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Human capital factors that enhance sustainable strategic management practices for organizational resilience: A case of urban councils in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT
The continued service delivery challenges being experienced by local authorities, mainly in developing countries, is a cause for concern. This indicates a lack of or failure to adopt sustainable strategic management practices which are viewed as strategies for enhancing organizational resilience. This paper, therefore, explored the influence of human capital factors on the practice of sustainable strategic management necessary for organizational resilience focusing on urban councils in Zimbabwe. The study used the descriptive survey of the quantitative research approach. The population of the study involved all the 2931 managers and professional employees in the 32 urban councils in Zimbabwe. A sample of 344 employees was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan sampling determination table. A Questionnaire was used in data collection and was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test for reliability while the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) was used for measuring sampling adequacy. Employee competencies and motivation were found to be low while employee commitment was found to be moderate in urban councils of Zimbabwe. So, the weak organizational resilience of the majority of Zimbabwean urban councils as evidenced by poor performance in terms of service delivery, can be attributed to poor sustainable strategic management practices being caused by lack of consideration of human capital factors. In order to improve organizational resilience, urban councils in Zimbabwe are recommended to adopt effective sustainable strategic management practices through enhanced employee competencies, motivation and commitment. However, a further study is recommended on other factors affecting sustainable strategic management practices with a different methodology focusing on organizations in the private sector.

Keywords:
Commitment; Competence; Economic; Environmental; Motivation; Social

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current business environment is characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). Regardless of size, all organizations are vulnerable to external threats and disasters. According to Hillmann and Guenther (2021), with the rapidly increasing number of crises and disasters around the world, resilience has been conceptually invoked to enlighten post-crisis management in pursuing sustainable development for organizations. Since these threats are unavoidable, organizations must be flexible in responding to them. Flexibility of organizations in the face of external threats has been interpreted as resilience. According to Kowsar, Nedaei and Seyednaghavi (2019) cited in Hamidavi et al, (2023), the adverse impact of natural disasters and economic crises on organizational operations highlights the need for organizational resilience (OR). Correspondingly, organizational resilience concerns an organization's ability to survive, and potentially even thrive in volatile operating environments. At the organizational level, resilience is trackable through a portion of characteristics, routines, capacities, practices, capabilities, abilities, and processes that facilitates an organization to cope with expected and unexpected disruptions and survive (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021). Local authorities are some of the public sector organizations being seriously affected by the volatility in the business environment. The effect is more intense for those operating in less developed countries. According to Miller (2018), this is because, for long, these public sector organizations have been relying on the central government as their primary source of funding. However, of late, funding and other forms of grants and contributions from central governments have been steadily decreasing. As such, these public organizations are now vulnerable to global competition, and to a lager extent, are affected by regulatory frameworks, policies and government interventions, among others (Tajeddini & Trueman, 2016 cited in Eresia-Eke & Soriakumar, 2021). For instance, in Tanzania, unsuccessful implementation of strategic management practices in local authorities is still a challenge. Recent Chief Auditor-General reports show that many councils in the country fail to meet standard qualification of governing resources at work place (Theresia & Ludwing, 2015 in Pandisha et al, 2022). This has made people in the country to suffer in different degrees of poor service deliverance due to poor implemented strategic management practices (Boundless, 2013, in Pandisha, et al, 2022). Similarly, in South Africa continuous negative audit reports by the Auditor General on municipalities and increasing service delivery protests by local communities are a sign of lack or poor strategic management practices (Auditor-General Report, 2016; Chikulo, 2016 cited in Nkadimeng, 2019). Furthermore, strategic planning has not improved service provision by local authorities in Zambia even after the government had encouraged local authorities to develop strategic plans as a means to improve service delivery responsibilities in their areas of jurisdiction (Taylor et al 2018).

In Zimbabwe, there is increasing poor service delivery by urban councils in terms of provision of clean and safe drinking water, road maintenance, refuse collection, repairing of burst sewer and water pipes and drainage cleaning among others, visible in most urban councils in the country. This is buttressed by regular Auditor-General and media reports which continue to expose shortcomings of these critical government agencies in terms of service delivery. For instance, the Auditor-General report, on local authorities for the financial year ended 31 December 2018 presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe in 2019, paints a grim picture of inadequate service provision in the country's cities, towns and smaller urban settings. It portrays a sorrowful state of service delivery in urban centers in the country. Similarly, the 2016 first report of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Local Government, Rural and Urban development on service delivery by the local authorities also pointed poor service delivery by the majority of urban councils visited. Another report from the Office of the Auditor General of Zimbabwe for the financial year ended December, 31, 2019 on local authorities presented to Parliament in 2021; indicate that the majority of local authorities in the country are operating without key Policy documents such as strategic plans. The 2022 report presented to parliament of Zimbabwe in 2023 reported rising cases of service delivery from thirty-three in 2021 to forty-one in 2022 (Auditor-General report, 2022). These were mainly sewer and drainage system challenges.

Such phenomenal shortcomings require that these public organizations adopt sustainable strategic management practices which can tackle changing economic, social, environmental and technological environments and achieve high levels of alignment and performance (Mckeown, 2012 cited in Elbanna, et al, 2020). Additionally, Moura and Tomei (2021) asserts that the practice of sustainable strategic management is viewed as one of the strategies for enhancing organizational resilience it is therefore, against this background that the paper sought to explore human capital factors and their influence in the practice of sustainable strategic management necessary for enhancing organizational resilience of local authorities focusing on urban councils in Zimbabwe.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of sustainable strategic management

Sustainable strategic management practices are structured approaches that organizations use to integrate sustainability into their strategies, decision-making and operations. These practices aim to balance economic, social and environmental considerations so as to ensure long-term success and positive impact (Rao & Shukla, 2023). Sustainable strategic management is an embodiment for a sustainable flow of economic activities in an organization and the economy (Stead & Stead, 2008 in Rao & Shukla, 2023). In this sense, it is defined as a process of evaluating, enunciating and employing commercial strategies that are ecologically responsible and economically viable to the society (Stead & Stead, 2014 in Rao & Shukla, 2023). Sustainable strategic management is a multidisciplinary concept which brings in the contributions from diverse fields such as the hospitality industry to measure the selection of environmentally sustainable strategies in formulating a competitive advantage (Parnell, 2008; Walsh & Dodds, 2017 in Rao & Shukla, 2023). It also brings in contributions from the automobile industry to stimulate the sustainability by smearing various business strategies and managerial insinuations, and the banking industry to assess the sustainability practices through an integrated strategic multi-criteria decision-making process (Wesseling et al., 2015; Raut et al., 2017 in Rao & Shukla, 2023). Moreover, sustainable strategic management has also been adopted in the semi-conductor, food and medical, and tourism industry, respectively, to measure the sustainability performance through an integrated strategic management model (Duman et al., 2018; Hsu et al., 2011; Mayakul et al., 2018 cited in Rao & Shukla, 2023). Some of the prevalent sustainable strategic management forms of practice include the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), Sustainability Balanced Scorecard (SBSC), Circular Economy Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), among others (Rao & Shukla, 2023). According to the authors, these approaches provide guidelines, metrics and tools to help organizations in assessing and prioritizing sustainability issues, set goals and targets, develop sustainable strategies and initiatives, measure and report performance and continuously improve and innovate. By embracing these sustainable strategic management frameworks, organizations can reduce their negative impacts, capitalize on opportunities and contribute to a more sustainable future.

The sustainable balanced scorecard derives from the original balanced scorecard with an adapted structure and content to integrate economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainability (Bieker, 2003 in Pereira & Oliveira, 2020). The concept is still relatively new in the management field (Ricart, Rodriguez & Sanchez, 2005 in Gloria, Okonewa & Onyinyechukwu, 2020). The balanced scorecard is probably the most important recent innovation built to enhance organizational value by allowing top managers to better manage their organizations' critical processes resulting in an enhanced competitive market position and firm value (Kaplan & Norton, 2001 in Gloria et al., 2020). It is defined as a set of financial measures (reflecting results of past actions) complemented by operational measures on customer satisfaction, internal processes, innovation and improvement of the organization (the drivers of future financial performance) showing managers a quick and wide view of the business (Kaplan & Norton, 1992 in Pereira & Oliveira, 2020). Since the balanced scorecard helps in the identification and management of simultaneous improvements in environmental, social and financial business objectives, a sustainability balanced scorecard fulfils the main requirement of sustainability for a permanent improvement of business performance concerning such objectives (Figge et al., 2003 in Pereira & Oliveira, 2020). Therefore, integrating sustainability development with the balanced scorecard approach emphasizes that an all-embracing sustainability approach is a way of limiting negative environmental and social impacts (Fakoya, 2013 in Gloria et al., 2020).

According to Elkington's 1996 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is another dimension of sustainable strategic management practices (Elkington, 2006 in Nogueira, Gomes & Lopes, 2022). The concept was introduced to the business community in 1994 as a new sustainability taxonomy that would incorporate new rules for sectors to follow while tackling the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Loviscek, 2021). The framework was presented as a new challenge for businesses to incorporate human and environmental security into the strategic business model and to create new tools and taxonomies to evaluate the harm being done to society and the environment, according to Griggs et al. (2013), cited in Loviscek (2021). According to Wu (2013) in Nogueira, Gomes, and Lopes (2022), the Triple Bottom Line is defined as the three Ps: profit, planet, and people and encompasses three dimensions: economic, environmental, and social. Therefore, in order to calculate company performance in its sustainable interpretation, traditional economic outcomes, environmental and social dimensions were included (Hourneaux, et al., 2018 in Nogueira, Gomes & Lopes, 2022). According to the Triple Bottom Line paradigm, businesses engaged in socially and environmentally conscious behavior stand to gain financially (Gimenez, 2012 in Nogueira, Gomes & Lopes, 2022). Activities at the confluence of an organization's social, environmental, and economic performance can also yield financial rewards; these activities are linked to long-term economic returns and competitive advantage (Cater & Rogers, 2008 in Nogueira, Gomes & Lopes, 2022). Therefore, the sustainable practices of the triple bottom line can boost economic growth and strengthen an organization's competitive edge (Gregory, Stead & Stead, 2021).

Circular economy is the other practice for sustainable strategic management. According to Kirchherr et al. (2017) in Ahmad et al. (2023), it is described as an economic system that substitutes reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling, and recovering materials throughout the production/distribution and consumption process with the idea of "end-of-life." Social and economic sustainability are two aspects of sustainable development that are incorporated into the circular economy (Ghisellini et al., 2016 in Díaz-Duarte et al., 2024). it is evaluated based on factors including resource management (reduce, reuse, and recycle), effective energy, water, and material management, environmental impact in terms of emissions and generated waste, and indicators of the shift towards the circular economy (Nuňez et al., 2018 in Díaz-Duarte et al., 2024). The three fundamental components of the circular economy namely value creation, value transfer, and value capture represent both concrete, measurable economic benefits and intangible, non-financial gains (Urbinati et al., 2017; Ranta et al., 2018; Secundo et al., 2017; Wamba et al., 2015 in Dïaz-Duarte et al., 2024). Although the circular economy originated from a more technical standpoint, it is increasingly recognized that significant changes must be made to company models, supply networks, corporate strategies, and ultimately society as a whole (Ghisellini et al., 2016; Kirchherr et al., 2017 in Ahmad et al., 2023). A wide range of circular economy activities are linked to innovative competitive strategies, and these practices can be used to implement various competitive strategies (Mura et al., 2020). Achieving sustainable levels of consumption and production through the use of cleaner production techniques and efficient product life cycle management is the main aim of the circular economy, which ultimately aims to promote a balance between environmental protection and economic development (Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017 in Díaz-Duarte et al., 2024).

The incorporation of social, environmental, and economic factors into regular organizational management is known as sustainable performance (Truong, Huynh and Nguyen, 2023). Any company needs to be both financially successful and ecologically conscious (Ho et al., 2009; Luthra et al., 2013 in Truong et al., 2023). According to Zhu et al. (2008), Nishitani et al. (2016) in Troung et al. (2023), an organization's economic performance is defined as its ability to make a total profit as well as its ability to save costs through wise purchasing decisions, waste management, energy use, waste disposal methods, and the imposition of fines for environmental damages. Energy conservation, emission reduction, and waste reduction are all part of environmental performance. Since energy conservation, waste pollution, and emission reduction are regarded as environmental performance criteria, it involves reducing air emissions, the use of hazardous products, water waste, and solid waste (Zhu et al., 2005; Chiou et al., 2011, Lee et al., 2012; Rao, 2002 in Troung et al., 2023). Social performance is typically used to quantify how sustainability policies affect customer loyalty and happiness, worker health and safety, and the reputation of the company and its products (Ashby et al., 2012; Zailani et al., 2012 in Troung et al., 2023).

2.2 Theoretical perspective

The AMO Theory (Ability, Motivation and Opportunity) was initially proposed by Bailey (1993), who suggested that ensuring the employee's discretionary effort needed three components namely the necessary skills, appropriate motivation and employers need to provide employees with the opportunity to participate (Appelbaum et al., 2000 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). Thus the theory considers a three-dimensional model consisting of ability, motivation, and opportunity to enhance human resource management practices (Rajiani et al., 2016; Kundu & Gahlawat, 2018; Pak et al., 2019 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). The theory draws from the concept of high performance work systems (HPWS). Its acronym stands for the three elements namely individual ability (A), motivation (M), and the opportunity to participate (O) (Knies & Leisink, 2014; Claudia, 2015 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). The ability component of the theory focuses on improving the employees' capabilities and skills by a set of functions that are aimed to recruit talented candidates, conducting extensive programs for training and developing, and working on job enrichment (Bainbridge, 2015; Pak et al., 2019 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). It is described as practices and policies that the human resource function of an organization performs in order to ensure that employees have the required skills, knowledge and ability to execute their deliverables with the minimum level of supervision. The component is essentially made up of three distinct elements of an employee's knowledge, skills, and ability. The motivation component refers to encourage employees to perform their jobs optimally through rewards and incentives, job security, and career development (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2018 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). According to the theory, human resource policies should be drawn to motivate employees to attain set goals while also catering for rewards for efforts and results obtained by employees. The opportunity component demonstrates the open horizons for staff to participate in the organization's success by information involvement, work as a team, and to empower their employees (Obeidat et al., 2016; Rajiani et al., 2016 in AI-Shahwani, 2020). The component addresses policies and practices that aim at enhancing employee engagement and performance through the provision of opportunities to foster employee involvement. Such opportunity-enhancing policies typically enhance the delegation of decision-making authority and responsibility to enhance employee involvement across the organization thus reinforcing employee trust in their respective organizations and speeds up organizational growth as collaboration and teamwork. Therefore, in summary, people perform well when they have the capabilities, they have the adequate motivation, and their work environment provides opportunities to participate (Boselie, 2010; Choi, 2014; in AI-Shahwani, 2020).

2.3 Employee competencies and the practice of sustainable strategic management

Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities required executing tasks that support strategic objectives (Hamel, 1990; Sanchez & Heene, 1997, in Tawse & Tabesh, 2020). These competencies are akin to "operational capabilities" in that they are not dynamic in nature since they lie in the actions of organizational members as they engage in the strategic management practice (Helfat & Winter, 2011 in Tawse & Tabesh, 2020). The authors further assert that operational competencies enable "repeated and reliable performance of an activity" and determine the quality of strategic management task outcomes. The competency to carry out tasks, often referred to using terms such as expertise, capability and proficiency, required by a strategy, is a basic condition of effective implementation in the strategic management process of an organisation (Tawse & Tabesh, 2020). A competency is a combination of skills, attitudes, and behaviors possessed by an individual or a combination that is expected by the organization from a particular employee (Hayton and McEvoy, 2006 in Diaz-Fernandez, et al., 2024). According to the authors, to be successful with respect to sustainability, an individual must be knowledgeable about the environment as well as the economic and social issues related to sustainability (e.g. knowledge about competitors). In addition, a personnel value system must exist to support the individual's actions (e.g. attitudes) and the individual must have the ability to perform tasks related to sustainability (skills).

Previous studies have identified individual competencies as the employees' main contribution to a company's competitiveness and it is further suggested that distinct employee characteristics and behaviors are required for different strategies (Hayton and McEvoy, 2006; Dıaz-Fernandez et al., 2013, 2014 in Diaz-Fernandez, et al., 2024). Additionally, Alomran (2019) studied the level and barriers of adopting strategic management practices by healthcare organizations in Saudi Arabia. Insufficient capabilities of employees emerged as one of the barriers to strategy implementation. Moreover, Omondi, Onyango & Museve (2022) sought to establish the effect of staff competency in strategy implementation on Water Service provision in Kakamega County in Kenya. The results of the study revealed a significant effect of staff competency in strategy implementation. Therefore, for operational competency, the importance of using the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, through structural actions such as use of the balanced scorecard in conjunction with formal scenario planning, which allows an organization to better predict the capabilities required to deal with future competitive contingencies is emphasized (Othman, 2007, in Tawse & Tabesh, 2020).

Employee empowerment is an organized increase from the know-how skills and sensations needed for staff members to execute efficiently in the offered process, as well as, to operate in underlining situation (Bijuna et al., 2016 in Murugi & Ongoto, 2018). This means that empowered employees are relatively committed. This is so because employee empowerment also enhances the capabilities of panel of employees in very effective way by motivating them and transforming them in to well organized and well mannered, that ultimately affects the performance of the organisation (Kinyanjui & Juma, 2014 in Murugi & Ongoto, 2018). Thus strategic management in organizations is planned in a way to utilize the energy and capacity of employees keeping in mind the end goal to finish their job and to accomplish the intended objectives. Likewise, employee training is considered as the process of improving the existing knowledge, exposure and general performance abilities in an individual (Odongo & Owuor, 2015 in Murugi & Ongoto, 2018). Institutionalization and operationalization of strategy in any organization is based on empowering staff with the relevant skills to perform the task with less difficulty (Mbaka & Mugambi, 2014, in Murugi & Ongoto, 2018). Thus, from the abovementioned observations, regarding the relationships between the employee competencies and sustainable strategic management practices, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H_1 *– Employee competence has a positive and significant influence in sustainable strategic management practices for organizational resilience*

2.4 Employee motivation and sustainable strategic management practice

Employees are considered the most important and leading factors in achieving sustainability in an organization (Zaborova & Markova, 2018; Kucharcikova, 2014 in Lorincova et al., 2019). Employees who are motivated and working hard to achieve their personal and organisational goals can become a crucial competitive advantage for any organization (Glisovik et al., 2019 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Employee motivation is the degree to which employees are intrinsically inspired by their work and the level to which they drive joy from simply doing the job (Baciu, 2018; Veldsman & Coetzee, 2014 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). It is defined as a process that explains one's intensity, direction and perseverance in trying to achieve intended goals (Wukir, 2013, in Sudiardhita et al., 2018). It is also regarded as an internal state that causes people to behave in a particular way to accomplish particular goals and purposes (Denhardt, Denhardt & Aristigueta, 2008, in Cioclov & Lala-Popa, 2018). In organizational context, motivation is usually interpreted as the satisfaction of undertaking a certain activity, getting fully involved and engaged into it (Cioclov & Lala-Popa, 2018). Therefore, the level of employee motivation in an organization is determined by the manner in which they take action, plan, coordinate and how they identify with the organization. In that case motivation is thus considered as a psychological process that arouses and directs employee behavior towards the realization of certain objectives or goals (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008, in Chikukwa, Msosa & Mlambo, 2020). Accordingly, motivation is an important tool for attaining employees' superior performance in an organization which results in organizational effectiveness (Nyinyimbe, 2020). When motivated and engaged, employees are more likely to commit to the organization's sustainability goals and take ownership of their roles in achieving them. Conversely, the lack of motivation and employee engagement can lead to a decrease in employee satisfaction, employee turnover and ultimately undermine the organization's sustainability effort (Shahzad et al., 2022).

Employee motivation (EM) is a critical component because motivated employees are more likely to commit to the organization's sustainability goals and take ownership of their roles in achieving them. Organizations rely on the motivation of their employees' to engage and contribute towards outcomes, therefore, it is important to understand and identify factors that affect and enhance motivation during strategic management process (Hitchcock & Stavros, 2017, in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). This is because motivated employees are more proactive in scanning for risks and opportunities that enhance and protect the organization's competitive advantage. For instance, Kumari et al (2021) empirically examined the role of motivation and reward in employee's job performance through mediating effect of job satisfaction in manufacturing and services firms. The results of the study indicated that reward and motivation affect employee job performance positively and significantly. Employees are most likely to take action and adapt their behaviors towards the achievement of strategic objectives when they understand how their efforts contribute towards organizational outcomes (Boswell, 2006; Copeland, 2013; McAdam et al., 2019 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021).

Since organizations rely on their employees' motivation to engage and contribute towards outcomes, it is important to identify factors that affect and enhance their motivation (Hitchcock & Stavros, 2017 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). In organizational context, goal achievement is possible when employees are aware of them, along with having ownership of these goals and believing that they are achievable, taking into consideration that they also contain intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes for the employees (Kanfer et al., 2017 in Begiri, 2019). According to a study by Kalogiannidis (2021) on the impact of employee motivation on organizational performance in the public sector, employee motivation, through its different aspects such as rewards and recognition, management styles, workplace environment and employee characteristics was found to be influential to organizational performance. It is therefore, important for organizations to be aware of the factors that motivate employees towards the attainment of desired outcomes (Gagne, 2018; McAdam et al., 2019 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Conversely, the lack of motivation can lead to a decrease in employee satisfaction and employee turnover and ultimately undermine the organization's sustainability effort (Shahzad et al., 2022). As such, managers need to understand the factors that determine and affect employee motivation during strategic management practice since it is a self-initiated activity Welpe, 2017 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed.

H_2 - *Employee motivation has a positive and significant influence in the practice of sustainable strategic management for organizational resilience.*

2.5 Employee commitment and the practice of sustainable strategic management

Employee involvement and commitment are critical to implementing successful strategic change in organizations (Fiegener, 2005; Elbanna, 2008 in Nwachukwu et al., 2018). Employee commitment refers to the bond that exists between the organization and employees (Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). According to behavioral theory, employee commitment occurs as a consequence of actions, namely behavior. Some theorists use the term will to describe this mechanism and state that if employees are free to make decisions about an activity in which they will participate, then they will feel a greater obligation and responsibility to carry out the activity to the end, as well as consider non-profit costs (Đorđević et al. 2020). In order to implement strategies successfully, firms need to create an organizational climate that supports the commitment of employees to the exercise (Nwachukwu, Chlädkovä & Olatunji, 2018). According to a study by Nwachukwu et al (2018) employee commitment emerged as one of the key drivers in relation to strategic performance in telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Therefore, successful strategic practice requires the commitment of people especially at the implementation stage (Nwachukwu, Chlädkovä & Olatunji, 2018). It needs employees' follow-through and commitment to transform strategy into outcomes (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al, 2018 in Lees & Dhapat, 2021). Employee involvement and commitment are crucial for implementing successful strategic change in organizations (Fiegener, 2005; Elbanna, 2008, in Nwachukwu et al., 2018). This is because the transformation of strategies into outcomes, require employees' follow-through and commitment (Gagne, 2018; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al., 2018, in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Additionally, Boswell (2006); Copeland (2013); McAdam et al. (2019) cited in Lees and Dhanpat (2021) argued that employees are most likely to take action and adapt their behaviors towards the achievement of strategic objectives, when they understand how their efforts contribute towards organizational outcomes. Moreover, when employees understand their firm's strategy, it gives them a feeling of being part of the team, and thus increases their willingness to work towards shared business goals (Tonnessen & Gjefsen, 1999 in Nwuchukwu et al., 2018). From the foregoing, the following hypothesis was developed.

H_3 – *Employee commitment has a positive and significant influence in sustainable strategic management practices for organizational resilience.*

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey design of the quantitative research approach. The design was chosen because of its important characteristic of being able to deal with one or few variable as in this study. With a descriptive design a researcher was also able to describe preferences, practices, characteristics, commonalities or differences it is possible to gather data on a limited number of variables from a large number of subjects and it can be used for many different topics and populations. The questionnaire was used to collect data and for reliability evaluations on quantifiable data, the instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for each research item was higher than 0.7 making the instrument typically suitable and acceptable. To determine whether the 344 sample drawn from a population of 2931 using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s determination table, was sufficient for the component analysis, the sampling adequacy assessment: Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. The KMO test was used to measure the suitability of data for factor analysis, thus it tests the adequacy of the sample size while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.696
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1259.599
	Df	91
	Sig.	.000

It follows that the sample was sufficient and the findings obtained met the criteria required for conducting exploratory factor analysis because the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure's likelihood value of 0.696 was 0.000, which is significantly less than 0.05, the permissible margin of error.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics included arithmetic mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of findings on the three variables of the study. The mean denotes the average of a group responses or how responses are distributed around the mean whereas a small standard deviation consists of fairly unvarying replies and a huge standard deviation consists of a significant fluctuation in the replies. It is equal to zero when the replies are the same. So, to improve data understanding, mean and standard deviation were used concurrently in this study and the results are as presented on table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on human capital factors for sustainable strategic management practices

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean response	Std. Deviation
Employees' have the competences to practice SSM	241	1	4	2.47	Disagree	.683
Employees are motivated to practice SSM	241	1	4	1.72	Disagree	.600
Employees are committed to practice SSM	241	1	5	3.32	Neutral	.738
Overall	241			2.50	Disagree	.674
Valid N (listwise)	241					

(Source: Author's findings, 2024)

From the table, three items namely employee having knowledge (competence) (2.47) and employees being motivated for sustainable strategic management practice (1.72), had mean scores corresponding to mean response of disagree which imply that respondents were disagreeable to the notion. Respondents were however neutral on the commitment to the practice (3.32). Therefore, the overall mean score was 2.50 which corresponds to disagree implying that human capital factors are being neglected leading to poor sustainable strategic management practices and consequently poor performance of urban councils in Zimbabwe.

Bagozzi and Yi (1988) suggested that a cut-off value of 0.6 be used for normalized factor loadings. Higher critical ratios were also thought to be appropriate and significant (Bagozzi & Yi, 1981; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In Table 3, the critical ratios (CRs) and adjusted factor loadings (λ) for the categories used to assess convergent validity are shown on Table 2.

Table 3: Constructs, Items, λ and CR

Construct	Items	Λ	CR
Human Capital Factors (HCF)	HCF1	.962	9.620***
	HCF2	.840	9.442***
	HCF3	.781	10.323***

*Notes: - CR is fixed; *** significant at $p<0.001$*
Source: Survey data (2023)

5. DISCUSSIONS

Reviewed literature clarified the importance of employee competence in the practice of sustainable strategic management which subsequently enhances organizational resilience. The results of the study reveal lack of employee competences relevant for sustainable strategic management practices in the majority of urban councils in Zimbabwe. What is obtaining in the majority of Zimbabwean urban councils in terms of employee competencies contradicts the findings of studies by Omondi, Onyango & Museve (2022) in Kenya and Alomran (2019) in Saudi Arabia where staff competency was found to be a significant factor in sustainable strategic management practices. The results are also contrary to a claim by Hamel (1990); Sanchez and Heene (1997) in Tawse and Tabesh (2020) who emphasizes on employee competencies as a necessary element for the execution of sustainable strategies and subsequent performance of an organization. Additionally, the findings also contradict the assumption of the AMO theory where ability is one of the factors to be considered for high performance work systems. As such, lack of necessary competencies by employees of urban councils in Zimbabwe can be attributed to poor sustainable strategic management practices which results in their weak organizational resilience. As such, besides competency being positively and significantly correlated with the practice of sustainable strategic management for organizational resilience, this is not the case with Zimbabwean urban councils. Employees in the majority of urban councils in Zimbabwe are somehow incompetent hence weak organizational resilience due to ineffective sustainable strategic management practices.

On the other hand, employee motivation in urban councils in Zimbabwe was found to be low. The results are against the findings empirical studies by Kalogiannidis (2021) and Kumari et al (2021) where employee motivation was found to be a critical factor for attaining intended goals in an organization. Motivated employees were likely found to behave positively as far as the practice of sustainable strategic management is concerned. Additionally, the results of the study are contrary to the AMO theory where employee motivation is viewed as an important factor in achieving high performance in organizations. Given the level of performance of urban councils in Zimbabwe, the results of the study affirm the claim of Shahzad et al (2022) that lack of motivation can lead to a decrease in employee satisfaction, increase employee turnover and ultimately undermine the organization's sustainability effort. The results thus substantiate the perceived poor performance of urban councils in Zimbabwe in terms of service delivery. The poor performance can be attributed to ineffective sustainable strategic management practices which result in weak organizational resilience and can be traced to the demotivated employees.

However, the results of the study revealed employee commitment as neither promoting nor discouraging sustainable strategic management practices in urban councils in Zimbabwe. The findings were neutral on this aspect. Still these divided views are against the assumption that employee commitment is one of the critical factor in sustainable strategic management (Nwachukwu et al., 2019; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al., 2018; Gagne, 2018 in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Additionally, according to a study by Nwachukwu et al (2018), employee commitment emerged as one of the key drivers in relation to strategic performance in telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Moreso, Fiegener (2005); Elbanna (2008) cited in Nwachukwu et al (2018) emphasized that employee involvement and commitment are crucial for implementing successful strategic change in organizations. This is because the transformation of strategies into outcomes, require employees' follow-through and commitment (Gagne, 2018; Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2013; Street et al., 2018, in Lees & Dhanpat, 2021). Therefore, in this regard, the partial commitment by employees in urban council in Zimbabwe is not enough for effective sustainable strategic management practices relevant for organizational resilience hence poor performance in terms of service delivery.

5.1 Conceptual framework

Based on the results of the study, a conceptual framework was developed which depicts key concepts, variables, relationships and assumptions emerged therefrom, as shown on figure 1 below.

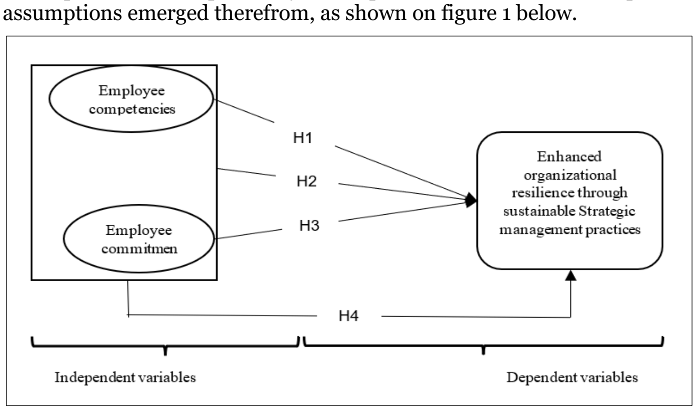

Figure 1. Human capital factors for practicing sustainable strategic management for organizational resilience
(Source: Authors' construction, 2024)

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study explored human resource factors affecting the practice of sustainable strategic management leading to the resilience of urban councils in Zimbabwe. employee competence, motivation and commitment were the three variables used in the study for exploration. Besides employee motivation, competence and commitment being positively and significantly related to the practice of sustainable strategic management practices leading to organizational resilience, this is not the case in urban councils in Zimbabwe. These variables were found to be negative in the majority of Zimbabwean urban councils. It can therefore, be concluded that weak organizational resilience, as evidenced by poor performance in terms of service delivery by urban councils in Zimbabwe, is a result of poor sustainable strategic management practices. Poor sustainable strategic management practices can be attributed to negative human capital factors where employees are not competent, are demotivated and lacks commitment.

Against this background, urban councils in Zimbabwe are recommended to enhance their resilience by adopting effective sustainable strategic management practices through consideration of human capital factors. Competence as a critical human capital factor can be achieved through staff development whereas employee motivation and commitment can be achieved through provision of both monetary and non-monetary incentives to employees, especially when operating in volatile and complex environments. However, a further research is recommended on other factors that affect sustainable strategic management practices using a different methodology and focusing mainly on private sector organizations.

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