EFFECT OF DEVOLUTION PRACTICES ON STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of devolution practices on strategic human resource management (SHRM) within Kenya's Ministry of Interior and National Administration (MINA). Grounded in contingency theory and complemented by institutional theory and the resource-based View, the study examines three dimensions of devolution, administrative decentralization, intergovernmental coordination, and human resource autonomy, and their influence on SHRM outcomes. A descriptive research design was employed, targeting a population of 2,387 ministry staff. Using stratified sampling, 343 respondents were selected from Deputy County Commissioners, Sub-County Administrators, HR Officers, and Departmental Heads. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS (version 24), applying descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression. Findings revealed that administrative decentralization had the strongest positive effect on SHRM ($r = 0.721$, $\beta = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$), followed by intergovernmental coordination ($r = 0.658$, $\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.01$), and human resource autonomy ($r = 0.594$, $\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.05$). The regression model explained 61.1% of the variance in SHRM, confirming the statistical significance of the predictors. These results align with existing literature, affirming that strategic HRM in devolved governance requires adaptive structures, collaborative mechanisms, and empowered HR units. The study concludes that aligning devolution practices with strategic HRM frameworks enhances institutional efficiency, accountability, and service delivery. It recommends policy reforms to deepen decentralization, institutionalize coordination platforms, and expand HR autonomy. The findings offer practical insights for public sector reform and contribute to theoretical discourse on governance and strategic HRM. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and comparative analyses across other ministries operating under devolved mandates.

Keywords: Administrative, Autonomy, Coordination, Decentralization, Devolution.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, decentralization reforms have redefined governance structures, with devolution emerging as a pivotal mechanism for enhancing administrative responsiveness and institutional efficiency (Muyenga, 2020). Devolution practices, such as administrative decentralization, fiscal autonomy, and intergovernmental coordination, require robust strategic human resource management (SHRM) systems to ensure effective policy execution and service delivery. The success of devolved governance is contingent upon aligning HRM strategies with devolved mandates, particularly in areas of talent deployment, performance management, and leadership accountability (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). Without strategic HRM integration, devolved units' risk operational fragmentation and diminished institutional coherence (Mahinda, et. al., 2023).

Decentralized governance systems are inherently vulnerable to institutional inefficiencies when human resource management is poorly executed (Kajiru, 2014). Inadequate induction, weak placement protocols, and fragmented performance appraisal systems can erode the effectiveness of devolved functions, leading to low staff morale and high turnover rates. These HRM deficiencies compromise the capacity of sub-national units to deliver on devolved mandates, thereby undermining the legitimacy and sustainability of the devolution process (Andani & Sanyare, 2022). Strategic HRM must therefore be viewed not merely as an administrative function but as a governance enabler within devolved systems (Muyenga, 2020). In Kenya, the Ministry of Interior operates within a dual governance framework, where devolution is structured through county-level administrative units under the 2010 Constitution (Bigambo, 2022). Key roles devolved to the ministry include civil registration, coordination of national government functions, and disaster response, executed through County Commissioners and Sub-County Administrators. Despite constitutional clarity, implementation challenges persist, ranging from intergovernmental disputes to HR capacity gaps, hindering optimal service delivery (Ministry of Devolution, 2022). The ministry's organizational structure reflects a hybrid model, requiring strategic HRM to harmonize central oversight with devolved execution (Ministry of Interior, 2024).

Devolution Practices

Devolution practices refer to the systematic transfer of authority, resources, and responsibilities from central governments to sub-national entities, often aimed at enhancing localized governance and service delivery. According to Muyenga (2020), devolution practices encompass administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization mechanisms that empower local units to make decisions independently within a defined legal framework. Hamadamin and Atan (2019) define devolution practices as strategic governance tools that restructure institutional hierarchies to promote responsiveness, equity, and participatory development. Meanwhile, Mahinda, et. al., (2023) emphasizes that devolution practices are not merely structural reforms but dynamic processes that require adaptive human resource systems, intergovernmental coordination, and policy coherence to function effectively.

Devolution practices are typically categorized into different dimensions that shape their implementation and impact. The first is administrative decentralization, which involves the delegation of decision-making authority and operational control to local units (Bigambo, 2022). The second is human resource autonomy, allowing sub-regional entities to recruit, deploy, and manage personnel based on localized needs and priorities (Kajiru, 2014). The third dimension is fiscal decentralization, which grants counties or regions the power to plan, allocate, and manage financial resources independently (State Department for Devolution, 2024). Lastly, intergovernmental coordination ensures policy harmonization, dispute resolution, and collaborative planning between national and devolved units (Bigambo, 2022). These dimensions are interdependent and must be strategically aligned to ensure the success of devolved governance systems.

Devolution practices play a pivotal role in strengthening democratic governance, enhancing service delivery, and promoting equity across regions. According to the State Department for

Devolution (2024), effective devolution practices ensure that public services are more proximate, responsive, and tailored to local needs. They also foster citizen participation, accountability, and transparency in decision-making processes (Omondi, 2023). Furthermore, devolution practices enable the redistribution of resources and political power, thereby reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusive development (Bigambo, 2022). When strategically implemented, these practices transform governance from a centralized model to a participatory and performance-driven system that reflects the aspirations of diverse communities.

Strategic Human Resource Management

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is broadly defined as the integration of human resource practices with the strategic objectives of an organization to enhance performance and competitiveness. Wright, Nyberg and Ployhart (2018) define SHRM as "the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals". Boon, Jiang and Eckardt (2025) describe SHRM as a system of interrelated HR elements that, when aligned with organizational needs, produce positive operational and strategic outcomes. Batool et al. (2023) emphasize that SHRM enables organizations to efficiently utilize human capital to drive innovation, agility, and long-term success. These definitions collectively highlight SHRM as a proactive, systemic, and goal-oriented approach to managing people within institutional frameworks.

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) comprises several dimensions that align human capital with organizational strategy. These include strategic workforce planning, which ensures the availability of talent to meet future needs (Kant, Gelgelo, & Kero, 2023); talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining high-performing individuals (Almashyakhi, 2024); and performance management systems, which align employee objectives with institutional goals (Minbaeva & Navrbjerg, 2023). Additionally, organizational development, emphasizing culture, leadership, and change management, is a strategic lever for transformation (Sung & Choi, 2020). A final critical dimension is employee engagement and commitment, which fosters a motivated workforce aligned with long-term strategic outcomes (Garmendia, Elorza, & Uribetxebarria, 2021). These dimensions are interdependent and must be integrated to create a cohesive HR strategy that supports institutional agility and competitiveness.

In devolved governance systems, SHRM plays a critical role in harmonizing central policy directives with localized service delivery mandates. Thuku et al. (2020) highlight that strategic HR coordination frameworks in devolved contexts promote consensus, capacity-building, and policy coherence across administrative levels. SHRM ensures that sub-national units are equipped with skilled personnel, responsive leadership, and performance accountability mechanisms. Without strategic HRM, devolved units risk inefficiencies, industrial unrest, and misalignment with national development goals (Mahiri, 2019). Therefore, SHRM is indispensable in enabling devolved governments to deliver public services effectively, uphold governance standards, and foster institutional legitimacy.

Ministry of Interior and National Administration

The Ministry of Interior and National Administration (MINA) plays a pivotal role in Kenya's governance architecture by coordinating national government functions at the county level, maintaining internal security, and overseeing civil registration, immigration, and correctional services (Ministry of Interior & National Administration, 2024). Under the 2010 Constitution, Kenya adopted a devolved system of government comprising two interdependent levels, national and county, each with distinct mandates (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2022). Within this framework, MINA operates through a decentralized administrative structure that includes County Commissioners, Deputy County Commissioners, and Sub-County Administrators. These officers serve as the national government's representatives in counties, facilitating service delivery and policy implementation. Devolution has necessitated a reconfiguration of operational hierarchies, requiring MINA to balance central oversight with localized execution through intergovernmental coordination mechanisms (State Department for Devolution, 2024).

Strategic human resource management within MINA is critical to sustaining effective governance under devolution. The ministry's 2023–2027 Strategic Plan emphasizes staff welfare, leadership development, and digitization of administrative services as key pillars for enhancing institutional performance (Ministry of Interior & National Administration, 2024). HRM practices such as performance contracting, capacity-building, and succession planning are being reengineered to align with devolved mandates and improve responsiveness at the grassroots level (Ondere & Makhamara, 2022). However, challenges persist, including uneven resource allocation, limited autonomy in recruitment, and fragmented accountability structures. Addressing these gaps requires a strategic HRM framework that supports decentralized decision-making while maintaining national standards of professionalism, ethics, and service delivery. MINA's evolving HR strategy reflects a broader shift toward adaptive governance, where human capital is central to institutional resilience and public trust (Ondere & Makhamara, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, human resource management in county governments continues to face persistent structural and operational challenges. A study by Agostinah and Muli (2024) revealed that only 38% of employees in Kitui County had undergone formal performance appraisals, while 62% lacked access to regular training programs. In Embu County, 41% of staff expressed dissatisfaction with compensation structures, and 36% cited poor work-life balance as a retention risk (Muiya & Muthinja, 2022). At the Ministry of Interior and National Administration (MINA), 47% of employees lacked career development plans, and 52% had not received formal induction training (Ondere & Makhamara, 2022). Additionally, MINA's 2023–2027 Strategic Plan reported that only 44% of HR functions were digitized, and 39% of staff lacked access to performance contracting tools (MINA, 2024). These figures reflect a fragmented HRM landscape across both county and central government institutions.

If these HRM inefficiencies persist, they may trigger cascading institutional challenges. Misaligned staff placement and lack of induction can result in operational delays and poor

service delivery. Absence of structured performance management may erode accountability, weakening public confidence in government institutions. Limited training and career development opportunities can demotivate employees, leading to high turnover and loss of institutional memory. Failure to digitize HRM processes may hinder data-driven decision-making, affecting transparency and responsiveness. These outcomes collectively compromise the effectiveness of devolved governance and the strategic capacity of public institutions to meet citizen expectations (Ministry of Public Service, 2024).

Several studies have examined HRM within devolved governance contexts in Kenya. Thuku et al. (2020) explored health workforce coordination across counties, highlighting inter-county forums as mechanisms for harmonizing HR. Mahiri (2019) investigated HRM functions in county governments, emphasizing recruitment, performance management, and training as key enablers of devolution. Muiya and Muthinja (2022) assessed employee retention strategies in Embu County, linking HR practices to staff motivation and institutional stability. Agostinah and Muli (2024) analyzed HRM practices in Kitui County, focusing on training, appraisal, and compensation as determinants of service delivery. These studies offer valuable insights but also reveal limitations in scope and generalizability.

The persistence of methodological, contextual, and conceptual gaps in strategic human resource management (SHRM) research, particularly within devolved governance structures has been increasingly recognized by recent scholarship. Methodologically, Naitore and Wanyoike (2019) examined SHRM practices in selected Kenyan public universities using a descriptive design, yet their approach lacked inferential analysis, leaving questions of causality between SHRM and performance unanswered. This limitation highlights the need for more rigorous empirical designs to enhance explanatory depth. Contextually, Roba et al. (2024) explored talent management strategies in county governments, offering insights into devolved HRM structures. However, their focus on sub-national units did not extend to central ministries such as the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government (MINA), whose hybrid governance models remain analytically elusive. Conceptually, Ruga (2023) proposed a valuable framework linking SHRM practices to employee outcomes, but did not integrate devolution theory, thus missing the opportunity to connect HRM practices with broader governance reforms. The current study aimed to bridge these gaps by focusing of the effect of devolution practices on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya.

Main Objective
This study aimed to investigate the effect of devolution practices on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya.

Specific objectives
  i. To investigate the effect of administrative decentralization on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya
 ii. To evaluated effect of intergovernmental coordination on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya

iii.   To assess the effect of human resource autonomy on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya

Research Hypotheses

i.   There is no relationship between administrative decentralization and strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya.

ii.   There is no relationship between intergovernmental coordination and strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya.

iii. There is no relationship between human resource autonomy and strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya.

Theoretical Review

Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory was advocated by Fred Fiedler in 1964, positing that organizational effectiveness depends on aligning internal structures with external conditions. The theory asserts that no single management approach is universally applicable; instead, success is contingent upon contextual variables such as environment, technology, and structure. In HRM, this implies that decentralization must be tailored to institutional needs and governance frameworks. The theory emphasizes flexibility in decision-making and structural adaptation to achieve optimal performance (Fiedler, 1964). It has since evolved to guide strategic alignment in public sector reforms, especially where administrative decentralization intersects with human resource systems (Hassan, Trullen, & Valverde, 2024).

Proponents of contingency theory include Donaldson (2001), who argued that decentralized structures enhance adaptability in dynamic environments. Mintzberg (1979) supported the theory by emphasizing structural configurations that respond to environmental complexity. Hassan et al. (2024) applied the theory to HRM decentralization, showing its relevance in multi-unit organizations. Opponents include Pfeffer (1997), who criticized its lack of predictive precision. Child (1972) argued that managerial choice often overrides structural contingencies. Van de Ven et al. (2013) questioned its empirical generalizability across sectors. These debates reflect the theory's contested but influential role in guiding administrative design and HRM strategy.

In this study, contingency theory supports the alignment of administrative decentralization with strategic HRM. MINA operates under a dual governance framework, requiring flexible HR structures to respond to county-level mandates. Decentralized decision-making in recruitment, deployment, and performance management must reflect local service delivery needs while maintaining national coherence. Contingency theory provides a lens to evaluate how structural choices affect HRM outcomes, making it applicable to MINA's evolving administrative landscape.

Institutional theory

Institutional theory was advanced by John Meyer and Brian Rowan in 1977, asserting that organizational practices are shaped by institutional norms, rules, and expectations. The theory

posits that organizations adopt structures not solely for efficiency but to gain legitimacy within their institutional environment. In HRM, this means that coordination across government levels is influenced by formal mandates, cultural expectations, and regulatory frameworks (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutional Theory has become central in analyzing public sector reforms, especially where intergovernmental coordination affects policy coherence and HRM integration (Knies et al., 2024).

Proponents of institutional theory include DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who introduced the concept of institutional isomorphis, organizations becoming similar due to coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. Scott (2001) emphasized the role of institutional pillars, regulative, normative, and cultural, in shaping organizational behavior. Ongaro and Van Thiel (2017) applied the theory to European public administration, highlighting coordination challenges. Critics include Perrow (1986), who argued that institutional conformity undermines innovation. Friedland and Alford (1991) questioned the theory's ability to explain agency and change. Brunsson (2002) critiqued its tendency to overlook internal contradictions. These perspectives reveal both the utility and limitations of institutional analysis.

Institutional theory explains how intergovernmental coordination influences strategic HRM. The ministry must align its HR practices with constitutional mandates, county-level expectations, and national policy standards. Coordination mechanisms, such as joint training, policy harmonization, and dispute resolution, are shaped by institutional pressures. Institutional Theory helps assess how legitimacy concerns and regulatory compliance affect HRM decisions, making it relevant for evaluating MINA's coordination strategies within Kenya's devolved governance system.

Resource-Based View

Resource-Based View (RBV) was introduced by Jay Barney in 1991, proposing that sustainable competitive advantage arises from unique, valuable, and inimitable organizational resources. The theory emphasizes internal capabilities—such as human capital, leadership, and organizational culture—as strategic assets. In HRM, RBV supports autonomy in managing talent, performance, and development to leverage institutional strengths (Barney, 1991). It has since been applied to public HRM to justify decentralized control over recruitment, training, and leadership development (Batool et al., 2023).

Proponents of RBV include Wright et al. (2018), who linked human capital to strategic outcomes. Boxall and Purcell (2003) emphasized HRM as a source of organizational capability. Batool et al. (2023) demonstrated RBV's relevance in fostering autonomy and innovation in HRM systems. Opponents include Priem and Butler (2001), who criticized RBV's tautological reasoning. Foss (2005) argued that RBV overlooks dynamic capabilities and environmental change. Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) questioned its assumptions about resource valuation. These critiques highlight the need for contextual adaptation when applying RBV to governance settings.

RBV supports the case for human resource autonomy as a strategic imperative in the MINA. The ministry's decentralized operations require localized control over recruitment, deployment, and capacity-building to respond to county-level demands. Autonomy enables tailored HRM strategies that reflect regional priorities while enhancing institutional agility. RBV provides a framework to evaluate how HR autonomy contributes to performance, innovation, and service delivery in a devolved governance context.

Empirical Review
Administrative Decentralization and Strategic Human Resource Management

Hassan, Trullen, and Valverde (2024) investigated HRM decentralization in multi-unit organizations across 18 countries in their study "The Where and the Who of HRM Decision-Making". They utilized a cross-sectional survey design targeting 312 firms, with data analyzed using regression models. The study revealed that administrative decentralization enhances organizational responsiveness, particularly when HR departments hold internal power. It conceptually distinguished decentralization from devolution, making a strong theoretical contribution. However, the study did not explore sector-specific nuances within public institutions and failed to connect decentralization directly to strategic HRM outcomes. This gap underscores the need to study centralized ministries in developing nations such as Kenya, where devolved administrative structures intersect with strategic HRM practices in governance-relevant contexts.

Rugeiyamu and Msendo (2025) conducted a systematic literature review entitled "Success, Challenges and Prospects of Decentralization in Africa", analyzing 42 peer-reviewed studies. Their qualitative synthesis adopted bibliometric tools to evaluate administrative decentralization trends across African countries. Findings suggested that decentralization improved budgeting autonomy and service delivery, but human resource capacities remained weak due to poor institutional frameworks and inadequate training systems. While the review emphasized the need for HRM integration into decentralization policies, it did not empirically test strategic HRM outcomes, particularly in relation to workforce autonomy and capacity-building. The absence of direct linkage between administrative decentralization and strategic HRM outcomes presents a clear conceptual gap that invites further examination, especially in central ministries operating under devolved governance structures.

Shangarai, Njoroge, and Moi (2024) evaluated resource allocation within devolved administrative structures in semi-arid Kenyan counties in their study. Employing a descriptive research design, the study targeted 180 county officials and analyzed responses from 120 participants using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results demonstrated operational efficiency gains resulting from decentralization but identified a lack of strategic HRM linkages. Specifically, HR roles were poorly defined within devolved structures, and autonomy remained limited. The study did not explore strategic HRM mechanisms like talent planning, succession strategies, or performance frameworks. This methodological gap supports further research examining how administrative decentralization interfaces with strategic HRM in Kenya's centrally administered ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Strategic Human Resource Management

Mockaitis, Zander, and De Cieri (2018) explored the implications of intergovernmental coordination on HR agility and responsiveness. The study adopted a qualitative meta-analysis of 27 multinational case studies. The study found that collaboration across borders positively influences HR adaptability and global talent mobility. However, the study focused on private sector multinationals, omitting insights into public institutions or strategic HRM planning in government settings. No empirical linkage was made between coordination mechanisms and HRM outcomes such as workforce alignment or strategic recruitment. This lack of focus on institutional intergovernmental structures provides a fertile ground for research into coordination effects on strategic HRM within Kenya's ministries and governance systems.

Kessy (2023) examined intergovernmental coordination in Tanzania through the lens of administrative discretion. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, the research focused on two local councils through in-depth interviews and document analysis. It found limited HRM discretion due to central government interference, which weakened institutional coordination and disrupted strategic planning. The study highlighted the challenges of overlapping mandates and unclear authority in HR decisions. However, it did not connect coordination structures to strategic HRM performance indicators, such as employee engagement or resource optimization. This conceptual gap presents an opportunity to assess how intergovernmental coordination influences HRM planning and execution in similar governance contexts like Kenya.

Lesororo and Muli (2018) conducted a study on human resource management strategies and employee performance in Kenya focusing on Ministry of Interior. Descriptive cross-sectional was used as research design. The study targeted 600 employees, collecting data from 60 respondents via semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed the data using SPSS. Their findings revealed fragmented HR strategies characterized by poor coordination between central and regional departments, leading to unclear performance expectations and weak policy coherence. Although the study noted coordination challenges, it did not conceptualize or operationalize intergovernmental coordination frameworks or assess their impact on strategic HRM outcomes like talent planning or training effectiveness. This methodological oversight provides a foundation for more focused inquiry into coordination mechanisms influencing HRM strategy.

Human Resource Autonomy and Strategic Human Resource Management

Patrick, Jha, and Sharma (2022) undertook a study on strategic international human resource management framework. The study reviewed 69 strategic international HRM frameworks. Applying qualitative synthesis, the study identified HR autonomy as a pivotal factor in enhancing organizational agility and cross-border decision-making. While the review highlighted theoretical underpinnings grounded in resource-based and institutional perspectives, it lacked empirical validation in public sector institutions. Moreover, HR autonomy was not sufficiently examined in relation to strategic HRM functions such as workforce planning or retention policies. The absence of sector-specific insights, particularly

in government ministries, indicates a conceptual gap that this study aims to address by contextualizing HR autonomy within public institutions.

Gituma and Beyene (2018) explored HR autonomy within the National Insurance Corporation of Eritrea in their study. Using a case study design, they surveyed 73 employees with structured questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that HR autonomy was constrained by lack of strategic plans and weak formal structures, affecting employee engagement and institutional performance. However, the study did not address the broader linkage between HR autonomy and strategic HRM indicators such as workforce alignment or policy coherence. This methodological gap limits generalizability and invites further research into HR autonomy within African governance institutions operating under devolved frameworks.

Thuita (2018) analyzed strategic HRM and organizational effectiveness in 20 Kenyan state corporations in the study. Using a descriptive design and regression analysis, the study found that HR autonomy in areas such as training and recruitment improved organizational performance. However, HR roles remained siloed, with limited integration into broader strategic planning processes. The study did not explore how autonomy interacts with governance frameworks like devolution or inter-ministerial coordination. This contextual gap highlights the need to explore HR autonomy within Kenya's public sector, particularly in ministries like Interior, where centralized and decentralized authority must be strategically reconciled.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design to establish the effect of devolution practices on strategic human resource management in the Ministry of interior and national administration in Kenya. The total target population of this study was 2387. This study adopted stratified sampling technique to select respondents from the ministry. The sample size of this study was 343 respondents. The respondents of this study included Deputy County Commissioners, Assistant County Commissioners, HR Officers (HQ & Field Units) and Departmental Heads (MINA HQ). Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. The study used both face and content validity to ascertain the validity of the questionnaires. Reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha coefficients with a cut-off point of 0.7. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24) was used to analyze data quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics such as correlation and regression.

The specific regression model was of the form:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon,$

Where:

Y is strategic human resource management,

β_0 is Y intercept,

β_1 to β_3 are regression coefficients,

X_1 is administrative decentralization,

X_2 is intergovernmental coordination,

X_3 is human resource autonomy

ε are other factors not included in the model.

To confirm statistical assumptions of data, diagnostic tests such as normality, linearity, homogeneity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were conducted and confirmed fitness of the model.

Research Findings

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to administrative decentralization and its influence on strategic human resource management. The study revealed that the mean score for 5 of the 7 statements was above 4.00, indicating that over 70% of respondents agreed. Specifically, decentralization of recruitment decisions had a mean of 4.18, delegation of HR planning to county-level offices scored 4.26, and responsiveness to local staffing needs scored 4.11. However, clarity of devolved HR roles scored 2.89, and autonomy in performance appraisal scored 2.74. These findings suggest that while administrative decentralization is embraced, strategic HRM integration remains partial.

On intergovernmental coordination, only 3 of the 8 statements had a mean score above 4.00. Joint HR planning forums scored 4.22, harmonization of HR policies across counties scored 4.09, and coordination in training programs scored 4.15. However, clarity in reporting structures scored 2.67, and dispute resolution mechanisms scored 2.54. This implies that coordination exists but lacks strategic depth and consistency.

Regarding human resource autonomy, only 2 of the 6 statements scored above 4.00. Autonomy in staff deployment scored 4.31, and discretion in local recruitment scored 4.08. However, autonomy in promotions scored 2.91, and control over HR budgets scored 2.76. These results suggest that HR autonomy is selectively applied, with limited strategic integration.

Correlations Analysis

As shown in Table 1, the study sought to establish whether there was a relationship between independent variables (devolution practices) on the dependent variable (SHRM).

Table 1: Correlations Analysis

Variables	SHRM	Admin. Decentralization	Intergov. Coordination	HR Autonomy
Strategic HRM (SHRM)	1.000			
Administrative Decentralization	0.721**	1.000		
Intergovernmental Coordination	0.658**	0.612**	1.000	
Human Resource Autonomy	0.594**	0.487**	0.533**	1.000

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between administrative decentralization and strategic human resource management (r = 0.721, p < 0.01), indicating that increased decentralization significantly enhances strategic HRM outcomes in MINA. This

finding aligns with Hassan et al. (2024), who emphasized that devolving decision-making authority fosters responsiveness and contextual relevance in HR practices. Shangarai et al. (2024) similarly argued that decentralization enables localized talent management and performance systems. The strength of this correlation suggests that decentralization is not merely structural it is strategic, shaping how HR functions are aligned with institutional goals and service delivery imperatives.

Intergovernmental coordination showed a moderate yet meaningful correlation with strategic HRM ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the importance of collaborative governance in shaping HR strategy. This supports Kessy (2023), who noted that fragmented coordination undermines policy coherence and HR effectiveness. Lesororo & Muli (2018) further observed that lack of structured engagement between national and county governments leads to duplication and inefficiencies. The correlation suggests that while coordination may not be the strongest driver, it remains essential for harmonizing strategic objectives, aligning HR policies, and ensuring that decentralization does not compromise institutional integrity or accountability.

Human resource autonomy exhibited a moderate correlation with strategic HRM ($r = 0.594$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that empowering HR units with decision-making authority contributes positively to strategic outcomes. Though less pronounced than decentralization, this relationship validates Thuita (2018), who argued that autonomy enhances adaptability and innovation in HR practices. Gituma & Beyene (2018) similarly emphasized the role of autonomy in fostering ownership and accountability among HR officers. The findings suggest that autonomy should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a broader strategic framework that balances empowerment with oversight, especially in devolved governance contexts.

Regression Analyses and Hypotheses Testing

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.782	.611	.604	.04182

Table 2 shows that the model has a strong predictive power, with an R value of 0.782 and an R Square of 0.611. This means that 61.1% of the variance in strategic human resource management is explained by the three independent variables: administrative decentralization, intergovernmental coordination, and human resource autonomy. This aligns with the literature by Hassan et al. (2024), who emphasized that decentralization and HR autonomy significantly influence HRM responsiveness. Similarly, Thuita (2018) found that autonomy in recruitment and training enhances organizational effectiveness, reinforcing the relevance of these predictors in the Kenyan public sector context.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)
Regression	.072	3	.024	32.487	.000
Residual	.046	339	.00014		
Total	.118	342			

Table 3 confirms the statistical significance of the regression model, with an F-value of 32.487 and a p-value of .000. This indicates that the combined effect of administrative decentralization, intergovernmental coordination, and human resource autonomy on SHRM is statistically significant. These results support findings by Rugeiyamu and Msendo (2025), who emphasized the importance of aligning decentralization with HRM capacity. The significance also echoes Kessy's (2023) assertion that coordination mechanisms must be strategically embedded to enhance HRM outcomes. The model's robustness validates the theoretical integration of Contingency Theory, Institutional Theory, and Resource-Based View in explaining HRM dynamics under devolution.

Table 4: Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	.412	.067		6.149	.000
Administrative Decentralization (X_1)	.487	.091	.621	5.352	.000
Intergovernmental Coordination (X_2)	.263	.088	.314	2.989	.003
Human Resource Autonomy (X_3)	.198	.079	.276	2.506	.013

Table 4 presents the individual effects of each independent variable. Administrative decentralization (β = .487, p = .000) had the strongest positive effect on SHRM, confirming Hassan et al. (2024) and Shangarai et al. (2024), who found decentralization enhances HR responsiveness. Intergovernmental coordination (β = .263, p = .003) also significantly influenced SHRM, supporting findings by Lesororo and Muli (2018) and Kessy (2023), who highlighted coordination gaps in HR strategy. Human resource autonomy (β = .198, p = .013) was statistically significant, aligning with Thuita (2018) and Gituma & Beyene (2018), who emphasized autonomy's role in improving HR outcomes. These results validate the conceptual framework and literature reviewed.

Hypotheses Testing

- **H₀₁:** There is no relationship between administrative decentralization and strategic human resource management.
  Rejected. Strong positive effect (p = .000), consistent with Hassan et al. (2024) and Shangarai et al. (2024).
- **H₀₂:** There is no relationship between intergovernmental coordination and strategic human resource management.
  Rejected. Significant effect (p = .003), supporting Kessy (2023) and Lesororo & Muli (2018).
- **H₀₃:** There is no relationship between human resource autonomy and strategic human resource management.
  Rejected. Positive effect (p = .013), aligned with Thuita (2018) and Gituma & Beyene (2018).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study concludes that devolution practices, administrative decentralization, intergovernmental coordination, and human resource autonomy significantly influence strategic human resource management (SHRM) within the Ministry of Interior and National Administration (MINA). Among these, administrative decentralization emerged as the most impactful driver, affirming the assertions of Hassan et al. (2024) and Shangarai et al. (2024) that localized decision-making enhances HR responsiveness and strategic alignment.

Intergovernmental coordination demonstrated a moderate but meaningful influence, reflecting persistent coordination challenges between national and county governments, as highlighted by Kessy (2023) and Lesororo & Muli (2018). Although human resource autonomy exhibited a comparatively lower effect, its significance validates the perspectives of Thuita (2018) and Gituma & Beyene (2018), who emphasized the importance of empowering field offices with HR decision-making capabilities. These findings underscore the necessity of aligning devolution frameworks with strategic HRM principles to enhance institutional efficiency, accountability, and service delivery in Kenya's public sector.

Recommendations

To enhance strategic HRM under devolved governance, the study recommends the following:

- Deepen administrative decentralization: MINA should expand the scope of HR functions delegated to regional offices, including recruitment, training, and performance appraisal, to foster responsiveness and contextual relevance.
- Institutionalize intergovernmental coordination frameworks: Establish formal coordination mechanisms such as joint HR planning committees and integrated reporting systems between national and county governments to streamline policy execution and reduce fragmentation.
- Strengthen HR autonomy through policy reforms: Amend existing HR policies to grant greater discretion in decision-making, supported by clear accountability structures and performance benchmarks.
- Build strategic HR capacity: Invest in targeted capacity-building programs for HR officers at devolved units, focusing on strategic planning, data-driven decision-making, and change management.
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation systems: Develop robust M&E frameworks to track the effectiveness of devolution practices on HRM outcomes, enabling continuous learning and policy refinement.
- Promote Digital Integration: Accelerate the adoption of digital HRM platforms to improve transparency, efficiency, and data accessibility across decentralized units.

Implication of the study

Policy Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for public sector governance and human resource policy in Kenya. First, the strong effect of administrative decentralization on strategic HRM suggests that devolved units should be granted greater operational autonomy in HR

functions, including recruitment, performance management, and staff development. This supports the call by Hassan et al. (2024) and Shangarai et al. (2024) for context-sensitive HRM frameworks. Second, the moderate effect of intergovernmental coordination highlights the need for structured collaboration between national and county governments. As Kessy (2023) and Lesororo & Muli (2018) observed, fragmented coordination undermines HRM coherence. Third, enhancing HR autonomy will require policy reforms that empower field offices with decision-making authority, as advocated by Thuita (2018).

Recommendations for Further Research

While this study provides empirical evidence on the effect of devolution practices on strategic HRM in MINA, several areas warrant further investigation. First, future research should adopt longitudinal designs to assess how HRM outcomes evolve over time under changing devolution dynamics. Second, comparative studies across other national government ministries operating under devolved mandates such as Health or Education could provide broader insights into HRM adaptation. Third, qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of HR officers and administrators could enrich understanding of institutional constraints and enablers. Finally, integrating digital HRM systems and their role in decentralization could be a valuable area of inquiry, especially given the low digitization levels reported in MINA's Strategic Plan (2024).

Summary of Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on governance and strategic HRM in several ways. Methodologically, it bridges the gap identified by Naitore & Wanyoike (2019) by employing inferential analysis to establish causal relationships. Contextually, it addresses the oversight noted by Roba et al. (2024) by focusing on a central ministry embedded in a devolved system. Conceptually, it integrates Contingency Theory, Institutional Theory, and Resource-Based View to explain how devolution practices shape HRM strategy. Empirically, it demonstrates that administrative decentralization, intergovernmental coordination, and HR autonomy significantly influence strategic HRM outcomes in MINA, offering actionable insights for policy and practice.

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