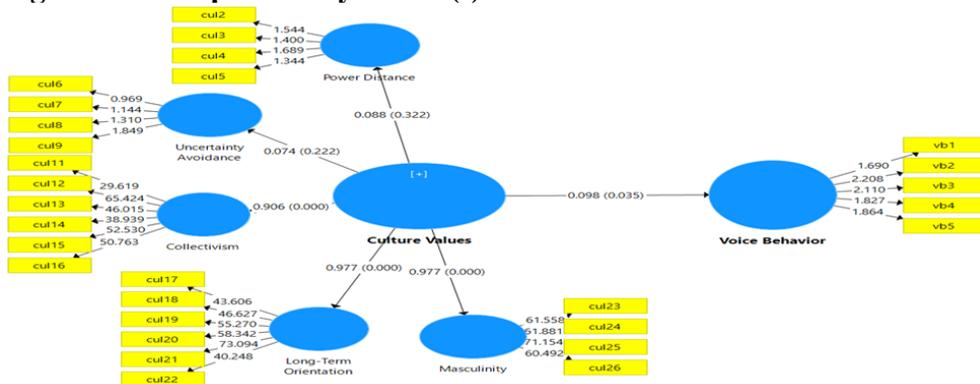
H4 Cultural values have a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

Table 6: Coefficient “cultural values on voice behavior”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Cultural values-> voice behavior	0.098	0.137	0.046	2.114	0.035	accept

Table 6 displays the results of hypothesis testing regarding the effect of cultural values on the dependent variable, voice behavior. The analysis employed a decision criterion based on the t-statistic, whereby the null hypothesis is rejected if the associated p-value is less than 0.05. In this study, all tested relationships demonstrated p-values below this threshold, indicating statistical significance. These findings confirm that cultural values exert a positive and direct influence on managers' voice behavior.

Figure 5 shows path analysis test (t) for Cultural values on voice behavior



H5 Work engagement has a significant positive impact on organizational identification among managers in companies.

Table 7: Coefficient “Work engagement on organizational identification”

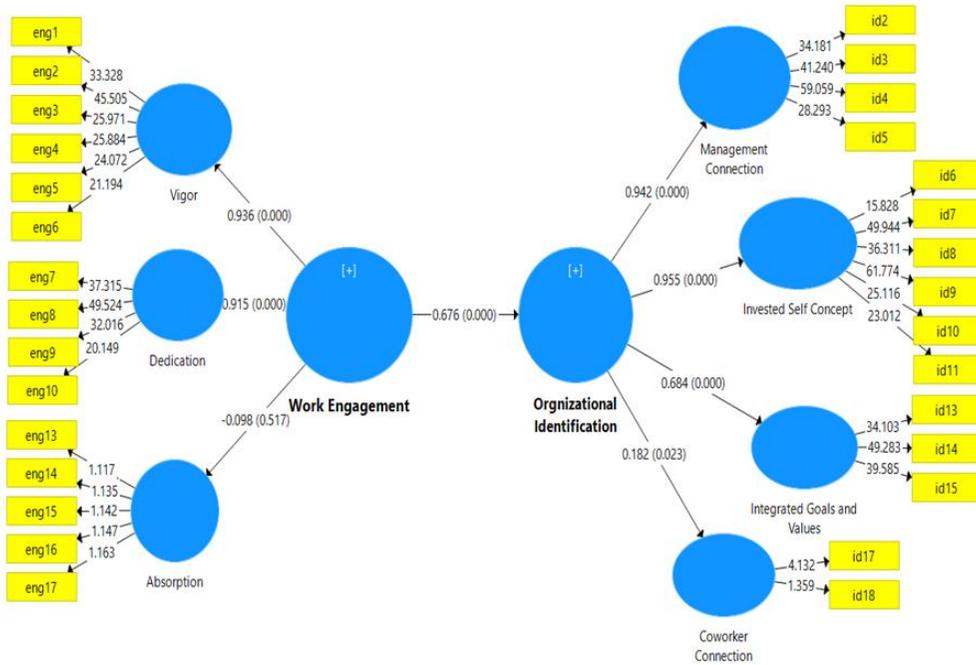
Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Work engagement -> Organizational Identification	0.676	0.674	0.044	15.442	0.000	accept

Table 7 displays the results regarding the influence of work engagement on managers’ organizational identification. The findings indicate a statistically significant and positive overall effect ($B = 0.676, p < 0.001$), suggesting that managers exhibiting higher work engagement tend to demonstrate stronger organizational identification. Within the examined dimensions, management connection ($B = 0.637, p < 0.001$) and invested self-concept ($B = 0.646, p < 0.001$) exert the most pronounced effects. These results imply that engaged managers experience a deeper affiliation with organizational leadership and perceive a heightened personal commitment to the organization.

Additionally, work engagement shows a significant, albeit somewhat weaker, impact on the alignment of integrated goals and values ($B = 0.462, p < 0.001$), implying that engagement facilitates congruence between managers’ personal objectives and the organization’s mission. The effect on coworker connection ($B = 0.123, p = 0.021$), while the smallest among the dimensions, remains statistically significant, reflecting a less pronounced but meaningful role in fostering peer relationships.

The consistently high T-values across all dimensions affirm the robustness and reliability of these results. Collectively, these findings support Hypothesis 5 (H5), underscoring the essential role of work engagement in enhancing organizational identification by strengthening managerial ties to leadership, personal investment, and goal congruence.

Figure 6 shows the path analysis test (t) for work engagement on organizational identification.



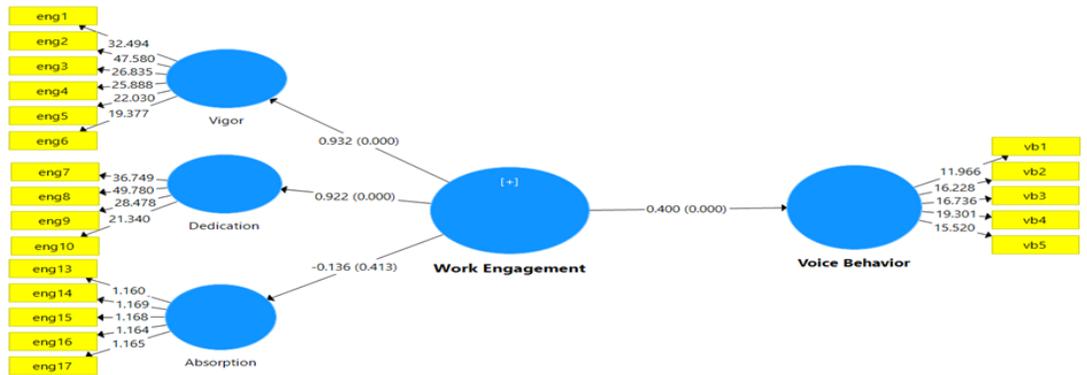
H6 Work engagement has a significant positive impact on voice behavior among managers in companies.

Table 8: Coefficient “Work engagement on voice behavior”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Work engagement -> voice behavior	0.400	0.403	0.047	8.499	0.000	accept

Table 8 summarizes the hypothesis testing results concerning the influence of work engagement on voice behavior. Following the decision rule associated with the t-statistic, the null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.05. In this analysis, all tested relationships exhibited p-values below this significance threshold, indicating statistical significance. Consequently, the findings reveal a positive and direct effect of work engagement on managers’ voice behavior.

Figure 7 shows the path analysis test (t) for work engagement on voice behavior



Mediation Effect Analysis

Hypothesis 7: Cultural values mediate a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification among managers in companies.

Table 9: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification through the mediating role of Culture”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership -> Cultural values	0.271	0.279	0.052	5.171	0.000	accept
Cultural values -> Organizational Identification	0.291	0.291	0.052	5.570	0.000	accept
Paternalism Leadership -> Cultural values -> Organizational Identification	0.079	0.084	0.030	2.665	0.008	accept

Table 9 summarizes the hypothesis testing outcomes related to the mediating effect of cultural values on the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification. Using a decision criterion based on the t-statistic, the null hypothesis is rejected if the corresponding p-value falls below 0.05. In this analysis, all examined relationships produced p-values under this cutoff, signifying statistical significance. These results confirm that cultural values significantly mediate the positive association between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification.

Table 10 reports the Variance Accounted For (VAF) value, which falls between 20% and 80%, suggesting the presence of partial mediation by cultural values. The VAF was calculated using the formula proposed by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014):

$$VAF = (pa * Pb) / (pa * Pb + Pc)$$

$$VAF (1) = (0.271 * 0.291) / (0.271 * 0.291 + 0.079)$$

$$VAF = 0.078861 / 0.157861$$

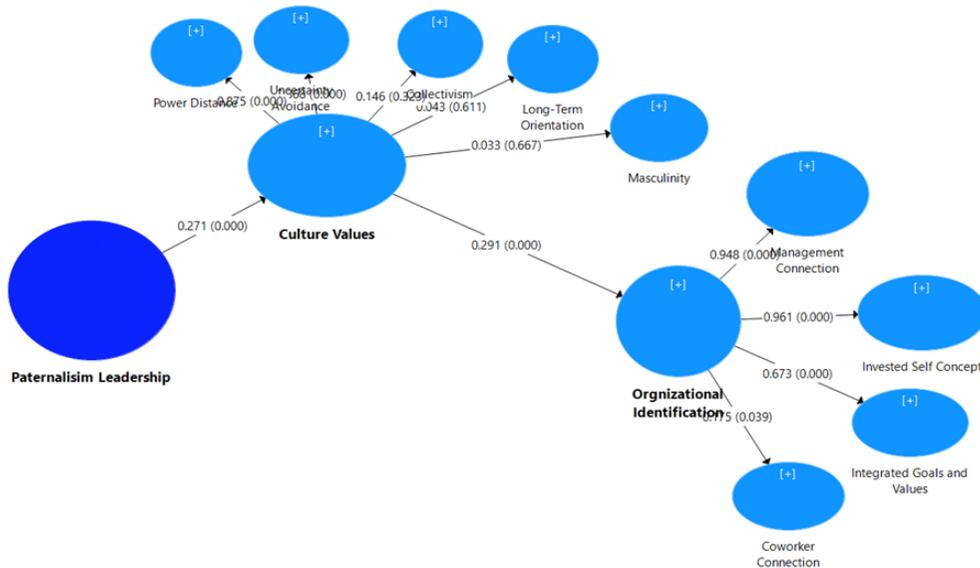
$$VAF = 49.95\%$$

Table 10: Mediation Analysis based on Preacher and Hayes (2008)”

Relationship	Path a		Path b		Indirect Effect			VAF	Confidence Interval		Type of Mediation P&H	Decision
	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	SE	t-value		95% LL	95% UL		
Paternalism Leadership_ -> Cultural values -> Organizational Identification	0.271	5.171	0.291	5.570	0.079	0.030	2.665	49.95%	0.035	0.147	partial	supported

The calculated Variance Accounted For (VAF) measures the degree to which cultural values mediate the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification. A VAF of 49.95% indicates that cultural values serve as a partial mediator, explaining nearly half of the overall effect that paternalistic leadership has on organizational identification. This result highlights the important, though partial, role of cultural values in conveying the impact of paternalistic leadership on both organizational identification and voice behavior. Consequently, cultural values partially mediate this relationship, emphasizing their crucial role in influencing how leadership styles affect employee identification and proactive engagement within organizational settings.

Figure 8 path analysis test (t) for Paternalism Leadership on Organizational Identification through mediating role cultural values.



Hypothesis 8: Cultural values mediate a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, voice behavior among managers in companies.

Table 11: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior through the mediating role of culture”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership_ -> Cultural values	0.246	0.258	0.053	4.665	0.000	accept
Cultural values -> voice behavior	0.416	0.426	0.044	9.408	0.000	accept
Paternalism Leadership_ -> Cultural values -> voice behavior	0.103	0.111	0.029	3.588	0.000	accept

Table 11 presents the hypothesis testing outcomes related to the mediating role of cultural values in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior. According to the decision criterion based on the t-statistic, the null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value falls below 0.05. In this analysis, all tested relationships showed p-values under this threshold, confirming statistical significance. These findings validate that cultural values act as a mediator in the positive association between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior.

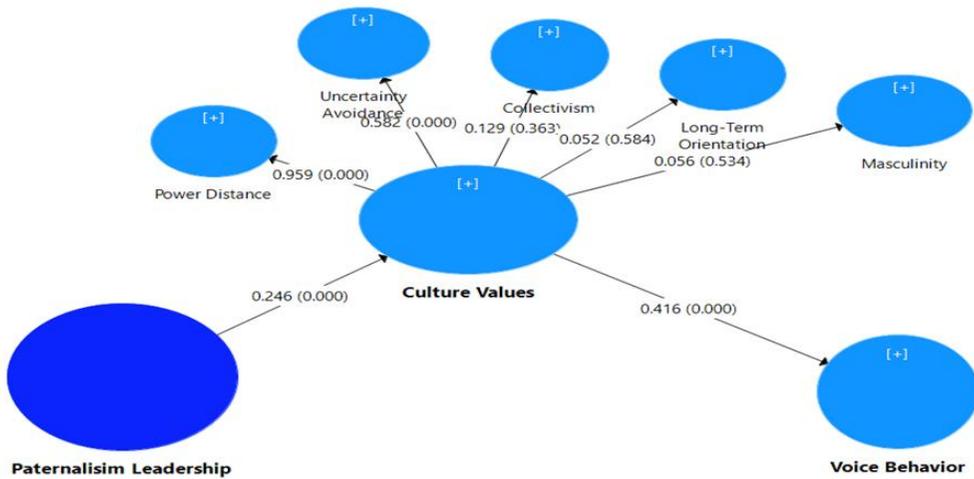
Table 12 provides the Variance Accounted For (VAF) value, which ranges between 20% and 80%, indicating that cultural values partially mediate the relationship. Using the formula outlined by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014), the VAF was calculated to be 49.84%. This result demonstrates that cultural values partially mediate the influence of paternalistic leadership on voice behavior, explaining nearly half of the total effect.

Table 12: Mediation Analysis based on Preacher and Hayes (2008)”

Relationship	Path a		Path b		Indirect Effect			VAF	Confidence Interval		Type of Mediation P&H	Decision
	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	SE	t-value		95% LL	95% UL		
Paternalism Leadership_ -> Cultural values -> Organizational Identification	0.246	4.665	0.416	9.408	0.103	0.029	3.588	49.84%	0.060	0.168	partial	supported

The calculated (VAF) quantifies the extent of mediation between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior through cultural values. Specifically, the VAF value of 49.84% indicates that cultural values serve as a partial mediator, explaining approximately half of the total effect of paternalistic leadership on voice behavior. This finding highlights the important mediating role of cultural values in shaping how paternalistic leadership influences employees’ willingness to express constructive ideas and concerns. Thus, cultural values partially mediate the relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior, emphasizing their critical contribution to fostering open communication within organizations.

Figure 9 path analysis test (t) for Paternalism Leadership on voice behavior through the mediating role of cultural values



Hypothesis 9: Work engagement mediates a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership, organizational identification among managers in companies.

Table 13: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on organizational identification through the mediating role of work engagement”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership_ -> work engagement	0.603	0.604	0.050	12.029	0.000	accept
Work engagement -> Organizational Identification	0.680	0.679	0.042	16.288	0.000	accept
Paternalism Leadership_ -> work engagement -> Organizational Identification	0.410	0.412	0.058	7.095	0.000	accept

Table 13 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing on the mediating effect of work engagement in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification. Following the decision rule based on the t-statistic, the null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05. In this analysis, all examined paths exhibited p-values below this threshold, indicating statistical significance. These outcomes confirm that work engagement serves as a mediator in the positive link between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification.

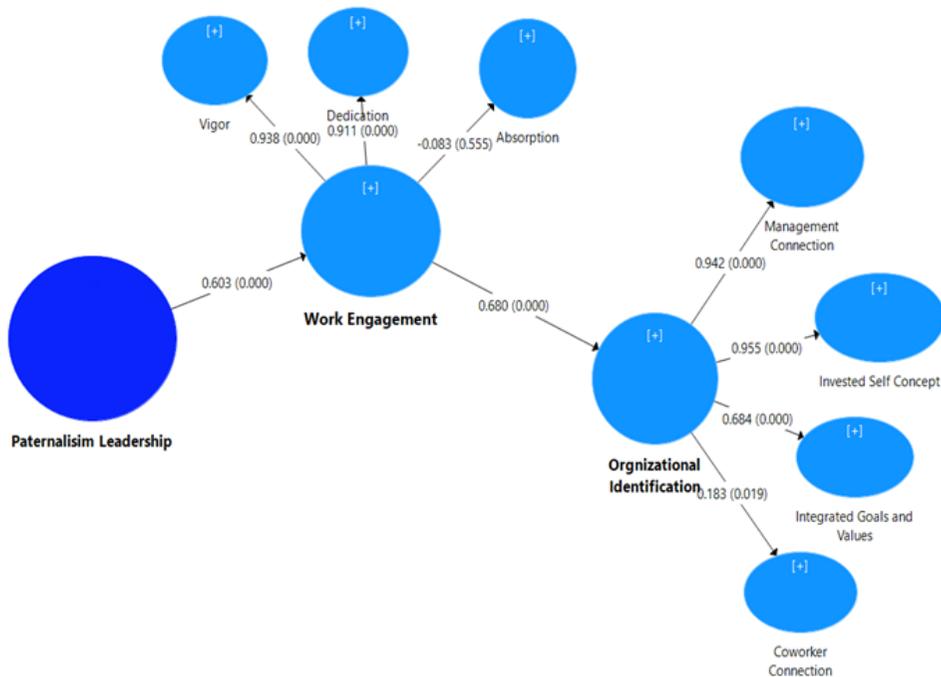
Table 14 displays the Variance Accounted For (VAF) value, which lies between 20% and 80%, suggesting partial mediation by work engagement. Applying the formula proposed by Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014), the VAF was calculated at 50.00%. This finding reveals that work engagement partially mediates the impact of paternalistic leadership on organizational identification, accounting for half of the overall effect.

Table 14: Mediation Analysis based on Preacher and Hayes (2008)”

Relationship	Path a		Path b		Indirect Effect			VAF	Confidence Interval		Type of Mediation P&H	Decision
	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	SE	t-value		95% LL	95% UL		
Paternalism Leadership-> work engagement-> Organizational Identification	0.603	12.029	0.680	16.288	0.410	0.058	7.095	50.00%	0.305	0.524	partial	supported

The computed (VAF) quantifies the degree to which work engagement mediates the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification. A VAF of 50.00% signifies that work engagement functions as a partial mediator, explaining about half of the overall effect of paternalistic leadership on organizational identification. This result highlights the critical role of work engagement in transmitting the positive impact of paternalistic leadership on employees’ organizational identification. Consequently, work engagement partially mediates this relationship, emphasizing its significance in strengthening organizational commitment through effective leadership practices.

Figure 10 path analysis test (t) for Paternalism Leadership on Organizational Identification through the mediating role of work engagement



Hypothesis 10: Work engagement mediates a positive effect between Paternalistic Leadership and voice behavior among managers in companies.

Table 15: Coefficient “Paternalistic Leadership on voice behavior through the mediating role of work engagement”

Element	B	Mean	S. D	T	P	Result
Paternalism Leadership_ -> work engagement	0.598	0.600	0.049	12.135	0.000	accept
Work engagement -> voice behavior	0.400	0.404	0.048	8.363	0.000	accept
Paternalism Leadership_ -> work engagement -> voice behavior	0.240	0.242	0.036	6.596	0.000	accept

Table 15 illustrates the hypothesis testing outcomes concerning the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior. According to the decision criterion based on the t-statistic, the null hypothesis is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.05. In this analysis, all evaluated paths yielded p-values below this threshold, confirming the statistical significance of the findings. These results demonstrate that work engagement positively mediates the influence of paternalistic leadership on voice behavior.

Table 16 presents the Variance Accounted For (VAF) value, which falls within the 20% to 80% range, indicating partial mediation by work engagement. Applying the formula from Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014), the VAF was computed as 49.92%. This indicates that work engagement partially mediates the relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior, explaining nearly half of the overall effect.

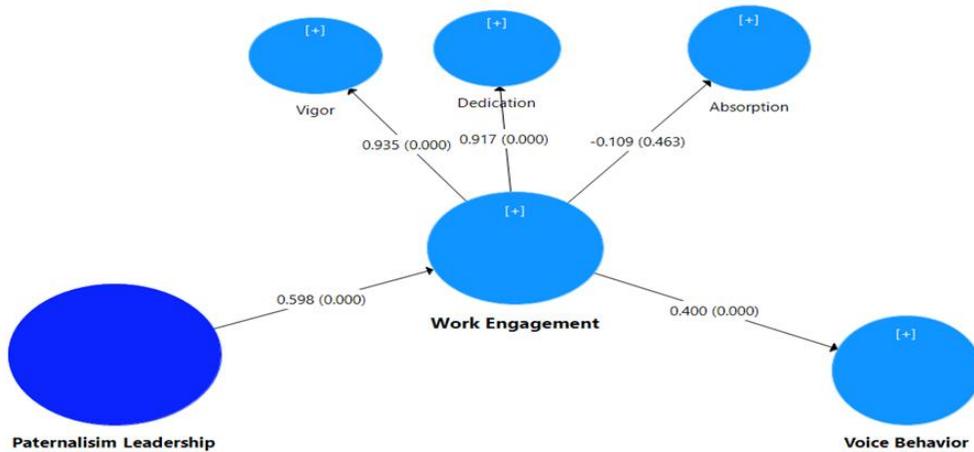
Table 16: Mediation Analysis based on Preacher and Hayes (2008)”

Relationship	Path a		Path b		Indirect Effect			VAF	Confidence Interval		Type of Mediation P&H	Decision
	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	t-value	Path coeff.	SE	t-value		95% LL	95% UL		
Paternalism Leadership-> work engagement-> Organizational Identification	0.598	12.135	0.400	8.363	0.240	0.036	6.596	49.92%	0.173	0.313	partial	supported

The calculated Variance Accounted For (VAF) reflects the proportion of variance explained by the mediating effect within the relationship between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior. Specifically, work engagement acts as a partial mediator, with a VAF value of 0.4992, indicating that it explains approximately 49.92% of the total effect. These findings confirm that work engagement plays a significant yet partial mediating role, underscoring

its importance in enhancing the impact of paternalistic leadership on employees' likelihood to participate in voice behavior.

Figure 11 path analysis test (t) for Paternalism Leadership on voice behavior through the mediating role of work engagement



Discussion

1. The study identified a significant positive and direct impact of paternalistic leadership on organizational identification. This aligns with existing research emphasizing leadership styles that blend authority and benevolence in fostering employees' sense of belonging and alignment with organizational objectives. Leaders who offer care alongside clear direction build trust and emotional connections, encouraging employees to internalize organizational values. Such effects are particularly prominent in collectivist cultures that value hierarchical yet supportive leadership. Supporting studies by Aycan (2021) and Chen et al. (2023) confirm that paternalistic leadership enhances employee commitment and identification by cultivating trust and psychological security.
2. Results also reveal that paternalistic leadership has a positive and direct effect on voice behavior. This leadership style creates a supportive atmosphere where employees feel emotionally connected and secure, motivating open expression of opinions and suggestions. Empirical evidence from Chen et al. (2023) and Aycan (2021) supports this, showing that trust and psychological safety fostered by paternalistic leaders encourage proactive communication and constructive feedback.
3. The findings indicate a positive and direct influence of cultural values on organizational identification. Shared organizational beliefs and

practices play a key role in shaping employees' psychological attachment and emotional alignment with their workplace. When cultural values such as inclusivity, respect, and innovation resonate with personal beliefs, employees develop a stronger sense of belonging. This is consistent with Schein's (2021) theoretical framework and empirical findings by Hofstede et al. (2022), which emphasize culture as foundational to fostering shared meaning and commitment.

4. Additionally, cultural values were shown to positively and directly affect voice behavior. Organizational norms that emphasize trust, respect, and inclusivity cultivate a climate conducive to open communication, allowing employees to voice ideas and concerns without fear. This echoes Schein's (2021) assertion that cultures promoting psychological safety enhance employee voice, and Hofstede et al.'s (2022) demonstration that participatory cultures empower active organizational engagement.
5. Work engagement exhibited a significant positive and direct relationship with organizational identification. Employees demonstrating vigor, dedication, and absorption tend to internalize organizational values more deeply, strengthening their psychological connection and alignment with organizational goals. This relationship is well-supported by Schaufeli et al. (2022) and Bakker and Albrecht (2021), who highlight engagement's role in fostering belonging and intrinsic motivation.
6. Similarly, the study confirmed that work engagement positively impacts voice behavior. Engaged employees display greater enthusiasm and commitment, leading to increased willingness to share ideas, concerns, and constructive feedback. This is consistent with Bakker and Albrecht's (2021) research, indicating that high engagement enhances psychological ownership and responsibility, motivating employees to contribute beyond formal roles.
7. The mediating role of cultural values between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification was supported, illustrating the nuanced interaction where leadership grounded in authority and benevolence exerts influence through culturally embedded values like respect for hierarchy and collectivism. According to Schein's (2021) framework, cultural values amplify paternalistic leadership's effect by strengthening employees' identification with leaders and the organization.
8. Cultural values also mediated the link between paternalistic leadership and voice behavior. Cultural norms related to authority, collectivism, and relational focus influence how employees perceive leadership and

their comfort in expressing opinions. These results align with Zhang et al. (2022), who note that cultural congruence enhances psychological safety, encouraging voice behavior under paternalistic leadership.

9. Work engagement was identified as a partial mediator in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and organizational identification, indicating that employees' emotional and psychological investment in their work bolsters leadership's effect on organizational attachment. By fostering trust and loyalty, paternalistic leaders indirectly increase identification through enhanced engagement, consistent with Bakker and Albrecht's (2021) view of engagement as a mechanism linking leadership and commitment.
10. Finally, the study confirmed that work engagement mediates the positive impact of paternalistic leadership on voice behavior. Paternalistic leadership fosters a work environment supportive of employee well-being and psychological safety, which enhances engagement levels. Engaged employees feel empowered to voice ideas and feedback that drive organizational improvement. This mediation effect is supported by Bakker and Albrecht's (2021) findings, emphasizing engagement as a crucial pathway through which leadership shapes proactive employee behaviors like voice.

Suggestions for Future Research

Firstly, subsequent research could examine the interplay between paternalistic leadership, work engagement, and employee behaviors across different cultural contexts. Since this study was situated within the Jordanian cultural environment, expanding the scope to include countries with diverse cultural orientations - such as more individualistic societies or other collectivist cultures - would be valuable. Comparative analyses could illuminate whether the mediating roles of work engagement and cultural values are consistent across varying cultural frameworks or whether distinct cultural factors modulate leadership effects and employee behavioral outcomes.

Secondly, to better establish causal relationships among paternalistic leadership, work engagement, organizational identification, and voice behavior, future research should adopt longitudinal study designs. Monitoring these variables over an extended timeframe would allow for a more precise examination of their temporal dynamics and the sustained effects of paternalistic leadership on employee outcomes. Additionally, longitudinal data would help clarify the persistent mediating role of work engagement and reveal any new factors that may affect these relationships over time.

Thirdly, while the present research highlights work engagement and cultural values as mediators, further exploration of additional mediating and

moderating variables is warranted to deepen understanding of the mechanisms underpinning paternalistic leadership effects. Future investigations might explore constructs such as emotional intelligence, organizational justice, or psychological safety as potential mediators. Additionally, moderating factors like job characteristics, variations in leadership styles, or individual personality traits could significantly influence the strength and direction of paternalistic leadership's impact on organizational behaviors.

Finally, adopting a mixed-methods approach could enhance the robustness and richness of future research. While self-reported questionnaires are prevalent, incorporating objective behavioral indicators - such as performance evaluations, supervisor assessments, or documented instances of voice behavior - would offer a more comprehensive perspective on the consequences of paternalistic leadership. Combining qualitative methods, including interviews or focus groups, with quantitative data would further deepen insights into how employees perceive leadership behaviors and experience engagement, thus contributing to a more nuanced and holistic understanding.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

This research highlights the crucial influence of paternalistic leadership in enhancing organizational identification and promoting voice behavior among employees in Jordanian shareholding industrial firms. The findings indicate that leadership perceived as caring and supportive encourages employees to internalize organizational values and actively engage in providing constructive feedback to improve organizational performance.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the important mediating effects of employee engagement and cultural values within these relationships. Employees who are deeply emotionally and cognitively involved tend to exhibit stronger organizational identification and are more willing to express their ideas and concerns. Similarly, prevailing cultural norms significantly shape how employees interpret leadership styles and affect the formation and expression of their organizational identification.

Based on these insights, it is advisable for managers and organizational leaders to implement leadership styles that effectively combine authority with compassion. Concurrently, fostering a corporate culture that aligns with employees' personal values can enhance commitment, stimulate innovation, and contribute to long-term organizational success.

For future research, it is advisable to extend the current framework by exploring additional moderating variables, such as psychological safety, trust in leadership, and communication climate, to enrich the understanding of these dynamics. Furthermore, conducting comparative analyses across various industries and cultural contexts would offer valuable insights into the

influence of environmental and contextual factors. Employing longitudinal research designs would also be beneficial for establishing causal relationships and capturing temporal changes in the interplay among leadership, engagement, and employee behaviors.

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Panorama de l'évolution des dépenses publiques au Maroc : Analyse historique et implications économiques

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Résumé

Cet article propose un panorama de l'évolution des dépenses publiques au Maroc, en adoptant une analyse historique et en explorant les implications économiques sur la période de 1980 à 2019. Pour mener cette analyse, nous avons utilisé des données quantitatives issues de sources officielles telles que la Banque Mondiale et la Direction de la Statistique du Maroc. L'étude est segmentée en sous-périodes distinctes : 1980-1993, 1994-2004 et 2005-2019. Nous avons employé des techniques de statistique descriptive et d'analyse de tendances pour examiner l'évolution des dépenses publiques et de la croissance économique au fil du temps. Les résultats montrent des variations significatives des dépenses publiques au Maroc en réponse à différents contextes économiques et politiques. Durant les années 1980, les dépenses publiques étaient marquées par des programmes d'ajustement structurel, entraînant une réduction des dépenses dans certains secteurs sociaux. La période post-1993 a vu une ouverture économique et une augmentation des investissements publics dans des secteurs stratégiques comme les infrastructures et les énergies renouvelables. Entre 2005 et 2019, les dépenses publiques ont continué à croître, reflétant une politique de soutien à la croissance économique et de réponse aux chocs internes et externes. En conclusion, l'évolution des dépenses publiques au Maroc démontre une adaptation continue aux défis économiques et sociaux.

Mots-clés : Dépenses publiques, croissance économique, PAS, PIB, Maroc

Panorama of the Evolution of Public Expenditures in Morocco: Historical Analysis and Economic Implications

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the evolution of public spending in Morocco, adopting a historical analysis and exploring the economic implications from 1980 to 2019. To conduct this analysis, we utilized quantitative data from official sources such as the World Bank and the Moroccan Directorate of Statistics. The study is segmented into distinct sub-periods: 1980-1993, 1994-2004, and 2005-2019. We employed descriptive statistics and trend analysis techniques to examine the evolution of public spending and economic growth over time. The results reveal significant variations in public spending in Morocco in response to different economic and political contexts. During the 1980s, public spending was characterized by structural adjustment programs, leading to reductions in spending in certain social sectors. The post-1993 period saw economic liberalization and increased public investment in strategic sectors such as infrastructure and renewable energy. Between 2005 and 2019, public spending continued to grow, reflecting a policy of supporting economic growth and responding to internal and external shocks. In conclusion, the evolution of public spending in Morocco demonstrates a continuous adaptation to economic and social challenges.

Keywords: Public expenditures, economic growth, SAP, GDP, Morocco

Introduction

Depuis le déclenchement de la crise financière de 2008, qui s'est transformée en crise économique et en crise de la dette souveraine, la politique budgétaire est devenue un sujet d'intérêt majeur sur la scène politique et économique mondiale (Mathieu et Sterdyniak, 2009)¹. Au Maroc, l'État joue

¹ Mathieu, A., & Sterdyniak, H. (2009). Les dépenses publiques et la croissance économique : aspects théoriques et empiriques. Notes du Conseil d'Analyse Économique, n° 18, 1–29.

un rôle crucial dans la relance de l'activité économique et le développement humain en utilisant son budget.

Au cours des années 2000, le Maroc a entrepris diverses réformes dans de nombreux domaines pour exploiter pleinement son potentiel. Cette approche proactive en matière de réformes a conduit à des résultats encourageants et significatifs. L'économie marocaine a connu une évolution marquée, avec une croissance plus stable du PIB et une plus grande résilience face aux chocs extérieurs grâce à la modernisation de la production nationale.

Au niveau national, la réalisation d'une croissance économique durable grâce aux dépenses publiques a toujours été un objectif central de la plupart des projets et programmes gouvernementaux, depuis l'indépendance jusqu'à nos jours. Sur cette période, même en dépit des Programmes d'Ajustement Structurel (P.A.S), le Maroc a cherché à devenir un exemple en planifiant des projets à long terme visant le développement des secteurs essentiels pour le bien-être de sa population, tels que les infrastructures, l'éducation et la santé. Cependant, les perturbations économiques mondiales, en particulier la crise de 2008, continuent d'avoir des effets néfastes sur de nombreux pays.

Ainsi, l'évolution quantitative des dépenses publiques s'est accompagnée d'une transformation de leur structure, influencée par les nouvelles missions de l'État, la nécessité de préserver les équilibres fondamentaux, et les nouvelles exigences liées à la libéralisation de l'économie nationale. Par conséquent, une multitude de facteurs, qu'ils soient économiques, politiques, conjoncturels, structurels, extérieurs, ou intérieurs, ont contribué à l'évolution des dépenses publiques, tant en termes de leur volume que de leur composition. Ces facteurs peuvent varier en fonction de la période considérée.

Partant, l'analyse rétrospective des dépenses publiques au Maroc au cours des trente dernières années est de nature à nous éclaircir sur la problématique de l'inefficacité des dépenses publiques dans notre pays. Donc, nous allons essayer de répondre à la question suivante :

Comment les dépenses publiques ainsi que leur structure ont-elles évolué au cours des quarante dernières années ?

Dans cette perspective, nous aborderons les principales périodes de l'évolution des dépenses publiques, notamment les années 1970 marquées par une politique de grands projets, les ajustements structurels des années 1980, la période de libéralisation économique des années 1990, et enfin, les réformes des années 2000 à 2019 qui ont cherché à améliorer l'efficacité de la dépense publique tout en répondant à des enjeux de développement durable et d'inclusion sociale.

Explications de l'évolution des dépenses publiques

Pour fournir une compréhension complète et significative de l'évolution des dépenses publiques, comme nous l'avons fait précédemment, il est essentiel de procéder à une analyse approfondie qui permettra d'expliquer cette évolution et d'évaluer ses répercussions sur l'économie du Maroc.

En effet, avant d'entamer notre analyse, il y'a lieu de distinguer, à travers l'étude de l'évolution des dépenses publiques durant ces dernières années (de 1970 jusqu'à 2016) quatre grandes périodes ²:

- **La période 1970-1982** : période avant la mise en œuvre du programme d'ajustement structurel (*PAS*), dite aussi période de relance budgétaire. Elle fut marquée par une croissance économique accélérée avec un taux d'investissement important et une évolution des dépenses publiques par rapport au PIB de 28,5 % ;
- **La période 1983-1992** : cette période est caractérisée par la mise en œuvre du Programme d'Ajustement Structurel (*PAS*) à la suite d'une grave crise économique. Cela a eu un impact significatif sur les dépenses publiques, qui sont devenues marginales dans certains secteurs, notamment dans le domaine social.
- **La période 1993-2009** : période Après la mise en œuvre du Programme d'Ajustement Structurel (*PAS*) « post-*PAS* », cette période est caractérisée par l'ouverture et l'intégration de l'économie marocaine dans l'économie mondiale, par le biais de l'ouverture commerciale, de l'investissement étranger et d'autres politiques visant à favoriser la croissance économique durable.
- **La période 2010-2019** : dans cette période le Maroc a connu une croissance économique relativement solide au cours de cette période, avec un taux de croissance annuel moyen d'environ 4%. Cela a été soutenu par des investissements dans des secteurs clés tels que l'industrie, le tourisme et les énergies renouvelables.

En effet, l'évolution des dépenses publiques différait selon les quatre périodes qui l'ont marquée. Chacune de ces périodes a été influencée par des événements spécifiques, entraînant des conséquences positives ou négatives sur le niveau global des dépenses de l'État, ainsi que sur leur répartition.

La période d'ante-ajustement :1970-1982

Au cours de la période d'avant le Programme d'Ajustement Structurel (*P.A.S.*), l'analyse de l'évolution des dépenses publiques permet de distinguer

² Skikra, A. (2024, July). Évolution des dépenses publiques et de la croissance économique au Maroc : Analyse descriptive. *International Journal of Financial Accountability, Economics, Management, and Auditing*, 6(4). ISSN 2788-7189.

deux sous-périodes distinctes. La première s'étend de 1970 à 1977, tandis que la deuxième débute en 1978 et se termine en 1982.

Sous période de relance par le budget : 1970-1977

D'abord, les dépenses publiques ont augmenté de manière significative, soutenant le financement de grands projets d'infrastructure et de développement. Ces investissements ont été réalisés dans des secteurs tels que les infrastructures de transport, l'agriculture, l'éducation et la santé, dans le but de moderniser le pays et de stimuler la croissance économique.

D'autre part, les dépenses publiques ont été impactées par des événements sécuritaires tels que les complots de 1971 et 1972, ainsi que le conflit du Sahara en 1975. Ces événements ont nécessité des investissements importants dans les domaines de la sécurité intérieure, du maintien de l'ordre et de la défense du territoire.

Ensuite, la hausse des prix mondiaux des phosphates³ a donné à l'État une plus grande marge de manœuvre financière. En conséquence, les projets d'investissement prévus dans le plan de 1973-1977 ont été revus à la hausse.

Enfin, l'augmentation des exportations, notamment des phosphates, a conduit l'État à dépenser davantage et à emprunter à l'étranger en raison de la perception d'une amélioration de sa capacité d'endettement.

Tableau 1: Évolution du PIB, des dépenses publiques au Maroc entre 1970-1977

Années	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
PIB courant	20021	22001	23345	25636	33540	36411	42356	49761
PIB réel	44624	47121	48270	49988	52785	56775	62914	66726
TCPIB	5	6	2	4	6	8	11	6
G /PIB	22,43	24,74	22,55	21,96	29,45	34,05	38,94	40,00
D.O/PIB	15,57	18,31	16,29	16,04	22,79	21,82	19,93	19,28
I /PIB	6,87	7,51	7,98	5,61	8,15	13,97	19,75	19,67
D /PIB	1,42	1,52	1,60	1,76	1,46	1,55	1,74	2,02
C /PIB	12,02	12,31	12,38	11,67	12,03	16,09	21,67	20,76

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M et la banque mondiale, calcul et présentation, nos soins

Au cours de cette période, les dépenses publiques ont connu une évolution en deux phases distinctes. Tout d'abord, il y a eu une stabilisation des dépenses publiques, puis une augmentation significative du volume des dépenses de fonctionnement et d'investissement, avec une prédominance de ces dernières à partir de 1977. Cette augmentation a été rendue possible grâce à la mise en œuvre du plan quinquennal 1973-1977⁴, qui a permis au

³ En 1974, les prix du phosphate ont connu une multiplication par cinq, passant de 13 dollars à 63 dollars la tonne.

⁴ El Aoufi, N., Herzenni, A., & Bensaid, M. (2005). Croissance économique et développement humain. 50 ans de développement humain au Maroc et perspectives pour, 2025.

gouvernement de lancer un vaste programme d'investissement comprenant la réalisation de nombreux projets d'équipement tels que des infrastructures universitaires, hospitalières, des barrages, des routes et des constructions scolaires.

Ainsi, le volume des dépenses d'équipement a été multiplié par 4,6 entre 1974 et 1977, en raison de l'adoption de codes d'encouragement des investissements par l'État, associés à des exonérations fiscales substantielles visant à stimuler la création d'entreprises. De plus, pendant le quatrième plan quinquennal (1973-1977), les investissements publics dans l'industrie ont représenté 21,7 % du budget, contre 11 % entre 1968 et 1972.

L'État a également étendu son rôle dans les secteurs sociaux en augmentant les salaires des fonctionnaires de 26 % et en créant de nouveaux emplois publics pour apaiser les tensions sociopolitiques de l'époque. Ces mesures ont contribué à une accélération du taux de croissance du Maroc, passant d'environ 4 % par an au début des années 70 à 7 % entre 1973 et 1977.

Cependant, cette stratégie d'expansion a présenté des défis de financement. Après une forte baisse de la demande et des prix mondiaux des phosphates, les ressources de l'État se sont épuisées. Par conséquent, le déficit budgétaire global, qui était généralement de 3 à 4 % du PIB au début des années 70, a atteint environ 18,4 % en 1977. L'État n'a pas pu mettre fin immédiatement à certains investissements, réduire les salaires ou supprimer les subventions en raison de contraintes techniques ou politiques.

En somme, la période après 1973 a été marquée par une croissance rapide des dépenses d'investissement, principalement axées sur les grands travaux d'infrastructures, et une augmentation des dépenses de fonctionnement, stimulée par des augmentations salariales et des subventions alimentaires (figure 1).

Figure 1 : Évolution des dépenses de fonctionnement et d'investissement entre 1970-1983 (en millions de DH)



Source : Données BAM, présentation, nos soins

Sous période de stabilisation : 1978-1982

Durant cette période, le Maroc a mis en place un programme de stabilisation pour faire face à la détérioration des équilibres économiques à la suite des politiques expansionnistes. Ce programme visait à remédier aux déséquilibres macroéconomiques croissants auxquels l'économie marocaine était confrontée depuis 1976, en particulier en ce qui concerne le déficit budgétaire qui s'élevait à environ 18,4 % du PIB en 1976. Dans ce contexte, les autorités marocaines ont adopté une politique budgétaire restrictive visant à réduire les dépenses publiques.

Tableau 2: Évolution du PIB, des dépenses publiques au Maroc entre 1978-1982

Années	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
PIB courant	55154	62034	74089,98	79033,3	92906,9
PIB réel	68216,21	74486	74090	72041,9	78971,64
TCPIB	2	5	4	-3	10
G /PIB	34,42	34,93	33 ,93	39,1	37,48
D.O/PIB	21,85	20,87	21,97	26,94	25,52
I /PIB	12,57	14,66	12,26	13,11	13,78
D /PIB	2,96	2,79	2,37	3,38	5,2
C /PIB	20,79	21,33	18,34	19,08	18,30

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M et la banque mondiale, calcul et présentation, nos soins.

Selon les données du tableau ci-dessus, on constate une baisse d'environ 6 points de la part des dépenses publiques d'investissement par rapport au PIB entre 1977 et 1978. Cependant, cette proportion est demeurée relativement constante au cours de la période 1978-1982, avec une moyenne d'environ 13%. Par ailleurs, le ratio des dépenses totales par rapport au PIB, qui s'élevait à 40% en 1977, a également connu une diminution au cours de cette période.

De plus, cette sous-période se caractérise par une augmentation des dépenses courantes, notamment celles liées au fonctionnement, principalement dans les domaines de la défense et de la sécurité (en raison des deux coups d'État et de la guerre au Sahara). Ainsi, ces dépenses continuent d'augmenter à un rythme relativement élevé pendant la majeure partie de cette période. Les subventions à la consommation connaissent également une augmentation significative, représentant en moyenne environ 2% du PIB. Pendant cette sous-période, on observe également un ralentissement de la croissance économique, qui atteint à peine un niveau suffisant (en moyenne 3% contre 7% lors de la sous-période précédente), se maintenant au niveau de la croissance démographique. En effet, pendant cette période, en plus des effets d'une sécheresse prolongée et d'une gestion budgétaire médiocre, le Maroc a souffert d'une expansion imprudente des dépenses publiques et d'une mauvaise qualité de leur gestion, ce qui a entraîné un déficit budgétaire atteignant 12% du PIB en 1982. Cette situation a conduit l'État à recourir à

l'emprunt externe, associé à une augmentation du service de la dette (5,2% du PIB en 1982), en raison de la hausse des taux d'intérêt sur les marchés internationaux et du niveau d'endettement devenu préoccupant et insoutenable. Tous ces facteurs ont entraîné, au début des années 80, une détérioration de tous les agrégats macroéconomiques, comme le montre le Tableau 3.

Tableau 3 : Situation macroéconomique du Maroc en 1982 (en %)

Taux de croissance	Taux d'inflation	Déficit budgétaire	Déficit commerciale	Epargne publique	Réserves de changes	Dettes extérieures
-1%	10,5%	-12%	-13%	-2%	Mois d'un mois d'importations	50% des recettes en devises et 60% du PIB

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M et la banque mondiale, calcul et présentation, auteur

Les dépenses prévues dans le cadre du plan quinquennal très expansionniste adopté en 1981, qui prévoyait une augmentation significative des investissements publics sur une période de cinq ans, ont eu un impact considérable sur la situation budgétaire déjà fragile du début des années 1980. Cependant, ce plan a été abandonné dès sa deuxième année au profit d'un programme d'ajustement structurel élaboré en collaboration avec la Banque mondiale et le Fonds monétaire international. Ce programme a été mis en œuvre de 1983 à 1992 et visait à rétablir la stabilité économique et financière du pays.

La période du PAS : 1983-1992

Au début des années 80, le Maroc a fait face à une situation économique difficile, marquée par plusieurs défis et contraintes. Cette période a été caractérisée par une conjoncture économique instable, des pressions inflationnistes, des déséquilibres budgétaires, ainsi que des défis externes. Ces facteurs ont contribué à créer un contexte économique complexe et ont influencé les politiques et les décisions prises par les autorités marocaines pour relever ces défis.⁵:

- Une croissance faible avec des taux d'inflation élevés ;
- Des déséquilibres au niveau des comptes financiers interne et externe ;
- Un endettement au niveau extérieur excessif et l'entrée dans un cycle de rééchelonnement ;
- Un niveau presque nul des avoirs extérieurs.

⁵ DEPF, « Bilan du Programme d'Ajustement Structurel », octobre 1995, p.1et 2.

Pour faire face à cette crise aiguë, le Maroc s'est lancé en septembre 1983, avec l'appui du Fonds Monétaire International et de la Banque Mondiale, dans un programme d'ajustement structurel, Ce programme était soumis à des normes spécifiques, à savoir :

- **Une norme quantitative** : qui visait à rationaliser les dépenses publiques en sélectionnant celles qui étaient rentables et essentielles au bon fonctionnement de l'État.
- **Une norme qualitative** : qui mettait l'accent sur la compatibilité entre les dépenses et les recettes de l'État, afin d'assurer une gestion financière cohérente.

Ces normes étaient destinées à améliorer la gestion des finances publiques et à garantir une utilisation efficace des ressources de l'État, dans le but de rétablir la stabilité économique et de favoriser une croissance durable.

Afin de maîtriser la croissance des dépenses publiques, des mesures ont été prises pour réduire les dépenses courantes, en particulier les dépenses de fonctionnement, avec une diminution de 1% en termes réels par an, et pour rationaliser les dépenses d'investissement afin d'éviter tout gaspillage des ressources sans compromettre la rentabilité des investissements existants. Parallèlement, l'État a dû procéder à une réduction importante des recrutements dans la fonction publique, un gel des salaires⁶ et une diminution des subventions aux entreprises publiques, en raison de l'augmentation des charges d'intérêt liées à la dette publique depuis le début du processus de rééchelonnement de la dette.

⁶ Un gel des salaires fait référence à une mesure prise par les autorités ou les employeurs pour bloquer ou geler temporairement les augmentations de salaires des employés. Cela signifie que les salaires restent inchangés pendant une période déterminée, sans augmentation ni ajustement en fonction de l'inflation ou d'autres facteurs. Cette mesure est généralement mise en place dans des situations économiques difficiles ou lorsque les finances publiques ou d'une entreprise sont contraintes. Le gel des salaires vise à réduire les coûts salariaux et à maintenir la stabilité financière, mais peut entraîner une diminution du pouvoir d'achat des employés et des tensions sociales.

Tableau 4 : Évolution du PIB, des dépenses publiques au Maroc entre 1983-1992

Années	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
PIB courant	99143	112364	12927	15410	15600	18239	19140	21252	24136	24404
PIB réel	78531	81937	87119	94350	91949	101525	103928	108120	115579	110920
TCPIB	-1	4	6	8	-3	10	2	4	7	-4
G /PIB	32,32	29,72	30,43	29,04	28,31	28,13	30,89	29,86	27,93	29,92
I /PIB	8,05	6,88	9,09	8,72	7,58	5,91	6,35	5,79	4,82	4,78
D /PIB	5,1	5,9	6,2	5,9	5,9	6,3	6,1	6,2	5,5	5,4
C /PIB	16,77	15,55	15,87	15,41	15,79	15,35	15,89	15,52	15,62	15,74

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M et la banque mondiale, calcul et présentation, nos soins

La période du PAS de 1978 à 1982 s'est caractérisée par une diminution des dépenses publiques totales par rapport au PIB, avec une part moyenne inférieure à 30% contre plus de 35% auparavant. Les dépenses d'investissement ont également connu une baisse d'environ 7%, tandis que les dépenses étatiques destinées à la consommation ont diminué pour se stabiliser autour de 15-16% du PIB en moyenne.

Cette période a été marquée par une réduction notable des dépenses d'investissement et des subventions de compensation au profit de l'augmentation de la dette publique, dont les services ont représenté en moyenne près de 5,9% du PIB entre 1983 et 1992. Cette évolution a entraîné une réorganisation de l'allocation des ressources budgétaires de l'État.

Au terme d'une décennie de mesures d'austérité rigoureuses, on observe une nette amélioration de la situation financière de l'État (Tableau.5) :

Tableau 5 : Comparaison de la situation macroéconomique entre 1983 et 1993 en % du PIB

Année	Taux de croissance	Déficit budgétaire	Balance du paiements	Inflation	Épargne publique	Réserves de changes
1983	-0,7%	-12%	-12%	10,5%	-2%	Moins d'un mois d'importation
1993	-1,1%	-1,6%	-1,9%	5,7%	5%	6 mois d'importation

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M, calcul et présentation, nos soins

Les données présentées dans le tableau mettent en évidence une nette amélioration de la situation macro-économique du pays pendant la période du PAS. En effet, à partir de 1987, l'épargne publique est redevenue positive, atteignant 5% du PIB. Le déficit budgétaire a été réduit de manière considérable, passant de -12% en 1983 à -1,9% en 1992. De même, le déficit du compte courant de la balance des paiements s'est amélioré après

rééchelonnement, passant de -12% en 1983 à -1,6% en 1992. Les tensions inflationnistes ont été maîtrisées, avec une augmentation de l'indice de coût de la vie limitée à 5,7% en 1992, comparativement à 10,5% en 1983. Les réserves de change ont également connu une augmentation significative, représentant plus de six mois d'importation en 1992, contre moins d'un mois en 1983.

Cependant, la poursuite à long terme des mesures d'austérité budgétaire⁷, bien que nécessaires dans le cadre du programme de stabilisation, a entraîné des conséquences néfastes sur les perspectives de croissance du pays en limitant les investissements dans les infrastructures et les services essentiels à la croissance.

La période post-PAS :1993-2009

La période post-PAS au Maroc peut être divisée en deux phases distinctes en ce qui concerne l'évolution des dépenses publiques :

Sous-période 1993-2004

La première phase, qui s'étend de 1993 à 2002, se caractérise par une augmentation significative des dépenses publiques au Maroc. Durant cette période, le gouvernement a mis en œuvre des politiques expansionnistes visant à stimuler la croissance économique et à répondre aux besoins de développement du pays. Les dépenses d'investissement ont été fortement encouragées, avec des investissements importants dans les infrastructures, l'éducation, la santé et d'autres secteurs clés de l'économie. L'objectif était de moderniser les structures économiques et d'améliorer les conditions de vie de la population.

Cette phase a été caractérisée par une volonté politique de relance économique et de rattrapage des retards accumulés pendant la période d'austérité du Programme d'Ajustement Structurel (PAS). Les dépenses publiques ont joué un rôle essentiel dans la dynamisation de l'activité économique et la création d'emplois.

Cependant, malgré les efforts déployés pour soutenir la croissance économique, cette première phase a également été marquée par des défis, tels que la gestion inefficace des ressources publiques et la persistance de certains déséquilibres budgétaires (3,7%)(A QACHAR, 2010).

⁷ L'austérité budgétaire fait référence à une politique économique qui vise à réduire les dépenses publiques et à augmenter les recettes dans le but de maîtriser la dette publique et de rétablir l'équilibre budgétaire.

Tableau 6 : Évolution du PIB, des dépenses publiques au Maroc entre 1993-2004 en MAD et en %

Années	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Dépenses ordinaires	5460	5979	6233	6770	7311	8066	7698	8554	9261	9752	10289	12510
Dettes publiques	14722	15817	16783	17270	17274	17731	17340	18620	18754	14104	17586	17441
Fonctionnement	3814	40781	42807	46579	50021	54542	58446	59296	67372	70150	76145	79613
Compensation	1918	3195	2745	4256	2636	4203	1190	3706	4892	2352	2896	5687
Dépenses d'Invst	19506	18678	19680	17524	14871	17428	17766	19249	21253	19993	17227	19813
Dépenses totales (G)	84832	90072	93889	88667	96461	105539	109424	122019	137887	122242	133261	146435
PIB courant	249220	279320	281700	319340	318350	341390	345490	345208	383185	397782	436987	476983
G/PIB	34	32,24	33,32	27,76	30,3	30,91	31,67	35,34	36	30,8	30,5	30,7

Source : Direction de la statistique et rapport de B.A.M, calcul et présentation, nos soins

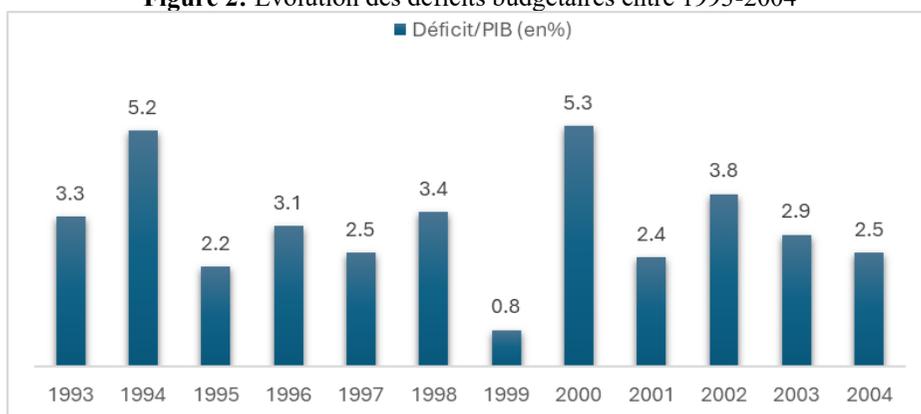
Les données du tableau 6 indiquent que la part des dépenses publiques par rapport au PIB dépasse en moyenne les 30% pendant la période post-PAS (Programme d'Ajustement Structurel). Les dépenses de fonctionnement et le service de la dette représentent des contraintes budgétaires importantes en raison de leur incompressibilité. Les dépenses de fonctionnement continuent d'augmenter, atteignant 16,7% du PIB en 2004, et elles constituent une part importante des dépenses de l'État, avec une masse salariale qui domine la structure des dépenses (43,6% des dépenses totales et 12% du PIB entre 1996 et 2004), ayant plus que doublé entre 1990 et 2004.

En effet, le gel des salaires et la réduction des subventions publiques à la consommation ont entraîné une augmentation des prix des produits de base dans les années 80, ce qui a entraîné une baisse du pouvoir d'achat des fonctionnaires, car l'inflation n'est pas indexée sur les salaires. Les syndicats ont revendiqué à plusieurs reprises et ont obtenu satisfaction en 1996 et 2000, ce qui a entraîné une augmentation des dépenses du personnel au cours de la seconde moitié de la décennie.

Cependant, cette prépondérance des dépenses de fonctionnement a eu un impact négatif sur les dépenses d'investissement, qui sont passées de 7,8% du PIB en 1993 à 4,1% en 2004. Étant donné que l'épargne publique était faible, elle n'a pas contribué de manière adéquate au financement des investissements ni au développement de l'activité économique du pays.

Dans ce sens, les recettes exceptionnelles ont permis de réduire le déficit budgétaire (Figure 2), qui s'est établi en moyenne à 3,1% du PIB sur la période 1996-2004, comparé à 3,3% entre 1990 et 1995. Par exemple, le déficit qui était d'environ 5,3% en 2000 est passé à 2,6% grâce aux recettes provenant de la vente de 35% des actions de Maroc Telecom.

Figure 2: Évolution des déficits budgétaires entre 1993-2004



Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M et la banque mondiale

Sous-période de 2004-2009

La sous-période de 2004-2009 au Maroc présente plusieurs aspects significatifs. Tout d'abord, sur le plan économique, cette période est marquée par une croissance relativement soutenue du produit intérieur brut (PIB) du pays. Des efforts ont été déployés pour stimuler l'investissement et diversifier l'économie, notamment dans les secteurs du tourisme, de l'agriculture et de l'industrie.

En ce qui concerne les finances publiques, les dépenses publiques continuent à augmenter, avec une attention particulière accordée aux dépenses d'investissement (tableau 7). Le gouvernement a cherché à promouvoir le développement des infrastructures, des projets d'énergie et des programmes sociaux.

Tableau 7 : Évolution du PIB, des dépenses publiques au Maroc entre 2005-2009

Années	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Dépenses totales	143165	144300	152743	183230	189504
Dépenses courantes	127229	123919	133869	157036	152090
Dépenses d'investissements	20.519	23 846	28 212	37 740	46361
Taux d'investissement	12,9	15,3	16,5	18,8	22
PIB courant	500095	522649	575270	616254	688843
G/PIB	31,62	30,59	31,23	32,76	30,8

Source : Direction de la statistique, rapport de B.A.M, calcul et présentation, nos soins

Les dépenses publiques totales au Maroc ont augmenté de manière significative au fil du temps, passant de 143 165 millions de dirhams à 189 504 millions de dirhams, avec une augmentation moyenne annuelle d'environ 8%, comme le montre le tableau. Les dépenses courantes, qui comprennent principalement les dépenses de fonctionnement de l'État, représentent près de 80% de l'ensemble des dépenses en 2009.

La maîtrise des dépenses de fonctionnement a été essentielle pour freiner l'augmentation de ces dépenses. En particulier, la masse salariale publique a atteint des niveaux élevés par rapport au PIB, en raison des augmentations salariales découlant des accords sociaux conclus en 1996 et 2000 avec les syndicats, portant sur la promotion exceptionnelle hors quota. En 2005, la masse salariale représentait 11,7% du PIB, l'un des taux les plus élevés au monde. Cela a contribué à creuser le déficit budgétaire de l'État, ce qui a nécessité une réduction du poids de ces dépenses pour améliorer les finances publiques.

Dans cette optique, le gouvernement a entrepris des actions visant à éliminer les principales sources de rigidité budgétaire. À partir de 2005, une opération de départ volontaire a été mise en place, dont les objectifs principaux étaient de⁸ :

- Réduire le sureffectif constaté en mettant en place des mesures visant à ajuster les effectifs ;
- Permettre à l'administration de recruter des profils spécialisés et répondant aux besoins réels en compétences, afin de reconstituer sa capacité de recrutement ;
- Maîtriser la masse salariale et stabiliser les dépenses publiques à des niveaux acceptables en tenant compte des contraintes budgétaires ;
- Favoriser le rajeunissement du management de l'administration en offrant aux jeunes fonctionnaires des opportunités d'accéder à des postes de responsabilité.

Dans ce sens, le gouvernement a pris des mesures visant à réduire les effectifs de la fonction publique, ce qui a entraîné le départ de près de 39 600 fonctionnaires. Cette décision a permis de diminuer la masse salariale, réduisant ainsi les dépenses salariales par rapport aux dépenses courantes et au produit intérieur brut (PIB). La part des dépenses salariales par rapport aux dépenses courantes est de 36 %, et par rapport au PIB, elle est de 11,1 %.

Malgré ces mesures, l'État reste le principal employeur et a créé 28 000 postes en 2010. Le taux de chômage a augmenté de 10 % au premier trimestre de 2010 par rapport à 9,6 % à la même période en 2009⁹. En prenant en compte

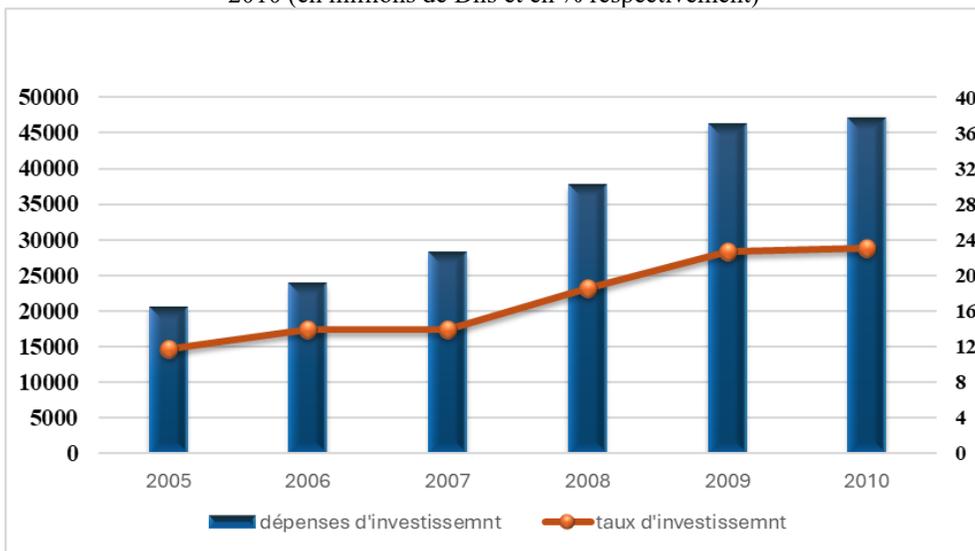
⁸ Ministère de la modernisation des secteurs publics. (2005, 30 octobre). Résultats et analyse de l'opération départ volontaire (p. 10-11).

⁹ Haut-Commissariat au Plan. (2010). Impact de la crise mondiale sur l'économie marocaine.

la création de postes budgétaires, le coût de l'augmentation des salaires convenus dans le cadre du dialogue social, ainsi que des éléments clés tels que les avancements d'échelle, les promotions de grade et l'utilisation des postes vacants, la masse salariale dans la fonction publique continue d'augmenter à un rythme inquiétant.

En effet, les dépenses liées au personnel représentent près de 57 % du montant total alloué aux dépenses de fonctionnement. La masse salariale de la fonction publique est passée de 66,3 milliards de dirhams en 2007 à 80,4 milliards en 2010, ce qui correspond à une augmentation annuelle d'environ 6 à 7 %, dépassant ainsi le taux de croissance du PIB.

Figure 3 : Évolution du montant et du taux des investissements au Maroc entre 2005 et 2010 (en millions de Dhs et en % respectivement)



Source : MEF, calcul et présentation, nos soins¹⁰

De ce fait, la contrainte budgétaire a un impact sur le développement et l'investissement public. Malgré cette contrainte, il est noté que les dépenses d'investissement de l'État ont considérablement augmenté au cours des cinq dernières années grâce à la politique des grands chantiers. Un graphique est présenté pour illustrer cette augmentation, montrant que les dépenses d'investissement de l'État ont plus que doublé, passant de 20 519 millions de dirhams en 2005 à 45 946 millions de dirhams en 2010, avec un taux d'investissement passant de 12,9% à 22% pendant la même période.

Cette évolution est attribuée à la volonté des pouvoirs publics de soutenir l'activité économique, en améliorant l'environnement juridique et réglementaire des affaires, en consolidant l'effort d'investissement de l'État et en lançant des grands projets d'infrastructures avec la participation du Fonds

¹⁰ Annexe 9

Hassan II¹¹ (Routes et Autoroutes, Ports, Aéroports, TGV...). De plus, des politiques économiques conjoncturelles de relance de l'investissement ont été mises en place, et l'Agence Marocaine des Investissements (AMDI) a été créée pour suivre les indicateurs de performance liés à l'investissement et surveiller les mesures adoptées par d'autres pays dans ce domaine.

La période 2010-2019

L'analyse des dépenses publiques sur la période de 2010 à 2019 révèle des tendances significatives qui ont marqué l'évolution économique du pays. Tout d'abord, on observe une croissance soutenue des dépenses totales (G), passant de 199 381 millions en 2010 à 287752 millions en 2019. Cette augmentation atteste de la volonté du gouvernement de soutenir l'activité économique et de répondre aux besoins grandissants de la société.

L'examen plus approfondi de la répartition des dépenses publiques met en évidence le poids prépondérant des dépenses ordinaires dans le budget. En effet, les dépenses ordinaires ont constamment augmenté, atteignant 224379 millions en 2019. Cette orientation budgétaire met en évidence l'engagement continu de l'État à financer les activités gouvernementales et les services publics essentiels.

Un autre aspect important des dépenses publiques est le soutien apporté aux investissements. Les dépenses d'investissement ont affiché une croissance globale malgré des fluctuations d'une année à l'autre, atteignant 63373 millions en 2019. Ces investissements ont été stratégiquement déployés pour stimuler le développement économique à long terme et renforcer les infrastructures clés.

La gestion de la dette publique est également un enjeu crucial pour assurer la stabilité financière. Bien que la dette publique ait augmenté sur la période étudiée, passant de 18 525 millions en 2010 à 29101 millions en 2019, son évolution reste maîtrisée. Les autorités ont manifestement adopté une approche prudente pour maintenir la soutenabilité de la dette et préserver la confiance des marchés financiers.

Enfin, le ratio des dépenses publiques au PIB (G/PIB) a été analysé pour évaluer l'impact global des dépenses sur l'économie. Bien qu'il ait atteint son pic en 2013 à 30,30%, ce ratio a depuis régressé pour se stabiliser à 24,96% en 2019. Cette diminution suggère que le pays a fait preuve de discipline budgétaire, en ajustant les dépenses publiques en fonction des conditions économiques changeantes.

En 2010, les dépenses des administrations publiques consolidées s'élevaient à 10 403,75 MAD, représentant 56,6 % du PIB¹². Ces dépenses se

¹¹ Ministère de l'économie. (2011). Rapport économique et financier, p-91.

¹² Banque du Maroc. (2010-2015). Rapport annuel (Chapitre VI : Finance publique, pp. 70).

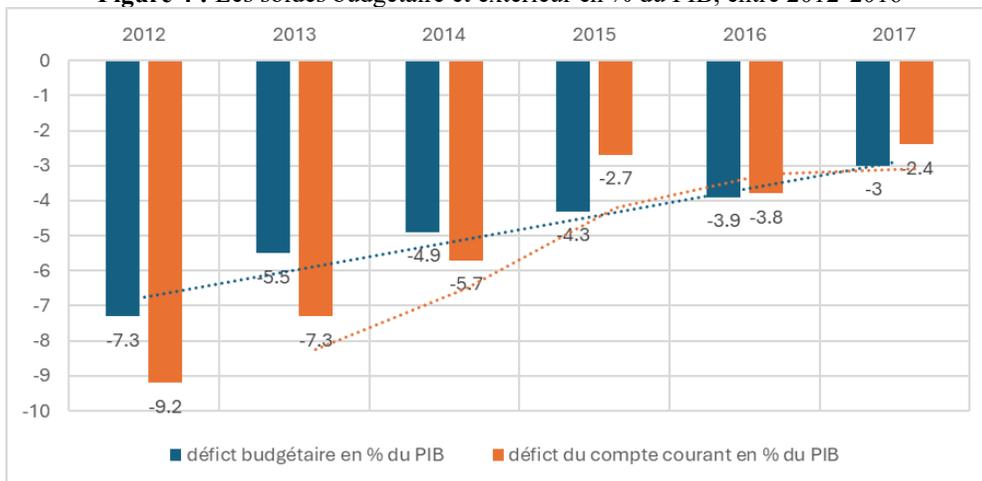
décomposent en 45,3 % pour les prestations sociales, 5,6 % pour les investissements, 10,1 % pour les subventions diverses et 4,3 % pour les intérêts de la dette publique. Les dépenses de fonctionnement, comprenant la masse salariale publique et les consommations intermédiaires, représentent 34,7 % du total. La maîtrise des dépenses publiques a été réalisée grâce à la réduction de la charge de compensation et à la mise en œuvre du système d'indexation partielle des prix de certains produits énergétiques à partir de septembre 2013. En 2013, les dépenses ordinaires ont atteint 209,5 milliards de dirhams, avec un taux d'exécution de 99,5 % par rapport aux prévisions initiales. Elles ont enregistré une baisse de 2,8 % par rapport à 2012, reflétant un effort de maîtrise par rapport à la hausse moyenne enregistrée sur la période 2005-2012, soit 9,9 %.

Depuis 2012, le Maroc s'est donc engagé dans une politique de redressement de ses équilibres macroéconomiques. Les autorités se sont fixées deux objectifs sur la période 2012-2017¹³ :

La réduction des dépenses de fonctionnement et l'amélioration de l'efficacité de l'action sociale de l'État afin de créer l'espace budgétaire nécessaire pour,

La poursuite des investissements et des réformes clés afin d'améliorer le climat des affaires pour soutenir la transformation du modèle économique (BAD, GdM, MCC, 2015). 2.1.5 Grâce aux efforts déployés par les autorités en matière de consolidation budgétaire, le Maroc a considérablement amélioré sa situation macro-économique pendant la période 2013-2016 (figure).

Figure 4 : Les soldes budgétaire et extérieur en % du PIB, entre 2012-2016



Source : nos soins¹⁴.

¹³ Banque africaine de développement. (2017). Document de stratégie pays (pp. 11-12).

¹⁴ Annexe 8

Du point de vue des finances publiques, le Maroc a enregistré une nette réduction de son déficit budgétaire (de -7,3 % du PIB en 2012 à -3,9 % en 2016 et attendu à -3 % en 2017) à la suite de la baisse des dépenses publiques, notamment des dépenses courantes qui sont passées de 29,9 % du PIB à 26,4 % du PIB en 2015. Ceci est le résultat de :

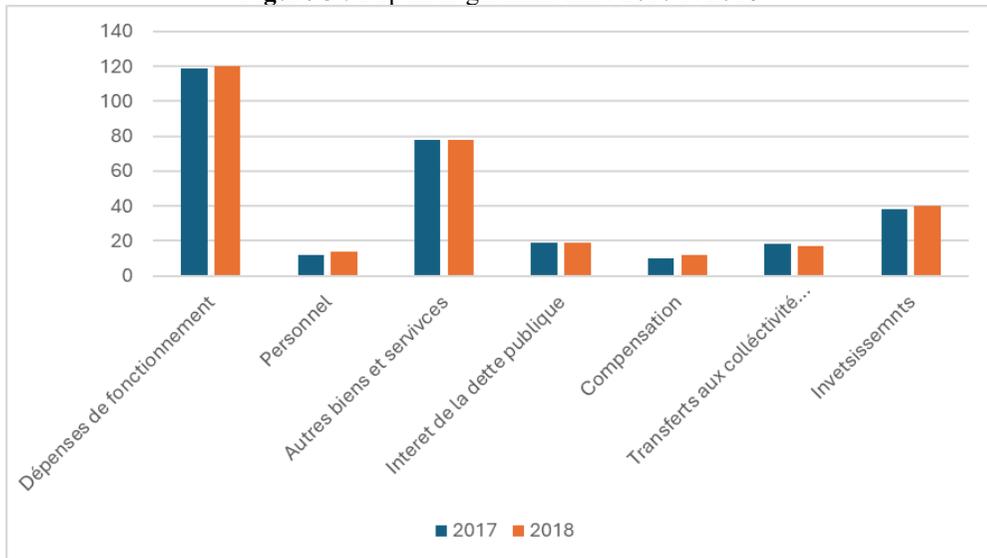
- La réduction du budget alloué aux subventions (en particulier à l'énergie) qui est passé de 6,2 % du PIB en 2012 à 1,4 % du PIB en 2015 ;
- La baisse des charges salariales d'environ 0,4 % du PIB ;
- L'annulation des investissements non réalisés. Ces mesures ont permis de mobiliser des recettes additionnelles, de rationaliser la dépense de l'État et d'améliorer l'efficacité de l'investissement. Grâce à ces efforts, le pays a obtenu une 2nd ligne de précaution et de liquidité de la part du FMI en 2014 et une 3^{ème} en 2016 (FMI, 2016 ; FMI, 2015).

Ces efforts ont aussi permis une réduction du déficit du compte courant qui est passé de - 9,2 % du PIB en 2012 à -0,7 % en 2016.

Dans ce sens, L'évolution des dépenses globales reflète un alourdissement de 2,8% à 176,4 milliards des dépenses ordinaires et une progression de 2% à 43,2 milliards des dépenses d'investissement. Les dépenses de biens et services se sont chiffrées à 122,4 milliards, traduisant une augmentation de 3,6% à 43,6 milliards des dépenses au titre des autres biens et services et de 0,4% à 78,8 milliards de la charge de personnel¹⁵. Celle-ci recouvre une hausse de 0,5% de la masse salariale structurelle et de 24,5% des rappels. Pour leur part, les charges en intérêt de la dette se sont accrues de 1,4% à 21,8 milliards, recouvrant un accroissement de 2,3% à 19,4 milliards des intérêts sur la dette intérieure et un allègement de 5,1% à 2,4 milliards de ceux sur la dette extérieure. De son côté, la charge de compensation s'est alourdie de 15,4% à 13,3 milliards. Selon les données de la Caisse de Compensation, la charge de la subvention du gaz butane relative aux huit premiers mois de 2018 s'est établie à 7,7 milliards, en augmentation de 19,4% par rapport à la même période en 2017, et celle relative au sucre a affiché un léger repli de 0,7 à 2,4 milliards (figure 5).

¹⁵ Banque du Maroc. (Novembre 2018). Revue mensuelle de la conjoncture économique, monétaire et financière (p. 29).

Figure 5 : Dépenses globales entre 2017 et 2018



Source : Élaboration de l'auteur.¹⁶

Conclusion

À travers une exploration détaillée des périodes clés de l'évolution des dépenses publiques au Maroc de 1970 à 2019, cette étude a mis en lumière les dynamiques complexes et les choix stratégiques qui ont façonné le paysage économique du royaume. De la période d'ante-ajustement aux ajustements structurels post-PAS, chaque phase a représenté un moment crucial où les décideurs ont dû naviguer entre impératifs économiques, politiques et sociaux.

Nous avons observé comment les politiques budgétaires ont répondu aux défis internes et externes, influençant à la fois la croissance économique et la stabilité macroéconomique. Les réformes initiées ont souvent été le reflet des priorités nationales et des exigences des institutions internationales, avec des implications significatives pour le bien-être social et la redistribution des ressources.

En somme, le panorama de l'évolution des dépenses publiques au Maroc met en exergue une trajectoire marquée par des phases distinctes, reflétant les choix stratégiques, les contraintes économiques et les contextes politiques successifs. L'analyse historique révèle que les dépenses publiques ont joué un rôle clé non seulement dans la stimulation de la croissance économique, mais aussi dans la gestion des équilibres macroéconomiques et la promotion du développement social.

Toutefois, ces dépenses ont aussi posé des défis majeurs, notamment en termes d'efficacité, de soutenabilité budgétaire et de répartition équitable des

¹⁶ Annexe 6

ressources. Les réformes budgétaires, souvent impulsées par les exigences nationales et internationales, traduisent une volonté d'adapter la politique publique aux mutations économiques tout en répondant aux attentes sociales.

Face aux enjeux actuels et futurs - tels que la diversification économique, la réduction des inégalités et l'intégration dans un contexte globalisé - une gestion rigoureuse, transparente et orientée vers la performance des dépenses publiques demeure indispensable. Cette réflexion ouvre la voie à des perspectives renouvelées pour un développement durable, fondé sur une maîtrise judicieuse des finances publiques au service du bien-être collectif.

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Gouvernance territoriale et performance des services de santé: perspectives pour les Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux au Maroc

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Résumé

Cet article analyse les conditions de réussite des Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux (GST) au Maroc, une innovation visant à décentraliser et intégrer les services de santé. S'appuyant sur le management public, les théories de la gouvernance et le cadre du Triple Aim, l'étude explore les leviers d'une gouvernance territoriale performante. La méthodologie repose sur une revue de littérature, une analyse comparative des réformes au Canada, en Espagne et en France, ainsi que sur l'examen des textes législatifs marocains (BO 7151, 7213) et des rapports institutionnels (OMS, HCP). Les résultats identifient comme facteurs clés : une territorialisation basée sur les besoins populationnels, une autonomie locale effective, des outils de pilotage (tableaux de bord, contractualisation) et un renforcement des capacités managériales, malgré des défis liés à la centralisation et aux disparités régionales. L'article préconise une gouvernance multi-niveaux agile, favorisant coordination, responsabilisation et expérimentation. Des recherches empiriques, notamment sur le pilote de Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceima, sont nécessaires pour évaluer l'impact des GST sur l'équité et la performance des services de santé.

Mots-clés : Gouvernance territoriale, Réforme de la santé, Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux, Pilotage stratégique, Management public

Territorial Governance and the Performance of Health Services: Prospects for Territorial Health Groups in Morocco

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Abstract

This article examines the conditions for the success of Territorial Healthcare Groups (GSTs) in Morocco, an innovative initiative aimed at decentralizing and integrating healthcare services. Drawing on public management, governance theories, and the Triple Aim framework, the study explores the levers for effective territorial governance. The methodology combines a literature review, a comparative analysis of healthcare reforms in Canada, Spain, and France, and an examination of Moroccan legislative texts (BO 7151, 7213) and institutional reports (WHO, HCP). The findings highlight key success factors: territorialization based on population needs, effective local autonomy, management tools such as dashboards and contractual agreements, and strengthened managerial capacities, despite challenges posed by historical centralization and regional disparities. The article advocates for agile, multi-level governance that promotes coordination, accountability, and experimentation. Further empirical research, particularly on the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima pilot, is essential to assess the GSTs' impact on equity and healthcare service performance.

Keywords: Territorial governance, Health reform, Territorial Health Groups, Strategic steering, Public management

Introduction

Dans un contexte mondial de transformation des systèmes de santé, marqué par la recherche d'un équilibre entre l'amélioration de la qualité des soins, la réduction des coûts et une meilleure expérience pour les usagers, de nombreux pays ont engagé des réformes structurelles profondes (WHO, 2007). Le cadre conceptuel du Triple Aim, proposé en 2008 par Berwick,

Nolan et Whittington, synthétise cette ambition en articulant trois objectifs fondamentaux : améliorer l'expérience des soins pour les patients, renforcer et améliorer la santé des populations, et réduire le coût des soins de santé par habitant. Ces principes ont influencé les politiques de santé à l'échelle internationale, encourageant des logiques de décentralisation, d'intégration des services et de gouvernance territoriale.

Le Maroc n'échappe pas à cette dynamique. Il est confronté à des inégalités régionales persistantes en matière d'accès aux soins, à une centralisation historique de la décision et à une fragmentation des structures de santé. Le pays a inauguré une réforme ambitieuse à travers l'adoption de la loi-cadre 06-22 relative au système national de santé (BO 7151, 2022), complétée notamment par la loi 08.22 (BO 7213, 2023). Ces textes visent à instaurer une nouvelle architecture de gouvernance sanitaire, fondée principalement sur la création des Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux (GST). Ces entités, récemment passées de la phase de conceptualisation à la mise en œuvre, notamment dans le pilote de Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceima, visent à régionaliser la gestion des services de santé pour mieux répondre aux besoins locaux, tout en renforçant la coordination, la performance et l'efficacité du système.

La création des GST constitue une innovation institutionnelle majeure dans l'histoire des politiques de santé au Maroc. En proposant une gouvernance territorialisée et intégrée, cette réforme vise à rompre avec la centralisation historique du système de santé et à mieux adapter les services aux besoins locaux. Elle s'inscrit dans une réflexion théorique plus large sur la gouvernance multiniveaux (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012), l'intégration territoriale des soins (Valentijn et al., 2013), et la décentralisation fonctionnelle comme levier d'efficacité (Saltman et al., 2007). Ces approches permettent de penser les GST comme un dispositif de réorganisation des rapports entre l'État, les territoires et les professionnels de santé autour des objectifs communs, de performance, de coordination et d'adaptation contextuelle.

Toutefois, la mise en œuvre de cette réforme soulève de nombreux défis dans un contexte national marqué par des disparités régionales, des capacités administratives inégales et une culture organisationnelle dominée par des logiques verticales (OMS, 2022 ; Benmaamar et al., 2016). Dans cette perspective, les Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux (GST) apparaissent comme une réponse organisationnelle innovante, alignée sur les standards internationaux de gouvernance intégrée. Cependant, la transition d'un système centralisé vers une gouvernance territorialisée soulève une question centrale : **quelles sont les conditions de réussite de la transformation territoriale du système de santé au Maroc à travers les GST, en termes de ressources, d'outils de pilotage et de mécanismes de coordination, afin de garantir leur efficacité, leur équité et leur soutenabilité ?**

De cette question principale émergent trois interrogations secondaires :

1. Quelles sont les ressources organisationnelles, humaines, financières et technologiques nécessaires pour assurer une mise en œuvre efficace des GST au Maroc ?
2. Quels outils de pilotage stratégique doivent être mobilisés pour optimiser la performance territoriale des services de santé ?
3. Quels mécanismes de coordination sont essentiels pour garantir l'intégration des soins et la synergie des politiques publiques ?

Ces questions orientent l'étude vers trois objectifs spécifiques : (i) identifier les ressources clés nécessaires à la mise en œuvre des GST ; (ii) déterminer les outils de pilotage adaptés à la performance territoriale ; (iii) analyser les mécanismes de coordination indispensables à l'intégration des soins et à la cohérence des politiques publiques. En vue de collecter les informations, nous avons eu recours à une approche méthodologique.

Méthodologie

En l'absence de données empiriques consolidées sur les Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux, encore à un stade expérimental au Maroc, cette recherche adopte une approche exploratoire qualitative à visée théorique. La démarche méthodologique repose sur trois volets complémentaires :

- une revue de littérature ciblée portant sur le management public, la gouvernance territoriale et le contrôle de gestion appliqué à la santé ;
- une analyse comparative internationale mobilisant les cas du Canada, de l'Espagne et de la France, sélectionnés pour la diversité de leurs modèles de gouvernance sanitaire ;
- un examen des textes législatifs marocains (lois n° 06-22 et 08-22, publiées aux Bulletins Officiels n° 7151 et n° 7213), complété par l'étude de rapports institutionnels nationaux et internationaux (OMS,

HCP, Ministère de la santé et de la protection sociale marocaine).

Cette triangulation documentaire vise à croiser les apports théoriques et les réalités institutionnelles, tout en contextualisant les enjeux spécifiques à la réforme des GST au Maroc.

Cadre conceptuel mobilisé

L'analyse s'appuie sur un cadre conceptuel multidimensionnel, articulant trois grands registres théoriques :

- **Gouvernance territoriale** : fondée sur les principes de subsidiarité, d'autonomie institutionnelle et de coordination multiniveau (Swyngedouw, 2005 ; Benz & Papadopoulos, 2006). Cette perspective met l'accent sur l'adaptation des politiques publiques aux besoins

locaux ainsi que sur l'innovation organisationnelle (Saltman et al., 2007 ; Bossert & Beauvais, 2002).

- **Théories du management public :**
 - **théorie de l'agence** (Jensen & Meckling, 1976 ; Eisenhardt, 1989) : mobilisée pour analyser les relations contractuelles entre acteurs centraux et territoriaux, en intégrant les enjeux d'incitation, de contrôle et d'asymétrie d'information (Kettunen & Kallio, 2021) ;
 - **resource-Based View** (Wernerfelt, 1984 ; Barney, 1991) : utilisée pour valoriser les ressources stratégiques (humaines, financières, technologiques) des organisations territoriales et leur contribution à la performance ;
 - **approche par la structuration organisationnelle** (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967 ; Mintzberg, 1982) : examine l'équilibre entre différenciation fonctionnelle et intégration structurelle dans le pilotage des entités territoriales ;
 - **contrôle de gestion** (Anthony & Govindarajan, 2007 ; Demeestère, 2005 ; Nobre, 2009) : propose des outils de pilotage (reporting, dialogue de gestion, indicateurs de performance) adaptés à une gouvernance orientée vers les résultats.
- **Cadre du Triple Aim** (Berwick et al., 2008 ; OMS, 2022) : utilisé comme référentiel transversal pour analyser la performance des systèmes de santé selon trois dimensions interdépendantes : l'amélioration de l'expérience patient, l'amélioration de la santé des populations et l'optimisation des coûts.

Méthode d'analyse

La méthode retenue est de nature qualitative et repose sur une synthèse critique des approches managériales, des expériences internationales sélectionnées et des dispositifs réglementaires marocains. Cette approche permet :

- d'identifier les conditions de réussite des GST dans le cadre de la réforme du système de santé ;
- de formuler des recommandations opérationnelles contextualisées à l'intention des décideurs publics et des professionnels impliqués dans la gouvernance territoriale de la santé.

Résultats

L'analyse croisée des cadres conceptuels, des expériences internationales et du contexte réglementaire marocain permet de dégager trois résultats principaux, en lien direct avec les objectifs spécifiques de la

recherche. Ces résultats mettent en lumière les conditions clés de réussite des Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux (GST) dans le cadre de la réforme du système de santé marocain.

Les ressources comme socle de la mise en œuvre effective des GST

La réussite des GST repose sur la disponibilité et la répartition équitable des ressources organisationnelles, humaines, technologiques et financières. L'étude révèle l'existence de fortes disparités régionales en matière de ressources humaines qualifiées (médecins, infirmiers, gestionnaires), ainsi qu'une capacité institutionnelle inégale à piloter localement les services. Par ailleurs, l'absence de systèmes d'information interopérables et la faiblesse des mécanismes de financement fondés sur les besoins populationnels entravent l'opérationnalisation des GST (OMS, 2022 ; Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2021). Le renforcement des capacités locales apparaît dès lors comme une condition préalable indispensable à toute territorialisation effective.

La mobilisation d'outils de pilotage adaptés pour soutenir la performance territoriale

Les GST exigent une ingénierie de gestion stratégique fondée sur des outils appropriés de contrôle et d'évaluation. L'analyse souligne l'importance d'un pilotage basé sur des indicateurs de performance intégrés, combinant données quantitatives (efficacité, coûts, accès aux soins) et qualitatives (satisfaction des usagers, qualité perçue). Des instruments issus du contrôle de gestion, tels que les tableaux de bord équilibrés, la comptabilité par activités (*Activity-Based Costing*) et le dialogue de gestion, s'avèrent essentiels pour soutenir une gouvernance orientée vers les résultats (Kaplan & Norton, 1996 ; Anthony & Govindarajan, 2007 ; Neumann et al., 2016). En outre, la contractualisation entre les niveaux central et territorial (ex. : CPOM, contrats locaux de santé) constitue un levier pertinent pour articuler les priorités nationales et locales.

La gouvernance intégrée comme vecteur d'efficacité et de cohérence des politiques de santé

La transformation territoriale du système de santé marocain appelle un profond renouvellement du modèle de gouvernance. Les GST doivent être conçus comme des plateformes de coordination intermédiaire, à même d'assurer à la fois l'intégration verticale des orientations stratégiques (État – régions – établissements) et la coordination horizontale entre les acteurs locaux. Cette gouvernance multiniveau suppose des mécanismes de coopération entre professionnels de santé, élus locaux, gestionnaires et usagers, afin de renforcer la cohérence des parcours de soins et l'efficacité

globale du système (Saltman et al., 2007 ; Denis et al., 2011). Toutefois, cette dynamique se heurte à des défis structurels hérités de la centralisation, à des cultures administratives hiérarchisées, ainsi qu'à un déficit en données fiables pour le pilotage territorial (Berraho, 2017 ; Ouassou & Allali, 2022).

Discussion

La discussion s'organise autour de trois axes, chacun mettant en évidence un levier déterminant pour la réussite des Groupements Sanitaires Territoriaux au Maroc. Chaque sous-section analyse les implications concrètes des résultats, identifie les défis rencontrés ainsi que les opportunités à saisir, et propose des recommandations opérationnelles adaptées au contexte marocain. L'analyse s'appuie sur des cadres théoriques reconnus et sur des expériences internationales pertinentes, afin d'éclairer les dynamiques à l'œuvre dans la mise en œuvre des GST.

Le premier résultat met en évidence que la réussite des GST dépend de la disponibilité et de la répartition équitable des ressources organisationnelles, humaines, financières et technologiques. Les disparités régionales, documentées par le Haut-Commissariat au Plan (2021), révèlent une pénurie de professionnels qualifiés (médecins, infirmiers et techniciens de santé, gestionnaires) ainsi que des capacités administratives inégales, limitant la capacité des régions à assumer des responsabilités accrues (Najem, 2019). Selon la théorie des ressources (Barney, 1991), le renforcement des capacités locales est essentiel pour soutenir une gouvernance territorialisée. L'expérience des réseaux intégrés de services de santé au Canada montre que des investissements ciblés dans les ressources humaines et les systèmes d'information interopérables sont cruciaux pour une décentralisation efficace (Marchildon, 2013).

Défis :

Au Maroc, la centralisation historique du système de santé constitue un frein majeur à l'autonomie des régions dans la gestion de leurs priorités sanitaires (OMS, 2022). Cette limitation est aggravée par l'absence de systèmes d'information intégrés, qui entrave la circulation fluide des données entre les différents niveaux de gouvernance. Par ailleurs, le mécanisme actuel de péréquation financière demeure insuffisant pour corriger les disparités interrégionales et assurer une équité territoriale dans l'accès aux soins (Benmaamar et al., 2016).

Opportunités :

Les GST représentent une opportunité stratégique pour mutualiser les ressources, renforcer les compétences locales par la formation continue, et

intégrer des outils numériques adaptés, permettant ainsi une gouvernance sanitaire plus réactive aux spécificités régionales.

Recommandations :

- renforcer les capacités humaines par des programmes de formation ciblés à destination des professionnels de santé et des gestionnaires territoriaux.
- déployer des systèmes d'information interopérables, afin d'optimiser la gestion et l'analyse des données sanitaires à l'échelle régionale.
- instaurer une péréquation financière fondée sur les besoins réels des populations (démographie, morbidité, précarité), pour promouvoir une équité territoriale durable.

Le deuxième résultat souligne la nécessité d'outils de pilotage stratégique, tels que les tableaux de bord équilibrés (Kaplan & Norton, 1996), l'*Activity-Based Costing*, et les Contrats Pluriannuels d'Objectifs et de Moyens (CPOM), inspirés du modèle français (Perrin, 2010). Ces instruments permettent d'aligner les priorités nationales et locales tout en tenant compte des spécificités régionales. L'exemple des Agences Régionales de Santé (ARS) en France montre que des indicateurs de performance intégrés (combinant efficacité, qualité des soins et satisfaction des usagers) renforcent une gouvernance orientée vers les résultats (Ministère de la Santé, 2016).

Défis :

Le manque de données sanitaires fiables et l'hétérogénéité des compétences managériales freinent l'intégration des outils numériques dans la gestion territoriale (Ouassou & Allali, 2022). Par ailleurs, une approche de standardisation trop rigide peut ignorer les spécificités locales et limiter l'appropriation des réformes (Bezès & Siné, 2011).

Opportunités :

Les GST offrent l'opportunité d'institutionnaliser des dispositifs numériques de suivi-évaluation adaptés aux réalités régionales. Ces outils peuvent renforcer la transparence, améliorer la performance locale et soutenir une gouvernance orientée vers les résultats.

Recommandations :

- mettre en place des tableaux de bord territorialisés intégrant des indicateurs quantitatifs (accès aux soins, coûts) et qualitatifs (satisfaction des patients).
- adopter des contrats d'objectifs inspirés des CPOM pour articuler les priorités nationales et locales.

- former les gestionnaires à l'utilisation des outils de contrôle de gestion afin de garantir leur adaptation aux contextes locaux.

Le troisième résultat met en avant l'importance d'une gouvernance intégrée, avec les GST comme plateformes de coordination intermédiaires. Une gouvernance multiniveau (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012) favorise à la fois l'intégration verticale (entre l'État, les régions et les établissements) et horizontale (entre acteurs locaux). Les expériences des Groupements Hospitaliers de Territoire en France et des communautés autonomes en Espagne montrent que la coordination multi-acteurs et les systèmes d'information intégrés sont essentiels pour assurer des parcours de soins cohérents (Saltman et al., 2007 ; Denis et al., 2011).

Défis :

La culture organisationnelle verticale et le manque de concertation entre les acteurs (professionnels, élus locaux, usagers) freinent l'intégration des soins (Berraho, 2017). Le transfert des compétences demeure flou, et les données nécessaires au pilotage territorial sont insuffisantes (OMS, 2022).

Opportunités :

Les GST peuvent renforcer la proximité décisionnelle et favoriser une concertation multi-acteurs, ce qui améliore l'adaptation des services aux besoins locaux.

Recommandations :

- créer des instances de concertation multi-acteurs (professionnels, usagers, élus locaux) pour renforcer la cohérence des politiques publiques.
- développer des systèmes d'information intégrés afin de faciliter la coordination des parcours de soins.
- clarifier les responsabilités entre le niveau central, les agences déconcentrées et les GST pour garantir une gouvernance cohérente.

Conclusion

Cette contribution théorique éclaire les enjeux de la territorialisation de la gouvernance sanitaire au Maroc à travers la réforme des GST, portée par les lois 06-22 (BO 7151, 2022) et 08-22 (BO 7213, 2023). En mobilisant les cadres du management public, de la gouvernance territoriale et du Triple Aim, l'étude identifie trois conditions clés de réussite, alignées sur les objectifs spécifiques :

- **ressources adéquates** : Le renforcement des capacités locales (ressources humaines qualifiées, systèmes d'information

interopérables, financement équitable) est essentiel pour surmonter les disparités régionales et les faiblesses administratives (OMS, 2022 ; HCP, 2021).

- **outils de pilotage adaptés** : Des tableaux de bord multidimensionnels, des contrats d'objectifs inspirés des modèles français et l'Activity-Based Costing permettent un pilotage stratégique contextualisé (Kaplan & Norton, 1996 ; Perrin, 2010).
- **coordination efficace** : Une gouvernance multiniveau, avec les GST comme agences intermédiaires, favorise l'intégration des soins par une coordination verticale et horizontale, soutenue par des instances collaboratives (Saltman et al., 2007 ; Denis et al., 2011).

Malgré ces leviers, des défis structurels persistent : centralisation historique, inégalités territoriales, manque de données fiables et culture organisationnelle verticale (Berraho, 2017 ; Ouassou & Allali, 2022). Les GST offrent des opportunités significatives – proximité décisionnelle, mutualisation des ressources, concertation multi-acteurs –, mais leur succès dépend d'une mise en œuvre progressive, d'une clarification des responsabilités et d'un renforcement des capacités. Les expériences internationales (Espagne, France, Canada) soulignent l'importance d'une autonomie locale équilibrée par une régulation nationale, soutenue par des outils numériques et une gouvernance participative.

L'expérience internationale montre l'importance d'un équilibre entre autonomie locale et régulation nationale, soutenu par des outils numériques performants et une gouvernance participative. L'expérimentation en cours à Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceima représente un laboratoire privilégié pour tester ces principes.

Perspectives de recherche :

- évaluer les expérimentations pilotes des GST, notamment à Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceima, pour analyser leur fonctionnement et leurs dynamiques organisationnelles.
- étudier les mécanismes de coordination multi-acteurs pour optimiser l'intégration des soins et la cohérence des politiques publiques.
- analyser l'impact des GST sur l'équité d'accès aux soins et la qualité des services, à l'aide d'indicateurs quantitatifs et qualitatifs.

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