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Nella Bahati Komora, Rugami Maina & Kathuri James Ndwiga

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^{*1}Nella Bahati Komora, ²Rugami Maina & ³Kathuri James Ndwiga

¹MBA, Strategic Management Student, Department of Business Administration,
Kenyatta University

²Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Kenyatta University

³Lecturer, Department of Geography, Kenyatta University

*Email of the Corresponding author: nellabahatik@gmail.com

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Abstract

The adoption and efficacy of Total Quality Management methods are essential to upholding high academic standards and operational efficiency at Mombasa County, Kenya's public universities. However, the challenge lies in effectively integrating these practices within the unique operational frameworks of Kenyan universities. The study aimed to determine the influence of stakeholder engagement on the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, the research examined four key aspects of stakeholder engagement and their effect on TQM implementation: stakeholder participation in decision making, stakeholder empowerment, stakeholder communication, and stakeholder grievance management. The study was anchored on Theory of Constraints, Stakeholder Theory, Resource-Based View Theory and Contingency Theory. The study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional design, targeting 390 university staff members comprising management board members, departmental heads, and teaching staff. Stratified random sampling was used to select 197 departmental heads and teaching staff, while purposive sampling was employed to choose 12 management board members. Data was collected through questionnaires and analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques after coding and preparation on spreadsheets. The study revealed significant positive correlations between stakeholder engagement factors (participation in decision making, empowerment, communication, and grievance management) and TQM implementation. Regression analysis showed that these factors collectively explained 78.1% of the variance in TQM implementation, with stakeholder grievance management having the strongest impact. The study concluded that stakeholder engagement is crucial for successful TQM implementation in public universities and recommends prioritizing stakeholder involvement, empowerment, communication, and grievance management.

Keywords: *Stakeholder Engagement, Total Quality Management Practices, Public Universities, Mombasa County, Kenya*

1.0 Background of the Study

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TQM practices encompass the entire organization, from supplier to customer, and are critical for generating a competitive advantage (Varadarajan, 2020). Management commitment and participation, employee participation and commitment, customer orientation, quality improvement of education and training, work teams, and control techniques using probable statistics are examples of these practices (Cavallone & Palumbo, 2022). Cherif (2020) indicated that the significance of these practices, highlighting their positive impact on business outcomes in both the manufacturing and service industries. TQM is regarded as a guiding philosophy for quality execution in the construction industry, with successful applications in Saudi Arabia, India, the United States, and South Africa (Talib et al., 2019). Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in universities are critical for meeting the diverse needs of stakeholders, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and making data-driven decisions (Damtew, 2022). Stakeholder engagement is essential in public universities, especially in financial management and execution (Klemeshev *et al.*, 2019). Effective stakeholder involvement assist assures financial regulatory compliance, improve budgeting processes, and strengthen internal control systems (Saayir & Sande, 2021). In addition, according to Trivellato *et al.* (2020), stakeholder involvement may be a beneficial instrument for innovation for sustainability in the public sector. Total Quality Management (TQM) practices have been found to boost performance at public universities (Alzeaideen, 2019). However, many issues remain in this process, including a lack of stakeholder involvement, particularly among students (Bibi, Waheed, & Shehzadi, 2021), and the need for a people-centered management structure (Waswa, 2013). A lack of a TQM framework, as well as a distorted management attitude towards TQM, are significant hurdles (Abubakar & Garba, 2023).

The global recognition of stakeholder engagement's significance in the successful implementation of TQM practices at universities is well-established. For example, Saut *et al.* (2022) conducted a study in Brazil that emphasized the significance of stakeholders in quality management. Similarly, Sadikoglu and Olcay (2019) conducted research in Turkey that highlighted TQM practices are holistic and ethical strategy that involves all stakeholders. Singh (2021) found a favorable correlation between Soft TQM practices Factors and Faculty Satisfaction in the United States. Similarly, Ibrahim *et al.* (2020) emphasized the importance of governmental proximity and leadership in stakeholder engagement in Malaysia. Within the African region, research conducted by Yahiaoui *et al.* (2022) in Algeria has shown the direct influence of TQM practices on the caliber of graduates and the provision of community service at institutions. Research conducted by Ali *et al.* (2019) in Pakistan and Al-Qatawneh *et al.* (2017) in Jordan has emphasized the significance of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in the public sector, particularly in the realm of higher education, within the Asian setting.

Locally, in Kenya, the application of TQM practices is essential for improving service delivery in public hospitals in Kenya, with the quiet enhancement of the engagement of the employees, technology integration, progress of the existing technology, and client orientation being key factors (Wandie & Muathe, 2022). TQM practices is also crucial for improving the quality of education, with a focus on continuous improvement, quality standards, cultural and organizational change, customer relationships, and satisfaction (Omore, 2022). Jemimah, Mulwa, and Amukowa (2022) noted the significance of ongoing improvement and employee participation in Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, which may be accomplished via efficient contact with stakeholders. Maina et al. (2021) shows the significance of idealized influence, a crucial component of transformational leadership, in improving employee engagement, which is vital for the effective adoption of TQM practices. Robby (2021) demonstrates the effect of planning for human resources on instructors' performance,

highlighting the necessity of including stakeholders in the process of planning and making decisions.

The implementation of TQM practices is guided by a set of principles, including focus on the needs of the consumer, ongoing development, staff engagement, and data-driven choices (Al-Serhan, 2019). The application of TQM techniques is essential for improving the calibre of instruction, research, and service provision at public universities. TQM in public universities procedures are designed to make student satisfaction, reduce costs, and increase efficiency in various processes, such as curriculum development, teaching, and assessment (Foster & Gardner, 2022). By adopting TQM practices, public universities can foster a culture of ongoing development, where all stakeholders are actively involved in identifying and addressing quality issues (Petcharit et al., 2020). TQM methods successfully implemented at public universities can lead to numerous benefits, including improved student learning outcomes, enhanced research quality, increased student and employee satisfaction, and better alignment with industry needs (Bielova et al., 2019). TQM practices also help universities to eliminate waste, reduce costs, and optimize resource utilization (Abbas, 2020). Moreover, the involvement and empowerment of stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and staff, in the TQM practices process might encourage a feeling of possession and commitment to quality improvement initiatives (Cavallone & Palumbo, 2022).

According to Smith (2017) stakeholder engagement as the procedure of including individuals and groups with an interest in the company or its operations. Effective stakeholder engagement requires the identification of key stakeholders and a deep understanding of their priorities, interests, and values in relation to the organization or project at hand (Bahadorestani, Naderpajouh & Sadiq, 2020). In the context of public universities, stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices. Stakeholders in public universities include students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, employers, government agencies, and the wider community. Engaging these stakeholders in the TQM practices process is essential for gathering input, building support, and developing mutually beneficial relationships (Jonas et al., 2018). Konadu et al. (2021) demonstrated that robust stakeholder engagement leads to more sustainable decisions by incorporating diverse perspectives. Ongoing engagement enables universities to continually meet stakeholder needs and expectations, manage emerging issues, and create shared value (Mitchell et al., 2022).

Mombasa County serves as a hub for several public universities and their campuses, including Cooperative University College of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Technical University of Mombasa and the University of Nairobi (KNBS, 2019). These universities have a significant physical presence in the County, serving thousands of students through their local centres and satellite campuses (Asemota *et al.*, 2022). They offer a range of academic programs leading to diplomas, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees. The universities also conduct research and provide extension services aimed at community engagement and development (Munyoki *et al.*, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Total Quality Management (TQM) practices being applied at Mombasa County, Kenya's public universities, faces significant challenges that hinder the effective achievement of high educational standards and operational efficiency. Despite the increasing reliance on stakeholder engagement and TQM strategies to enhance performance and meet the growing demands of higher education (Wangai, 2022), these universities struggle to integrate these

practices within their unique operational frameworks successfully. The escalating operational costs and complexities of managing academic and administrative tasks pose substantial barriers to the successful implementation of TQM practices (Waithaka, 2022). Public universities in Mombasa County find it challenging to balance quality improvement initiatives with budget constraints, which hampers their ability to fully embrace and benefit from TQM practices (Mwangi, 2023).

In addition, the Kenyan higher education sector, particularly in Mombasa County, has been negatively impacted by international issues like the COVID-19 epidemic. The dramatic decrease in physical student engagement and the rapid shift to online learning platforms (Njoroge, 2021) have exposed universities to financial and infrastructural strains, disrupting traditional modes of stakeholder engagement and quality management (Kamau & Mutua, 2021). The changing landscape of higher education globally, especially in developing countries, has necessitated a focus on adaptable and resilient operational strategies, moving away from traditional long-term planning models (Otieno et al., 2022). However, public universities in Mombasa County struggle to navigate these challenges effectively, further compounded by inconsistent government policies and regulatory frameworks that impact their ability to implement and manage TQM practices (Hassan, 2022).

The issue this research attempts to solve is the deficiency of thorough comprehension of how stakeholder engagement influences the implementation of TQM practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya. Existing literature on the application of TQM practices fails to offer a comprehensive understanding of the unique effects of stakeholder attitudes, empowerment, communication, and grievance management on the application of TQM principles in higher education, especially in the setting of Mombasa County. Previous studies, such as those by Okoth (2021), have explored TQM practices in Kenyan universities but have not examined these stakeholder factors as moderating variables, thereby creating a conceptual gap. Additionally, the focus on Mombasa County universities introduces a contextual gap, as prior research has primarily centred on universities in Nairobi and other regions, overlooking the unique challenges faced by public universities in this specific geographical context. The study aimed to address this methodology gap by employing a mixed-methods approach to analyse the influence of stakeholder engagement factors on TQM practices implementation.

1.2 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to determine the influence of stakeholder engagement on implementation of total quality management practices in public universities in Mombasa county, Kenya.

1.2.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To examine the effect of stakeholder participation in decision making on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- ii. To analyse the influence of stakeholder empowerment on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of stakeholder communication on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- iv. To assess the effect of stakeholder grievance management on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of stakeholder participation in decision-making on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya?
- ii. What is the influence of stakeholder empowerment on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya?
- iii. What is the effect of stakeholder communication on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya?
- iv. What is the effect of stakeholder grievance management on the implementation of Total Quality Management practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya?

2.0 Literature Review

The section presents the theoretical framework and empirical review.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Four theories—the Theory of Constraints (TOC), stakeholder theory, resource-based View theory, and contingency theory served as the foundation for this study. The theories are favourable and provide insight and a foundation for the research objectives discussed.

2.1.1 Theory of Constraints (TOC)

Established by Eliyahu M. Goldratt in the 1980s, the Theory of limitations (TOC) is a management concept that centres on recognising and addressing bottlenecks or limitations that impede an organization's functionality (Goldratt & Cox, 1984). TOC is predicated on the idea that all systems have some kind of limitation that limits its ability to achieve its goals, and that managing these constraints is the key to improving the system's performance (Goldratt, 1990). The theory proposes a five-step process for managing constraints: determining the restrictions of the system, making use of them, putting the constraints above everything else, elevating the constraints, and repeating the procedure in case a new constraint appears (Goldratt, 1990). Within the scope of this study, TOC offers an insight of how limitations at Mombasa County, Kenya's public universities might affect the use and efficacy of TQM methods. Universities may enhance their programmes, services, and results, which boosted student happiness and boost performance, by recognising and addressing these limitations. In addition, TOC highlights the significance of ongoing progress, which aligns with the principles of TQM practices. By applying the five-step process of TOC, universities can continuously identify and manage constraints, leading to ongoing improvements in quality and performance.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, proposed by Edward Freeman in 1984, holds that an organization's stakeholders, defined as groups or individuals impacted by or affecting the organization's goals, play an important role in its performance and strategy (Freeman *et al.*, 2010). The theory emphasises the importance of identifying and comprehending stakeholders' needs, and it suggests putting these needs into action (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). Key responsibilities to stakeholders include efficient capital use, timely and accurate information, and effective business management. This theory asserts that both internal and external stakeholders have a significant influence on an organization's strategic direction due to their level of power and interest. Stakeholder engagement is particularly significant in the context of this study because it emphasises the importance of effectively managing stakeholder resources and communication. The study aligns with the core principles of Stakeholder Theory by focusing on stakeholder human resource and communication management, with the goal of catering to stakeholder needs. This method is useful for examining the effect of stakeholder engagement

on the performance of Total Quality Management practises in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya. The theory serves as a foundation for understanding how effective internal stakeholder engagement and capacity building can influence the implementation and success of these practises.

2.1.3 Resource-based View Theory

According to Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View (RBV) thesis, a company's valuable, rare, unique, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources and skills provide it a durable competitive edge. According to Barney (1991), these resources can be either intangible (such as organisational culture, intellectual property, and brand reputation) or tangible (such as financial capital and physical assets). According to the notion, in order to generate value and attain better performance, businesses should concentrate on recognising, cultivating, and utilising their distinctive resources (Peteraf, 1993). RBV highlights the diversity of businesses, contending that every business has a special combination of resources at its disposal that may be applied to value-adding initiatives (Barney, 1991). Since these resources are hard for rivals to copy or replace, they can offer a durable competitive advantage when they are VRIN (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). The significance of organisational capabilities—a company's capacity to efficiently allocate and integrate its resources in order to accomplish desired goals—is another point of emphasis for RBV (Grant, 1991). Further, RBV suggests that the effective deployment and combination of TQM-related resources through organizational capabilities is crucial for achieving superior performance (Yusr, 2016). For instance, a firm's ability to effectively include and oversee stakeholders, including as workers, clients, and suppliers can be viewed as a valuable organizational capability that enhances the success of TQM initiatives (Aquilani et al., 2017). Within the framework of this research on the impact of stakeholder involvement on TQM practice adoption at public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya, RBV provides a useful lens for examining how universities' resources and capabilities related to stakeholder engagement contribute to the success of their TQM efforts.

2.1.4 Contingency Theory

Joan Woodward created contingency theory in 1959, and Tom Burns popularised it in the 1960s and 1970s (Woodward, 1959; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). According to the theory, there is no one ideal method to run a business or make choices; rather, the optimum course of action depends on both the internal and external circumstances (Fottler, 1981). The following are the primary presumptions of contingency theory: Since organisations are open systems, they require careful management to balance internal requirements and adjust to external conditions (Lorsch & Morse, 1974); different types of operating contingencies require different organizational structures and managerial styles for the organization to function efficiently (Donaldson, 2001); and management styles and organizational structures need to match operating contingencies as improper matches could result in performance decrements or failure (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1988). Contingency theory is highly pertinent to this study on stakeholder engagement and Total Quality Management (TQM) practices given that it highlights the need to adapt strategies based on changing internal and external circumstances (Fottler 1981). The theory suggests that active stakeholder participation provides key insights for developing appropriate TQM initiatives tailored to university contexts rather than applying standardized models. Therefore, contingency theory offers a useful framework to assess how universities can effectively implement quality management practices supported by robust stakeholder engagement and feedback.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section reviews existing literature related to the objectives of this study on stakeholder engagement factors influencing TQM implementation in universities.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Participation in Decision Making and Implementation of TQM Practices

The study by Otieno (2016) sought to explore the impact of stakeholder participation in the development and application of strategies on the operational efficiency of Mombasa County's tea warehouse businesses. The study used a quantitative approach to its investigation, gathering primary data to assess the extent of stakeholder involvement and its correlation with organizational performance. The study findings established that there was a strong positive correlation between stakeholder involvement and performance. While the study showed a significant positive relationship between performance and stakeholder participation, it focused on tea warehousing companies, not public universities or TQM practices specifically. This gap highlights the need to examine the role of stakeholder involvement in strategy formulation and implementation for successful TQM adoption in Kenyan universities.

Gheith (2020) conducted a research study on the impact of quality management practices on innovation and organizational performance in public universities in the Campania region of Italy. The study used a quantitative methodology by collecting survey data from 356 faculty members across multiple universities. The study found that soft quality management (QM) practices like leadership, people management, and customer focus directly improve organizational performance. Soft QM also shows an indirect effect on performance through enabling hard QM practices like process improvement and evidence-based decision making.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Empowerment and Implementation TQM Practices

Grace *et al.* (2020) did a research study in Kisumu East Sub-County, Kenya, to look into the effect of empowering stakeholders in the use of scientific activities in early childhood education programmes. 297 respondents were chosen from a target population of 1227 people by the study using a cross-sectional design and simple stratified random sampling. The participants included members of the County Executive committee, County Chief Officers, Departmental directors, Project Management Committee members, Sub-County Administrators, Ward administrators, EYE coordinators, and EYE instructors. Empowered stakeholders are more likely to come up with original and innovative solutions to problems related to programme execution, the study finds, support both short- and long-term programme plans, and be actively participating in project activities. However, there is a need for more insight into the role of stakeholder empowerment specifically in TQM implementation in universities, which this study aims to address by assessing the role of stakeholder empowerment in implementing TQM in Kenyan public universities.

Sila (2021) conducted a research study analysing quality management, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and feminist ethics of caring have common principles and concepts. The study used an integrative literature review methodology drawing from over 150 sources. The study found substantial overlap between the core principles emphasized across quality management frameworks like the Baldrige criteria, CSR standards, and feminist ethics perspectives. Areas of convergence include stakeholder orientation, leadership commitment, ethics and integrity, nurturing workplace culture, customer/societal well-being and development, and continuous improvement. The study also showed that feminist ethics provides a relational stakeholder-focused lens largely missing from mainstream quality management and CSR research. The care and responsibility principles of feminist thought offer

fresh insights to enrich stakeholder engagement and ensure equitable treatment in these practices.

2.2.3 Stakeholder Communication and Implementation TQM Practices

Samsudin et al. (2021) conducted a study on internal communication patterns in Malaysian manufacturing businesses that were using TQM. This is a multiple case study that was conducted with 14 informants from five big industrial firms using a qualitative in-depth interview approach to obtain data. The study was conducted in manufacturing companies from three continents: two local organizations located in Malaysia, two organizations in the east, and one organization in the west. Despite the fact that we live in the age of technology, the results reveal that face-to-face meetings are still the most preferred and dependable communication channel between superiors and subordinates. However, the study had a limited focus on the educational sector, specifically on the role of communication in TQM within universities, which this study aims to address by investigating the impact of stakeholder communication on TQM implementation in Kenyan universities.

Maxwell and Carboni (2014) carried out a research study to determine on how nonprofits carefully consider who to communicate with in and outside of government-funded service implementation networks (SINs) to accommodate various stakeholder groups. Organizational network analysis methods are used to examine survey and interview data that non-profits both inside and outside of SINs provide. The study found that strategic communication within SINs differs from communication outside the network. The study also found that non profits emphasize different communication tools for management depending on the stakeholder group. The study, however, lacked insights into the use of strategic communication in the context of TQM in higher education, a gap this study aims to fill by investigating strategic communication methods in TQM implementation in public universities.

Zwikael *et al.* (2022) conducted a research study on improving stakeholder communication for the project despite their lack of understanding of project management principles. The study used a qualitative methodology through 27 interviews with project management practitioners, trainees, and stakeholders. The study found that five key project management concepts pose knowledge barriers for effective stakeholder communication - project benefits, iron triangle constraints, critical path analysis, uncertainty management, and project leadership. Stakeholders struggled to comprehend these core ideas impeding project discussions. The study also showed that varied approaches help improve stakeholder communication given terminology knowledge gaps. Simplified analogies, visualized models, storytelling, interactive sessions, emphasis on outcomes over tools, and bidirectional clarification enable better stakeholder engagement around project trade-offs.

2.2.4 Stakeholder Grievance Management and Implementation TQM Practices

Dhanabhakyaam (2022) conducted a research study to analyse the effect of grievance management on job commitment and organizational justice among IT employees. A quantitative research design was employed. Surveys were distributed to IT employees, likely gathered through internal company channels. The study found that IT employees' perceptions of grievance management had a significant positive impact on their job commitment and organizational justice. In other words, employees who felt their grievances were handled fairly and effectively were more likely to be committed to their jobs and perceive the organization as just. The study only focused on the IT sector, not directly relatable to grievance management in educational settings or TQM, leaving a gap that this study addresses by exploring the role of grievance management in TQM practices in public universities.

Patil *et al.* (2020) carried out study to create a prototype for a system that handles and resolves complaints from college-level students. Designing a prototype grievance redressal system based on the study and any other areas that may be required. Students may use their own email addresses to file concerns with the system. The highlighted issue areas were effectively integrated into the prototype design. Beyond the first study, additional required areas were examined. The prototype provides a viable method for resolving student problems by overcoming students' reluctance to communicate or seek assistance. For a possibly more comfortable experience, the email-based communication paradigm allows anonymity and indirect engagement. However, the study focused more on system design rather than the impact of grievance management on TQM, a gap this study aims to fill by assessing the effectiveness of grievance management systems in enhancing TQM in public universities.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Following the approach of Creswell (2014), the conceptual framework of this study visually represents the relationships among stakeholder engagement (independent variable) and the implementation of Total Quality Management practices (dependent variable) in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya. This is depicted in a diagram (Figure 1).

Independent Variables

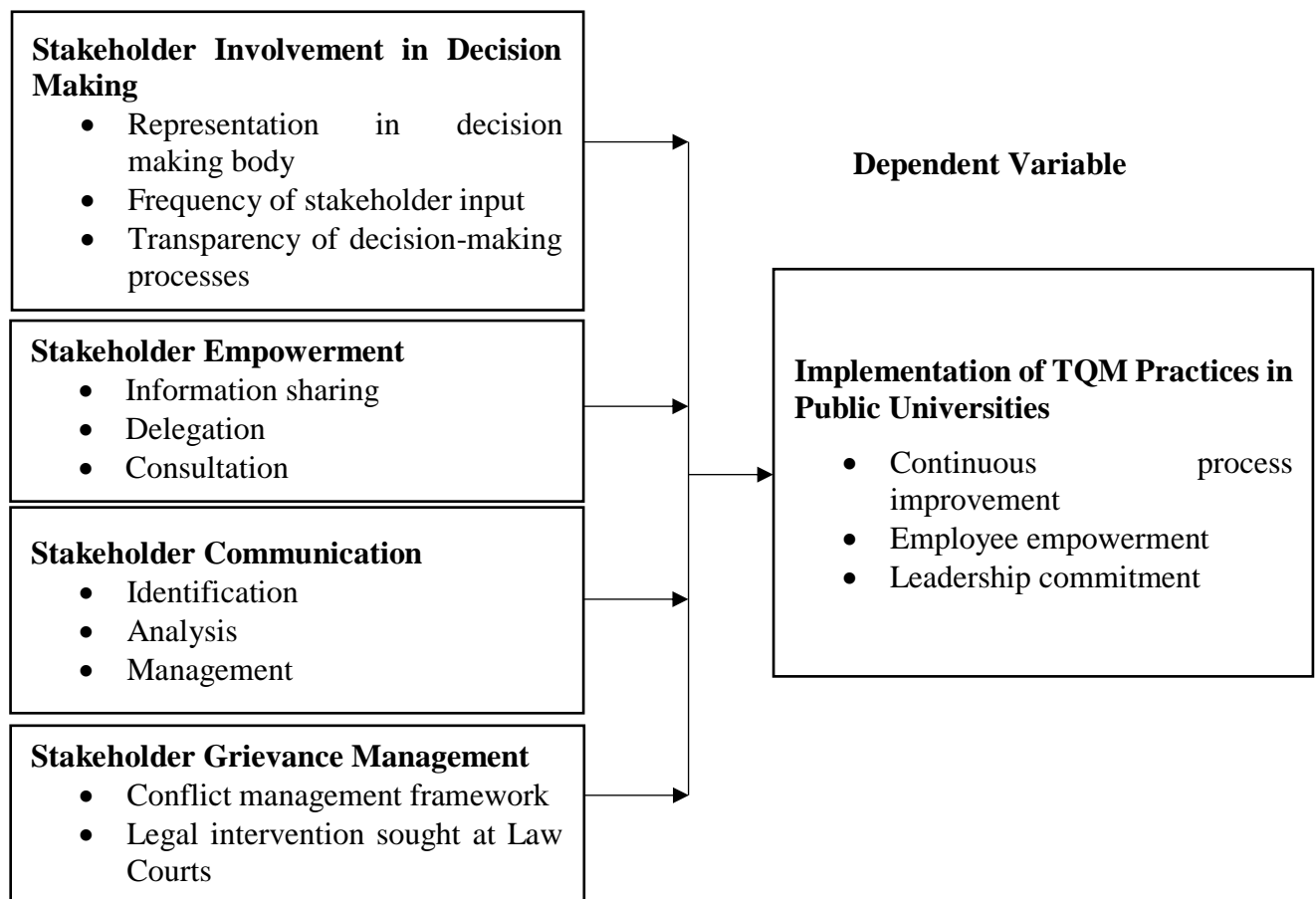


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

The study used a descriptive research methodology to examine the impact of stakeholder involvement on the execution of Total Quality Management (TQM) practises at public universities located in Mombasa County, Kenya. The unit of analysis for the study was the individual universities, while the unit of observation includes 390 staff members within these universities which included 12 Management Board Members, 53 Departmental Heads and 325 teaching staff. The study used a mixed-method sampling approach that combines stratified random sampling and purposive sampling. Departmental Heads and Teaching Staff was sampled using stratified random sampling. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, was used to select Management Board Members. A total of 12 Management Board Members was carefully selected using purposive sampling and the sample size was 197 respondents. The study employed a systematic approach to collect primary data using structured questionnaires. Following authorization, departments within each university were selected to participate, and eligible participants were identified. Stratified random sampling was used to select Departmental Heads and Teaching Staff, while purposive sampling was applied for Management Board Members. The study utilized a drop-and-pick method for questionnaire distribution, personally delivering questionnaires to selected participants in their respective departments. Before being analysed, the data was coded and prepared for analysis using spreadsheets and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 and Microsoft Excel 2019. The qualitative data was analysed thematically. The findings were shown with tables to facilitate easy understanding and interpretation. Lastly, decisions about the population based on sample data was made using inferential statistics. Pearson's correlation analysis was used. The multiple regression model is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(i)$$

Where:

Y = Total Quality Management implementation (dependent variable)

β_0 = Constant term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Regression coefficients

X_1 = Stakeholder involvement in decision making

X_2 = Stakeholder empowerment

X_3 = Stakeholder communication

X_4 = Stakeholder grievance management

ε = Error term

4.0 Research Findings and Discussions

This section presents the results of the inferential statistics, which include correlation and regression analysis, and incorporates the qualitative findings.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 1 presents the results of the correlation analysis, which examines the relationships between the independent variables (stakeholder participation in decision making, stakeholder empowerment, stakeholder communication, and stakeholder grievance management) and the dependent variable (implementation of TQM practices).

Table 1: Correlation analysis

	TQM Practices	Decision Making	Stakeholder Empowerment	Stakeholder Communication	Grievance Management
TQM Practices	1.000				
Decision Making	.720** 0.000	1.000			
Stakeholder Empowerment	.663** 0.000	.527** 0.000	1.000		
Stakeholder Communication	.637** 0.000	.407** 0.000	.645** 0.000	1.000	
Grievance Management	.779** 0.000	.644** 0.000	.442** 0.000	.474** 0.000	1.000

The results show that all independent variables have significant positive correlations with the implementation of TQM practices. Stakeholder grievance management has the strongest correlation with TQM practices ($r = 0.779$, $p = 0.000$), followed by stakeholder participation in decision making ($r = 0.720$, $p = 0.000$), stakeholder empowerment ($r = 0.663$, $p = 0.000$), and stakeholder communication ($r = 0.637$, $p = 0.000$). These findings are consistent with existing literature. For instance, Otieno (2016) found a strong positive correlation between stakeholder involvement and organizational performance in tea warehousing companies. Similarly, Gheith (2020) demonstrated that soft quality management practices, such as leadership, people management, and customer focus, directly improve organizational performance in public universities. The significant positive correlations between the independent variables and TQM practices implementation suggest that higher levels of stakeholder engagement in decision making, empowerment, communication, and grievance management are associated with more effective implementation of TQM practices in public universities. These results highlight the importance of involving stakeholders in various aspects of TQM implementation to ensure its success. In addition, the correlation analysis reveals significant positive correlations among the independent variables themselves. For instance, stakeholder participation in decision making is positively correlated with stakeholder empowerment ($r = 0.527$, $p = 0.000$), stakeholder communication ($r = 0.407$, $p = 0.000$), and stakeholder grievance management ($r = 0.644$, $p = 0.000$). These interrelationships suggest that the various dimensions of stakeholder engagement are interconnected and may reinforce each other in the context of TQM implementation.

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of the multiple regression analysis, which examines the influence of stakeholder engagement factors (stakeholder participation in decision making, stakeholder empowerment, stakeholder communication and stakeholder grievance management) on the implementation of TQM practices in public universities.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884a	0.781	0.776	0.10356

Table 2 shows the model summary of the multiple regression analysis. The R-squared value of 0.781 indicates that 78.1% of the variance in the implementation of TQM practices can be explained by the four stakeholder engagement factors. This finding suggests that stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of TQM practices in public universities, which is consistent with the findings of Githinji et al. (2020), who demonstrated a substantial and favourable correlation between stakeholder participation and project success at many phases of project management in Kenya Ferry Services.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.513	4	1.628	151.829	.000b
	Residual	1.823	170	0.011		
	Total	8.336	174			

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results, which test the overall significance of the regression model. The F-value of 151.829 ($p = 0.000$) indicates that the model is statistically significant, suggesting that the stakeholder engagement factors collectively have a significant impact on the implementation of TQM practices. This finding aligns with the study by Gheith (2020), which found that soft quality management practices, such as leadership, people management, and customer focus, directly improve organizational performance in public universities.

Table 4: Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.204	0.163		1.253	0.212
	Decision Making	0.208	0.042	0.25	4.988	0.000
	Stakeholder Empowerment	0.156	0.036	0.219	4.31	0.000
	Stakeholder Communication	0.165	0.043	0.189	3.86	0.000
	Grievance Management	0.402	0.046	0.431	8.772	0.000

Table 4 displays the regression coefficients for each stakeholder engagement factor. All four factors have statistically significant positive effects on the implementation of TQM practices ($p = 0.000$). Stakeholder grievance management has the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.431$), followed by stakeholder participation in decision making ($\beta = 0.250$), stakeholder empowerment ($\beta = 0.219$), and stakeholder communication ($\beta = 0.189$). These findings are consistent with the existing literature. For instance, Dhanabhakym (2022) found that employees' perceptions of grievance management had a significant positive impact on their job commitment and

organizational justice in the IT sector. Similarly, Grace et al. (2020) discovered that empowered stakeholders are more likely to come up with original and innovative solutions to problems related to programme execution and be actively participating in project activities in early childhood education programmes in Kenya. Further, the significance of stakeholder communication in TQM implementation is supported by Samsudin et al. (2021), who found that face-to-face meetings are still the most preferred and dependable communication channel between superiors and subordinates in Malaysian manufacturing businesses that were using TQM. Stanciu et al. (2016) also emphasized the importance of effective communication for managers to lead quality improvement initiatives and enable shared understanding of quality goals and methods between the manager and employees. The following was the study regression model after the analysis of the variables;

$$Y = 0.204 + 0.208X_1 + 0.156X_2 + 0.165X_3 + 0.402X_4$$

Based on the qualitative findings, stakeholder participation significantly enhances TQM implementation in universities. When faculty from various departments and students are included in quality decisions, organizations gain diverse perspectives leading to robust and innovative solutions. Empowered stakeholders demonstrate greater initiative and responsibility in maintaining quality standards, fostering ownership over quality processes. Clear, consistent communication channels—including dedicated feedback portals and regular updates—are crucial for maintaining momentum and engagement. In addition, fair, efficient, and transparent grievance management systems reduce resistance to quality measures and encourage honest feedback, allowing for targeted improvements. Leadership commitment to TQM principles positively impacts daily operations and job satisfaction by creating a culture where quality becomes everyone's responsibility. This commitment leads to increased resource allocation for training and development, improving skills and confidence in implementing TQM practices. However, resource constraints present challenges in effective implementation of new quality measures. Faculty members suggest forming quality circles that bring together staff from different departments to foster collaboration and shared ownership of TQM practices, aligning with research emphasizing workplace culture as a key convergence area between quality management and stakeholder engagement.

5.0 Conclusion of the Study

The study concluded that stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in public universities in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study found that stakeholder participation in decision making, stakeholder empowerment, stakeholder communication, and stakeholder grievance management all have significant positive influences on the implementation of TQM practices. The study also concluded that among the four factors, stakeholder grievance management has the strongest impact on TQM implementation, followed by stakeholder participation in decision making, stakeholder empowerment, and stakeholder communication, respectively. These conclusions are supported by the high levels of agreement among respondents regarding the various aspects of stakeholder engagement, as well as the strong positive correlations and significant regression coefficients found in the data analysis.

The study also concluded that the findings are consistent with the existing literature on stakeholder engagement and TQM implementation in various contexts. The importance of involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, empowering them to contribute to quality initiatives, maintaining effective communication channels, and addressing their grievances through well-established frameworks has been highlighted in studies conducted in different sectors and countries. The study concluded that public universities in Mombasa

County, Kenya, can benefit from prioritizing stakeholder engagement as a key driver of successful TQM implementation, as this can lead to improved organizational performance, enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, and a stronger culture of continuous improvement.

6.0 Recommendation of the Study

Public universities should prioritize stakeholder engagement in their Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation by actively involving diverse groups - faculty, staff, students, and external partners - in decision-making processes, ensuring their representation in TQM-related bodies, and providing regular opportunities for input and feedback. To enhance participation, universities must empower stakeholders through appropriate resource allocation, training, and delegation of responsibilities, while establishing transparent communication channels that address the specific needs of each stakeholder group. Additionally, effective conflict management frameworks should be developed and maintained, with regular reviews to ensure their effectiveness, ultimately creating a collaborative environment where stakeholders feel ownership of the TQM process and contribute to improved organizational performance.

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