

**WORKING PAPER**

**TOPIC**

**A COALESCED FRAMEWORK FOR PRESCRIBED AND ACTUAL  
INVOLVEMENT OF LINE MANAGERS IN TALENT MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS.**

**CONFERENCE STREAM**

**LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND TALENT DEVELOPEMENT**

Charming Nakweya, PhD Candidate, Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University.

Dr Sarah Pass, Senior Lecturer, Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University.

Dr Fotios Mitsakis, Senior Lecturer, Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University.

Dr Valerie Caven, Senior Lecturer, Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University.

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** *The mainstream literature presents the involvement of line managers (LMs) in Talent Management (TM) as a multi-dimensional concept that includes, among other things, the prescribed and actual dimensions of involvement, the analysis of which would best be supported by a unified framework. However, the literature shows a lack of unified framework for analysing the varied dimensions of involvement as the existing ones are fragmented. The paper aims to inductively generate a unified framework for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the Case Study Organisation (CSO).*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *We adopted an inductive, qualitative and embedded single case study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with forty-seven (47) key stakeholders at different levels of the CSO alongside document analysis.*

**Findings:** *The study generated a coalesced framework that combines Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF), Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional framework (TDF), and institutional isomorphism concept (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO.*

**Limitation:** *The results are limited to the CSO as this was a single case study.*

**Originality/value:** *The study extends the boundaries of using FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism concept (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) by merging them into a coalesced framework to analyse the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. Thus, the framework bridges the gap between theory and practice within the TM domain.*

**Key terms:** *Line Managers, Talent Management, Human Resource Management, Institution theory, FDF, TDF.*

## 1.0. Introduction

Talent Management (TM) academics and practitioners continue to stress on the need to involve Line Managers'(LMs) in TM, presumably due to the correlation between their involvement in TM and employee performance, and ultimately organisational performance (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022; Anlensinya *et al.*, 2019; Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). Realising organisational performance by involving LMs requires effectively involving them in TM (Tyskbo 2020; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Fitzgerald 2016). Decisions on how to effectively involve LMs in TM are based on analysis of LMs' involvement in both the prescribed and actual dimensions of involvement in TM (Teague and Roche 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Tyskbo 2020; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Nehles *et al.*, 2006). While analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement provides insights on how to appropriately determine the level of involvement of LMs in TM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Hall and Torrington 1998; Budhwar 2000b), analysing the actual dimension of involvement, nonetheless, helps identify glitches that impede performing their prescribed TM roles as intended, and ways to eliminate the glitches (Teague and Roche 2012, Evans 2015; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Bayo-Mariones *et al.*, 2020). Taken together, they ensure informed decisions to effectively involve LMs in TM, which in turn contributes to employee performance and ultimately organisational performance. However, literature show that the frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is fragmented (e.g. Tyskbo 2020; Fu *et al.*, 2020; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Teague and Roche 2012). In most cases, each framework is able to analyse a specific dimension of involvement and not another dimension of involvement which poses a challenge when it comes to analysing different dimensions of involvement in a single study (e.g. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Teague and Roche 2012; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Consequently, there is a gap between theory and practice within TM domain. Unsurprisingly, scholars lamented that TM research lags in offering TM solutions for organizations, especially in different national and industrial contexts (Thunnissen 2016; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Cappelli and Keller 2014). Consistent with the observed gap, Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, (2015) conducted a review of TM studies, the results of which revealed, among other things, dominant TM theories including institutionalism. To advance the TM theoretical stance, the author called for more TM studies using the prevailing theories and or in conjunction with other relevant theories as lens for analysing the phenomenon (ibid). In this article, we therefore argue that bridging the gap between TM research and practice could be facilitated by merging relevant frameworks into a coalesced framework to analyse the prescribed and the actual involvement of LMs in TM. Accordingly, the paper ventures to answer three questions, (1) how LMs are involved in TM, (2) which factors facilitate and inhibit the involvement of LMs in TM, and (3) how is the analytical framework generated for prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The paper is structured as

follows; First the paper presents the results of literature review on the dimensions of involvement, relevant frameworks and the analysis of the results. Second, the paper presents the research design and methodology followed by research findings and discussions, and finally the conclusion.

## **2.1 Prescribed and Actual dimension of involvement of LMs in TM.**

The mainstream literature on LMs' involvement in TM presents it as a multidimensional concept that includes, among other things, the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in Human Resource Management/HRM (e.g. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Teague and Roche 2012; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Tyskbo 2020; Wright and Nishii 2013; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Tyskbo 2020). The prescribed dimension of involvement relates to the question of which HRM practices or tasks are delegated to LMs for implementation (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Fu *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, the dimension relates to determining the extent or degree of involvement of LMs in HRM practices. The dimension, thus, dares to answer the question the extent to which LMs are involved in HRM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The relevance of the prescribed dimension of LMs involvement in TM stems from the fact that it helps to distinguish whether the involvement of LMs is rhetorical or real (*ibid*). The actual dimension of involvement relates to the question of how the prescribed LMs' involvement in HRM is implemented in practice? or why LMs' prescribed involvement in HRM is not implemented as intended (Tyskbo 2020; Gilbert *et al.*, 2015; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Wright and Nishii, 2007). The relevance of the actual involvement of LMs in HRM dimension stems from the fact that prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM may not always result in actual involvement of LMs in HRM unless LMs carry out the prescribed involvement in HRM as intended (Fu *et al.*, 2020:204). This is because, there are so many complexities and forces both external and internal that affect the prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM not to be implemented as intended resulting in an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM.

The general question, however, would be what are the relevant frameworks that provides guidance for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Therefore, the subsequent section provides results of the literature search on the frameworks for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

## **2.2 Relevant frameworks for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM**

The first relevant framework uncovered for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is the Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF). Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) building on the previous guide and the insights of some scholars (Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b;

Kinnie 1990; McConville and Holden 1999; Brewster and Larsen 1992), developed a FDF to analyse the involvement of LMs in HRM. The FDF comprises four dimensions namely, (1) task responsibility, (2) decision-making power, (3) financial power, and (4) expert power/knowledge. The FDF is underpinned by the understanding that realistic involvement of LMs in HRM requires that their involvement in HRM tasks should be supported with decision-making power, financial power and HRM expertise, otherwise, the involvement becomes a burden to LMs (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006). Thus, determination of the overall level of involvement of LMs in HRM is based on the LMs combined involvement in the four dimensions. For example, LMs are considered highly involved in HRM when their high involvement in HRM tasks is supported by high decision-making power, high financial power and high expert power. However, the general question would be what guidance the framework provides for determining the level of LMs' involvement in the four dimensions. Thus, the subsequent discussion on dimension addresses the concern.

### ***Task responsibility dimension***

The work of Budhwar and Sparrow (1997) influenced the development of the dimension (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a). Budhwar and Sparrow (1997), building on the work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), identified change in LMs' responsibility for HRM tasks (s) as a determinant of the extent of LMs' involvement in operational HRM tasks. The determinant focuses on determining whether LMs' HRM responsibilities have increased or remained the same or decreased over a given period (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997:481). Implicitly, LMs performing several tasks across several HRM practices are seen as more involved and vice versa (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Accordingly, the dimension was included in the FDF. Several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimensions' use (Budhwar 2000b; Gautam and Davis 2007; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018). A closer look at the relevant studies on LMs' involvement in HRM through the lens in question reveals mixed results of LMs' involvement in HRM, ranging from high, medium, and low with high involvement dominating the results (Hutchson and Purcell 2010; CIPD 2019; Hirsh 2015; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006, Bratton and Watson 2018).

### ***Decision making power dimension.***

The work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), and Kinnie (1990) influenced the development of the decision-making power dimension (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Budhwar 2000a; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Desiring to examine the degree of involvement, Brewster and Larsen (1992) developed a framework with an indicative element relating to the extent to which LMs are involved in TM based on HRM practices. The indicative element had four scales all aimed at answering the question, "who has the primary responsibility in decision-making on HRM between LMs and HRM specialists?" One of the

scales was HRM in consultation with LMs, or LMs proposed or recommended HRM decisions, meaning that HRM specialists shared the responsibility with LMs but HRM specialists had primary responsibility for decision-making. This implied moderate involvement of LMs in decision making (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimension's use (Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). A closer look at the relevant studies on LMs' involvement in HRM through the lens in question reveals mixed results of LMs' involvement in HRM, ranging from high, medium, and low. (e.g. Staunton 2014:94; Hirsh 2015; Budhwar 2000b:293; Gautam and Davis 2007).

### ***Financial power dimension***

Building on the work of previous scholars (Colling and Ferner 1992; and McConville and Holden 1999), Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) developed the financial dimension. The argument for the financial dimension is based on the fact that the involvement of LMs in the HRM budget facilitates the realistic and practical involvement of LMs in HRM (McConville and Holden 1999; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The dimension focuses on financial responsibilities relating to HRM entrusted to LM (Hales 2005). Thus, more control of the budget by the LMs entails more involvement, while less budget under the control of the LMs means less involvement by LMs. Greater involvement is reflected in LMs having primary decision-making responsibility for determining budget allocation and usage and overseeing budget implementation (e.g. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cascon-Pereira *et al* 2006; Hales 2005). Several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimension's use (Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018). A closer look at the relevant studies on LMs' involvement in HRM through the lens in question reveals mixed results of LMs' involvement in HRM, ranging from high, medium, and low. (e.g., Townsend and Russell 2013; Evans 2015).

### ***HRM expertise dimension***

The work of Budhwar and Sparrow (1997) informed the development of the dimension (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a;). Budhwar and Sparrow (1997), building on the work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), identified the percentage of LMs trained in HRM as a determinant of the extent of their involvement in TM expertise. Thus, the determinant is based on the percentage of LMs that have undergone HRM training. Additionally, it is based on its sufficiency or effectiveness to help LMs perform HRM roles. For example, insufficient or ineffective training provided to LMs meant LMs were less involved in TM expertise. Several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimensions' use (Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018). A closer look at the relevant studies on LMs' involvement in HRM through the lens in

question reveals mixed results of LMs' involvement in HRM, ranging from high, medium, and low (Trullen *et al.*, 2016; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010).

The strength of the FDF lies in its ability to provide an in-depth analysis of the involvement of LMs in HRM. This is based on the fact that the framework answers both questions of which HRM practices LMs are involved in and to what extent LMs are involved in the HRM practices. By having both capabilities, the framework provides a relevant analytical tool for an in-depth analysis of LMs prescribed involvement in HRM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006). However, the FDF does not analyse the actual involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension because the framework cannot answer the question of why the prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM differs from the actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Tyskbo 2020; Gilbert *et al.*, 2015; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Wright and Nishii, 2007).

The second relevant framework for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is the Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional Framework (TDF). Teague and Roche (2012:236), building on insights of several scholars (e.g. CIPD 2007; CIPD 2008; McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; Boxall and Purcell 2011), analysed the bottlenecks in the process of translating desired into the actual involvement of LMs in HRM which led to an inconsistency between desired and actual involvement of LMs in HRM. The analysis summarised the bottlenecks in a framework (TDF) that includes three problems namely, (1) delegation (2) alignment, and (3) monitoring. The claim behind TDF is that forces that impede LMs' involvement in HRM and result in an inconsistency between the prescribed and the actual involvement of LMs in HRM fall under the three problems mentioned. However, the general question would be what guidance the framework provides for analysing the actual involvement of LMs in HRM. Therefore, the subsequent sections provides the discussion.

### ***Delegation problems***

Delegation problems manifests itself in a variety of ways. Firstly, delegation issues are manifested through differing opinions between LMs and other key HRM stakeholders (e.g. senior management, HRM specialists) on HRM work leading to LMs either LMs partially performing HRM work or not performing the HRM work which in turn leads to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Evans 2015; Teague and Roche 2012; Maxwell and Watson 2006; Brandl *et al.*, 2009). Secondly, delegation issues are manifested by LMs self-serving behaviour where their focus is on doing things that end up benefitting themselves or not putting them in uncomfortable situation creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Sikora and Ferris 2014). Thirdly, delegation issues are manifested by lack of time and lack of motivation of LMs to perform HRM work resulting in HRM work being on the suffering side, leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g.

Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Whittaker and Marchington 2003; Teague and Roche 2012).

### ***Alignment problems***

Alignment issues relate to lack of organisational support for LMs in performing their HRM roles, resulting in LMs not performing the HRM work which in turn leads to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2020:737). In accordance with Rossett (2009), lack of organisation support can be manifested in resource constraints and a restrictive process in the form of restrictive policies that prevent performers from performing their work as intended. Traits of the alignment problems (e.g. alignment problems such as resource constraints, LMs' lack of knowledge to undertake HRM tasks, insufficient LM-TM training among others) were noted in several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM that led to inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM/TM (Evans 2015; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Biron *et al.*, 2011; Bayo-Mariones *et al.*, 2020; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Purcell and Hutchinson 2007; Teague and Roche 2012).

### ***Monitoring problems.***

Monitoring problems relate to the lack of oversight or evaluation of LMs performing HRM roles leading to LMs either not performing HRM work or not performing the HRM in line with the policy which in turn creates an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). A lack of monitoring can manifest in a lack of HRM accountability from LMs due to a lack of organisational seriousness in holding them accountable by not linking HRM work to their job description and performance contracts. As a result, LMs focus more on core tasks at the expense of HRM work as that is the work they are held accountable for (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). Traits of the dimension were noted in several studies relevant to the involvement of LMs in HRM leading to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM/TM (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Teague and Roche 2012; Whittaker and Marchington 2003).

The strength of TDF lies in its ability to provide partial guidance for the analysis of the actual involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension by explaining why prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM differs from the actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). However, TDF is limited to the analysis of internal forces leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Nonetheless, there are external forces (e.g. political, legal, and social) whose impact might contribute to the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (e.g. Khan 2011; Harris *et al.*, 2002; Glaister *et al.*, 2021). The TDF's limitation can be attributed to the fact that its construction was based on initial studies that focused on internal factors that caused the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Teague and Roche



2012; CIPD 2007; Boxall and Purcell 2011). In addition, LMs as the protagonist of the subject may also have influenced the focus as more attention was paid on them. Finally, TDF is unsuitable for analysing the prescribed involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension as it cannot answer the question of which HRM practices are delegated to LMs and to what extent they are involved in the HRM practices (Brewster and Larsen 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

The third concept is institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) which is closely related to the understanding that organisations interact with their social systems such as institutions that exert external pressures on their activities and influence the way in which they behave (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Scott *et al.*, 1983; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the concept provides guidance for explaining how organisations respond to the external forces emanating from institutions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Building on the work of Meyer (1979) and Fennell (1980), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified the concept of institutional isomorphism. The term institutional isomorphism refers to forces that cause organisations operating in the same context and looked different in the early stages of their life cycle to look more alike and adopt similar practices than those that do not share the same context (Hawley 1968:334; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). A central claim for institutional isomorphism is that alongside competition for resources and customers that compels organisations to differentiate their operations, organisations also compete for political power and institutional legitimacy, social and economic fitness, compelling them to adopt similar practices that tend to make them homogeneous in their operations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). Implicitly, the actions of organisations are not the result of aligning their operations with marketing strategy in response to market forces alone, but also the result of responding to institutional forces of regulatory agencies, general social expectations of leading organisations on which they depend and or that they share in the same context (Wellis and Hankin 2005:269; Jamu 2017:34; Greenwood and Hinings 1996). Against this background institutional isomorphism is claimed a useful tool in understanding the politics and the ceremonies that permeate many modern organisations causing them to implement and not to implement certain operations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Jackson and Schuler 1995:248).

The general question, however, would be what makes institutional isomorphism a useful tool for understanding the politics that permeate modern organisations. Thus, the subsequent section discusses the classifications of institutional isomorphism namely, coercive and mimetic that makes it a useful tool for analysis.

Coercive isomorphism refers to both formal and informal pressures placed on organisations by other organisations on which they depend and from cultural expectations in the society in which organisations function (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). The pressure in question could be the need to comply with employment laws, persuasion, or an invitation to join a collision or government orders on how certain things should be run (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395).

Mimetic isomorphism refers to environmental uncertainty pressures that leaves the organisation in the dark about the processes leading to the desired outcomes and compels it to copy from a successful organisation to survive (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395; Adebola 2017:67). It is a kind of pressure that leaves an organisation with no choice but to copy practices deployed by organisations that have proven successful in meeting the challenge (Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:217; Jamu 2017:35).

The strength of institutional isomorphism lies in its ability to provide guidance on how external institutional factors (e.g. political, legal, social) affect the implementation of HRM (Jackson and Schuler 1995:248), which in turn provides an explanation as to why organisations do not implement or implement TM programmes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Sidani and Al Ariss 2014). However, the institutional isomorphism is not suitable to analyse the prescribed involvement of LMs in TM as it cannot answer the questions of which HRM practices are delegated to LMs and to what extent they are involved in the HRM practices (e.g. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Furthermore, institutional isomorphism is discredited because it fails to explain why organisations operating in the same field adopt varied TM strategies, structures and practices (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395; Thornton and Ocasio 2008:101).

### **2.3 Summarised analysis of the results of the literature review**

The results of the literature review showed that the involvement of LMs in TM is a multidimensional concept that include, among other things, the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. However, literature show that the frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is fragmented. In most cases, each framework is able to analyse a specific dimension of involvement and not another dimension of involvement posing a challenge when it comes to analysing different dimensions of involvement in a single study. For example, FDF is able to analyse the prescribed dimension of involvement. However, it fails to analyse the process or the actual involvement dimension. Conversely, the strength of TDF lies in its ability to analyse the actual involvement dimension. Yet, the framework is limited as it cannot assess the prescribed dimension of involvement. Additionally, the framework does not consider external factors. In contrast, institutional isomorphism is suitable for analysing subset of actual involvement dimension of involvement (e.g external). However, it is not suitable for analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement. Consequently, there is a gap between theory and practice within TM domain. Unsurprisingly, scholars lamented that TM research lags in offering TM solutions to organisations, especially in different national and industrial contexts (Thunnissen 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020; Cappelli and Keller 2014). Consistent with the observed gap, Gallardo-Gallardo et al., (2015) reviewed TM studies, the results of which revealed, among others, dominant TM theories including institutionalism. To advance the TM theoretical stance, the author called for more TM studies with the prevailing theories and or in conjunction with relevant theories as a lens for analysing phenomenon

(ibid). Thus, there is a need for a unified framework that can analyse the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

### **3.0 Methods**

#### ***The case study organisation***

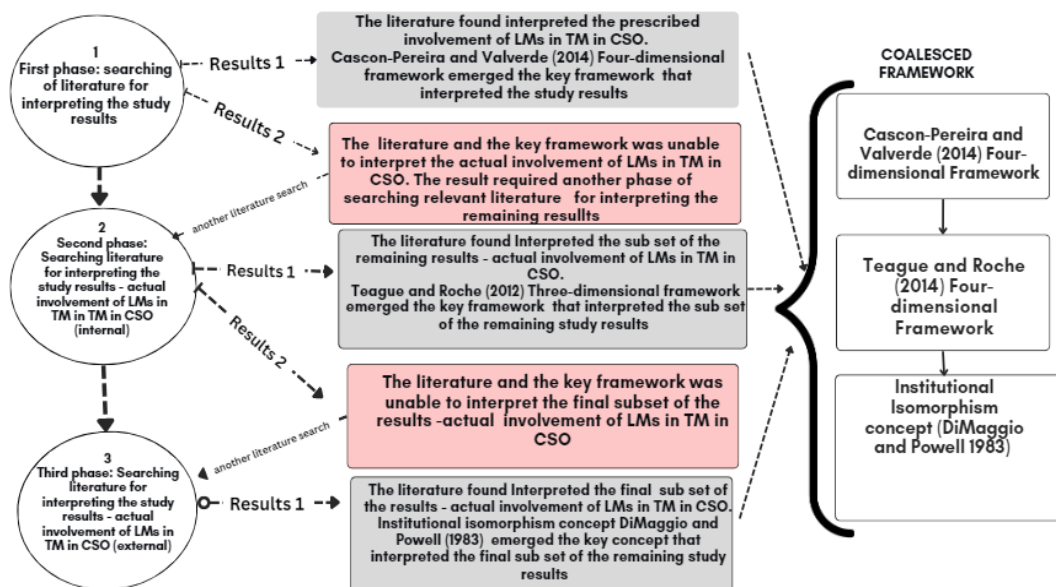
The CSO offers a good ground to fill a research gap in TM within an understudied geographical context. Since most TM studies were conducted in the Western context, Asia and few in Africa. The uniqueness of the CSO stems from the fact that it is a non-profit, state-owned bank (RBM 2019). Consistent with the law, the top leadership of the CSOs is appointed by the government subject to parliamentary approval. In accordance with the law, CSO should enjoy leadership independence. Yet, in reality, this was not always the case. The CSO leadership was ranked one of the least independent in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) trading bloc (Wessels 2009; Kamanga and Chikonda 2017; Kalilombe 2008). Besides, CSO operated in a country that was hit by COVID-19 pandemic (Government of Malawi 2020). Concerning TM, CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy comprising exclusive key position TM philosophy and inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy (Nakweya *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the interplay of the factors in the CSO offers potential for new insight into how TM is implemented through the lens of LMs and analytical tools of their involvement.

#### ***Data collection and analysis***

We adopted an inductive approach, a qualitative research type, and an embedded single case study research design (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Nakweya *et al.*, 2022). Key questions “how” and “which” aimed at an in-depth investigation of TM implementation through the lens of LMs which in turn facilitated the generation of a coalesced framework motivated the adoption of the approach (Whelan *et al.*, 2010; Robson and McCartan 2016; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Thus, qualitative data was collected by conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the CSO’s key stakeholders at varied levels namely, senior management, human resource department staff, LMs, officers, supervisors and staff representative council (Nakweya *et al.*, 2022; Whelan *et al.*, 2010). A hybrid non-probability sampling technique comprising purposive and quota sampling techniques was used to sample the interviewees (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017; Bryman 2012:187). Alongside one-on-one semi-structured interviews, we reviewed CSO documents such as job descriptions, and policies among others (Kotlyar 2018; Zhang 2015; Nakweya *et al.*, 2022). Data analysis was guided by a reflexive thematic analysis strategy and facilitated by NVIVO software (Braun and Clarke 2021:2; Braun and Clarke 2006:78). With the research questions in mind the transcripts underwent a coding process that resulted in codes. Thereafter, the codes underwent further coding resulting into initial themes, followed by candidate

themes, and finally themes. The first theme was LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise. The second theme was the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors. The study results were interpreted recursively. This is because the initial search for relevant literature yielded literature that interpreted a subset of the study results. Consequently, a further search of relevant literature was conducted and yielded another set of literature that interpreted the subset of the remaining subset of results. Similarly, another search of relevant literature was conducted yielding another set of literature that interpreted the final subset of the study results. A closer look at the literature that interpreted the results revealed a coalesced framework that analysed the involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. The recursive process is presented in Fig. 1 below.

**Figure.1. Recursive process for interpreting study results**



- The results were interpreted in three phases (e.g. Phase I, II, III).
- First phase yielded literature that analysed the prescribed involvement of LMs in TM. Key relevant framework that emerged from the alignment of the literature and study results that interpreted the results was the Four-dimensional framework of Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014). Yet, the literature and framework found was inadequate to analyse the other subset of study results- the actual involvement of LMs in TM. Thus, a second phase of literature search was conducted.
- Second Phase yielded literature that analysed the subset of the remaining study results. Key relevant framework that emerged from alignment of literature and study results that interpreted the results is the Three-dimensional framework of Teague and Roche (2012). Yet, the literature and the framework were unable to analyse the final subset of study results. Thus, a second search of literature was conducted
- Third phase yielded literature that analysed the last subset of the remaining study results. Key relevant concept that emerged from the alignment of the literature and the final subset of study results is institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

## **4.0 Research findings and discussions**

### **4.1 LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise.**

#### **4.1.1 LMs initiated and implemented TM decisions.**

The study found that LMs initiated TM processes. For instance, in line with Hutchinson and Purcell (2010) whose study found that LMs were involved in drawing job descriptions among other things; the study found that when it comes to talent acquisition, LMs' initiate the process by identifying vacancies in their respective divisions and reporting them to HRD for hiring review. Subject to HRD approval, LMs drew job descriptions that provided guidance to HRD to source suitable candidates, and finally formulated interview questions used to assess candidates during interviews.

*“Like in my department, line managers are the ones who identify gaps in their divisions, the gaps that are supposed to be filled” (SM1).*

*line managers shall ...(2) develop the job specifications, educational and other requirements of the candidate being sought” (Doc11)*

Equally, in talent development, LMs initiated the talent development process by conducting training needs analysis/(TNA) of their subordinates. Additionally, LMs initiated the talent development process by endorsing applications for employees who aspired to advance their careers through a self-initiated programme set up by the CSO to support staff below the key position to advance their careers through the acquisition of formal qualifications, one of the factors in the criteria for identifying talent for key positions.

*“So, line managers actually check on individual basis what their needs are and helping each one according to his training need” (OF1)*

Similar results were reported by Golik *et al.*, (2018) whose study found LMs conducting TNA.

Likewise, in performance management, LMs initiated the process by drawing performance contracts for employees which provided a basis for evaluating actual performance.

*“Line managers shall prepare and present for discussion with staff performance expectations and assessment criteria” (Doc21)*

The finding aligns with Nik Mat (2014) whose study found that LMs drew performance contracts for employees in Airport X.

Besides initiating TM processes, LMs implemented TM decisions. For example, consistent with Stahl *et al.*, (2012) whose study found that LMs implemented talent development through coaching and mentoring employees; the study found that LMs implement talent development decisions by ensuring that employees who attended training shared the knowledge acquired to colleagues when they return from training.

*So... line managers... make sure that when people come back they do prepare the report and share the knowledge with colleagues” (SP12)*

Taken together, the initiation of TM processes, and the implementation of TM decisions relate to the operational task responsibility dimension of the four-dimensional framework of Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014). This implies that LMs were more involved in operational TM tasks as they performed several operational tasks across TM practices (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b).

#### **4.1.2 LMs proposed TM decisions.**

Evidence from the study suggests that LMs proposed TM decisions across TM practices in the CSO. For example, in talent acquisition, LMs’ were part of the interview panel to assess and recommend suitable candidates for recruitment. Equally, in talent identification, consistent with Cadigan *et al.*, 2020:186 whose study found that LMs made recommendations for talent identification, the study found that LMs proposed employees for promotion into key positions based on the criteria of performance, years of service and qualifications.

*“During selection interviews the line manager is invited to be among the team that assesses the candidate’s suitability. So that is what the LMs does” (SM1)*

Yet, the results conflict with Brewster *et al.*, (2015:586) whose study found that LMs had decision making power on talent acquisition.

Similarly, in talent development LMs nominated people to attend training, which was approved by senior management,

*“the manager recommends the list of names for training to the Director” (OF4).*

The finding is consistent with Hirsh (2015) whose study found that LMs nominated employees for training. However, evidence from the study suggests that LMs deviated from the talent development policy when nominating employees for training. When HRD allocates the training budget to departments annually, it issues instructions to prioritise the training needs of employees who had not previously attended training needs. In most cases, however, the allocated budget was insufficient to meet even the

critical training needs. Out of frustration, some LMs based their nominations on employees who had never travelled in the previous year, rather than training needs and they managed to get away with this as HRD never monitored how the training budget was implemented.

Likewise, in performance management, LMs appraised employees whose scores were submitted to executive management for approval.

*“it's the managers responsibility to make sure ... the appraisal process is done timely ... they also ensure that they do the appraisals with the supervisors as well as with the officers and the senior officers” (SP8).*

Similar results were reported by Blayney *et al.*, (2020) whose study found that LMs appraised employees' performance.

Taken together, the proposition, and the recommendation that LMs made in TM practices relate to decision-making power dimensions of the FDF and this implies that LMs were moderately involved in TM decisions since they were partially involved in decision-making through recommendations (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b).

#### **4.1.3 LMs proposed a talent development budget.**

The study found that towards the end of the year, departments are tasked with preparing talent development budget estimates and submitting them to HRD for consolidation and forwarding to senior management for approval. Based on the results of the training needs analysis, the LMs formulates the estimates and submits a proposal to senior management via HRD for approval.

*“I can confirm to you that line managers we do not have decision making power on talent management, our work is to propose the budget and monitor its expenditure and not making decisions on the budget” (LM12)*

The finding partially supports Budhwar (2000b) whose study found that LMs were consulted by HRM when undertaking pay and reward decisions. In addition, the results imply that LMs had moderate financial power as they proposed talent development budget (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

#### **4.1.4 LMs attended the leadership development programme (LDP)**

The CSO had an LDP programme intended to equip employees in key positions with TM expertise among other things. Thus, the study found that LMs participated in the LDP in question. However, there were mixed reviews of the effectiveness of the LDP as some participants felt that it was effective whilst other participants felt that it was ineffective.

*“Yes, the Bank in some ten years ago did embark on training program, leadership programme... The programme is specifically for executive management, Directors and managers” (LM2).*

A similar finding was reported by Golik *et al.*, (2018) whose study found that LMs were subjected to TM training. The LDP relates to the acquisition of HRM expertise dimension of the FDF. While the results confirms that LMs acquired TM expertise through LDP, the extent of their acquisition situates between sufficient and insufficient ends of the continuum as there were mixed reviews of its effectiveness (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b).

Taken together, overall, LMs were moderately involved in TM. The claim is based on the results of the LMs combined involvement in the four dimensions namely, TM tasks, TM decision making power, TM budget and TM expertise. The high involvement of LMs in operational TM tasks, was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and finally backed by moderate TM expertise resulting in an overall moderate involvement of LMs in TM (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b).

#### ***4.2 The inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to external contextual factors***

The study found that politics manifested in low leadership independence affected the involvement of LMs in TM to the extent that it created the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Whenever new leadership is appointed following the change of government, the new leadership either discontinued or changed most of the TM programmes. For example, it was found that implementation of LDP was erratic due to the change of consultants following the change of leadership. According to reviews, the first consultant was far better than the second. Consequently, the TM expertise imparted to the LMs was inconsistent, with some attending good sessions while others attending average sessions. This entailed that some LMs were not able to acquire appropriate TM expertise as expected. Additionally, low leadership independence led to an unstable PMS which in turn led to LMs gaining less knowledge about the PMS, which hampered their involvement in performance management. Third, it led to the cancellation of talent development programmes.

*“I remember there was a time when the Bank had changed leadership and the new Governor who came in stopped postgraduate training for a period of two years if am not mistaken just because he felt that there were a lot of educated people” (SM1).*

The results relate in part to Dzimbiri (2015) who observed that since multiparty politics began in 1994 in Malawi, successive governments used their influence to appoint, promote, transfer and fire high-ranking civil servants’ people of their choice without following the correct procedures.



Consequently, LMs could not undertake the prescribed talent development roles creating an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The finding relates to coercive isomorphism which argues that organisations operations are influenced by both formal and informal pressures imposed on them by other organisations on which they depend on (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). The pressure in question could be the need to comply with employment laws, persuasion, or an invitation to join a collision or government mandate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395). In this context, the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM is attributed to coercive forces manifested in low leadership independence emerging from the executive arm of the government.

Besides, the study found that COVID-19 pandemic affected the involvement of LMs in TM to the extent that it created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. When COVID-19 pandemic struck, the CSO streamlined its operations to decongest the premises to curb the spread of the virus. In a two -week rotation, some employees worked on-site and the rest virtually. A closer look at the initiative clearly indicates that it was a copied strategy and not something that was developed by CSO itself in line with its status. This is because the CSO had no resources to support the adopted initiative. In particular, most employees working from home were not provided with tools (e.g, laptops, and internet data) to enable them work from home. Due to the lack of working tools coupled with the lack of proper tool to monitor people working from home, many employees viewed working from home as a vacation because they could not do anything at home. Consequently, senior management suspended the performance management system as it was difficult to manage the programme. In addition, the CSO cancelled talent acquisition as it was not possible to conduct face to face selection interviews.

*“We have not been able to recruit this year because of social distancing requirements and the situation was terrible especially between April and July and that's the time we wanted to acquire talent; we were not able to do it was eventually impossible for us” (HRD1)*

Furthermore, CSO cancelled all the talent development programmes.

*“When COVID-19 was just discovered in Malawi, most of the things were put on hold... Training as you are aware, there was not I think even local training, no, foreign training due to the travel ban. Most people didn't attend short-term training” (LM3)*

Consequently, LMs could not perform their prescribed TM roles creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The finding partially confirms the Willis Towers Watson survey (2020) which found that 42% and 28% of organisations in the USA and Canada suspended and contemplated suspending the recruitment, respectively due to COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, the results demonstrate the implications of the mimetic isomorphism of the institutional isomorphism concept which argues that mimetic isomorphism affects organisations to the extent that

they are left ignorant of the processes or strategies that might lead them to desired outcomes and consequently compel them to copy strategies from a successful organisation to survive (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Similarly, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the CSO, it had no COVID-19 pandemic response strategy to survive. As a result, the CSO copied the COVID-19 pandemic response strategies from other organisations which proved successful. The COVID-19 pandemic response strategies included streamlining operations, with some employees working from home to decongest the premises, cancellation of some TM programmes, social distancing and requiring masks among others. Thus, CSOs were forced to copy the strategies to survive the vexing period which in turn affected their operations including inhibiting LMs' involvement in TM to the extent of creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

A closer look at low leadership independence and the COVID-19 pandemic shows that they fall under institutional external contextual factors and contributed to the gap between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. However, the study found that internal contextual factors also contributed to the gap.

#### ***4.3 The inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to internal contextual factors***

First, the study found that CSO bureaucracy manifested in CSO's conservatism and characterised by a lack of interest in innovative ideas, inhibited LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

*“So, I think we are overly conservative, so to speak I think sometimes we don't move with time”*

(LM17)

*“The need to follow the human resource policies and procedures in doing talent management activities that also is barrier because it slows down the process it even takes away the innovation that line managers can bring to talent management” (OF2)*

Due to the CSO's conservatism, LMs felt discouraged from developing modern and efficient TM methods as their new ideas were quashed by superiors, ultimately frustrating them. Consequently, LMs were unable to perform prescribed TM roles as intended due to frustration.

Second, the study found that resource constraints inhibited LMs' involvement in TM to the extent that it led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual LMs' involvement in TM. For example, financial constraints precluded LMs from addressing all the vital capacity building needs of subordinates unearthed during the TNA exercise.

*“the major barriers in my opinion is ... lack of resources you know, because most managers they know what has to happen and they know the needs the gap that their officers have but they're not able to match that gap or to close that gap because of lack of financial resources you know to be able to train the officers in the areas that the manager thinks are vital” (SP8).*

Taken together, the results confirm several scholars whose studies attributed the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM to (1) resource constraints, (2) LMs' lack of knowledge to undertake HRM tasks, and (3) insufficient LM-TM training (Grant *et al.*, 2020:921; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:8; Evans 2015), categorised internal factors under the alignment problems - lack of organisation support to LMs in performing HRM work (Teague and Roche 2012). The lack of CSO support for LMs (alignment problems) manifested itself in resource constraints and their bureaucracy. This implies that the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM was due to alignment problems (Teague and Roche 2012).

Third, the study found that disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in a lack of TM ownership by LMs resulted in an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This was manifested in some LMs' not taking responsibility for performance appraisals for their staff for fear of being labelled bad managers by their employees.

*“The barrier ... number one stems from the fact that sometimes some managers fail to take responsibility and they want to be good to their subordinates in the sense that they leave to the subordinates to appraise themselves because they don't want to take responsibility or because they want to be good to them” (LM12)*

Consequently, LMs' partially participated in the exercise as subordinates appraised themselves creating an inconsistency between prescribed involvement and actual involvement of LMs in TM. A similar finding was reported by several scholars who argued that LMs had difficulties in taking performance appraisal roles as intended for fear of consequences associated with the outcome of the process (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005:289; Tyskbo 2020:831).

In addition, some LMs viewed TM as the work for HRD, consequently, they were reluctant to own TM work as well,

*“they believe that may be this one is actually basically for the HR that is for the talent management so it's that line of thinking you find that some managers wouldn't actually do their actual job in the talent management” (SP13)*

As a result, LMs could not perform the intended roles creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Taken together, the results mirrors previous studies that attributed

the inconsistency between LMs' prescribed and actual involvement in TM to internal factors such as (1) LMs' role conflict, (2) time pressures, (3) LMs self-serving behaviours, and (4) LMs lack of motivation (Gasden *et al.*, 2017:22; Buyens and De Vos, 2001); Makhecha *et al.*, 2018), categorised as delegation problems - differing opinions between LMs and other key stakeholders (e.g. senior management, HRM specialists) on HRM (Teague and Roche 2012). This implies that the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM was as result of delegation problems.

Finally, the study found that a lack of HR oversight of talent development budget implementation led to LMs deviating from the policy. Due to financial constraints, most departments were allocated less budget than they had proposed based on their training needs. Based on the allocated budget, HRD directed LMs to prioritise the training needs of employees who had not received training in previous years. Mostly, however, the budget was not sufficient to meet priority training needs of people who had not received training in previous years. As a result, out of frustrations, LMs instead resorted to use the allocated budget to motivate their employees by sending them on external travel in the name of training without considering the training needs. Due to lack of HRD oversight on implementation of talent development budget, LMs got away with that,

*... so from ... what you have been given now you start prioritising, and say, how do we close this gaps that we have? and sometimes instead of closing the gaps you just say that ok we do what we have and say we are no longer looking at the priority let's look at the amount and say ok for more people to benefit; 1, 2, 3, 4 you may go for training these ones out, that's what happens" (LM6)*

Consequently, this created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The study confirms previous studies that attributed the inconsistencies between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM to internal factors such as LMs lack of HRM assessment pressure (McGovern *et al.*, 1997), categorised as monitoring problems (Teague and Roche 2012).

## **5.0 Generation of a coalesced framework for analysing prescribed and actual involvement of LM in TM in CSO.**

A closer look at the study results and discussions, Section 4.0 reveals a coalesced framework resulting from the merging of FDF and TDF and institutional isomorphism concept analysed the involvement of LMs both at prescribed and actual levels. First, the claim is based on the fact that the study results show that FDF assessed the prescribed involvement dimension by providing the lenses to explain the answers to the questions on which TM practices LMs were involved? To what extent were LMs involved in TM practices? This is evidenced by the discussions of the study results along the following four dimensions of the framework.

### ***Task dimension***

Section 4.1.1 show that LMs were involved in initiating multiple tasks of varied TM practices (e.g. initiating processes in talent acquisition and identification). In addition, the section shows that LMs implemented TM decisions. Furthermore, the section interpreted that both the initiation of TM tasks and the implementation of TM decisions fall within the task responsibility dimension of FDF which profiles involvement at the task/operational level when the involvement of LMs is limited at performing tasks and not decision making (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Finally, the section interpreted that the extent of involvement of LMs in the dimension was high implying that they were more involved in operational TM tasks as they performed several operational tasks across TM practices (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Against this background, task dimension of FDF provided the medium for explaining the coverage/operational level of LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO. The finding aligns in part with Budhwar and Sparrow (1997) whose study exhibited characteristics of the use of the dimension to determine the extent of involvement of LMs in HRM.

### ***Decision making power dimension.***

Section 4.1.2 show that LMs were involved in proposing TM decisions in several TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, performance management). In addition, the section interpreted that proposing TM decisions falls within the decision-making power dimension of FDF (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In line with the question of the decision-making power “who has the primary responsibility in decision-making on HRM between LMs and HRM specialists/senior management?” to determine the extent of involvement in decision-making power, the study results and discussion section indicated that decision-making power was shared with HRM/senior management, yet, LMs had no primary responsibility for the decision-making. This implied that LMs were moderately involved in decision making dimension (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Given the above, the decision-making power dimension of FDF guided the explanation of the extent of or the depth of LMs' involvement in TM decision making in CSO. The results are partially consistent with several scholars whose studies

showed features of usage of the dimension to determine the extent of involvement of LMs in TM (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006).

### ***Financial power dimension***

Section 4.1.3 show that LMs proposed a talent development budget that was approved by authorities. In addition, the section interpreted that the task performed by LMs in the TM budget falls within the HRM financial dimension of FDF. Finally, the section interpreted that in line with the framework's guidance, the extent of their involvement in the dimension was moderate as LMs only proposed budgets for talent development (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Given the above, the financial power dimension of FDF helped to explain LMs' involvement in financial power. The results partially align with Hales (2005) whose study reveals some traits of using the dimension.

### ***Acquisition of TM expertise dimension***

Section 4.1.4 show that LMs participated in LDP which among other things provided LMs with TM expertise. In addition, section indicate that the programme's effectiveness had mixed reviews. Furthermore, the section interpreted that LMs' participation in LDP falls within the HRM expertise dimension of FDF which asserts that LMs' involvement in HRM is facilitated through the provision of human resource management training (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In addition, the section interpreted that the acquisition of TM expertise by LMs was moderate as the LDP's effectiveness was neither effective nor ineffective. Accordingly, the LMs-HRM training dimension of FDF was helpful in explaining the extent of involvement of LMs in acquisition of TM. The results are partially related to Budhwar (2000b) whose study showed some traits of using the dimension for the same purpose.

Taken together, the high level of LMs' involvement in TM tasks, supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and finally supported by moderate acquisition of TM expertise resulted in moderate overall LMs' involvement in TM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

However, no evidence is present in the study to claim that FDF analysed the actual involvement dimension confirming the framework's limitation of not going beyond the analysis of the prescribed involvement dimension.

Second, the claim rests on the fact that the study results show that TDF addressed the limitations of FDF by analysing the actual involvement dimension by providing an explanation to the question on why the actual involvement differs from intended involvement? This is evidenced by the discussions of the study results along the following three dimensions of the framework.

### ***Delegation dimension***

Section 4.3 show that the disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs' reluctance to appraise staff for fear of being labelled as a bad manager, the reluctance of LMs in performing TM work because they viewed TM as HR work, inhibited LMs' involvement in TM leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. In addition, the section interpreted that study results fall within the delegation dimension of TDF which argue that varied opinions between LMs and other stakeholders on HRM manifested in LMs prioritisation of core tasks over HRM among others, lead to the creation of a gap between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (Teague and Roche 2012). Given the above, the delegation dimension of TDF guided in explaining the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The results partially align with Evans (2015) whose study showed traits of using the dimension for the same purpose.

### ***Alignment dimension***

Section 4.2 show that the CSO' bureaucracy manifested in conservatism behaviour characterised by lack of interest in innovative ideas inhibited LMs' involvement in TM creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Additionally, the section indicate that resource constraints precluded LMs' involvement in TM, leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Furthermore, the section interpreted that the study results fall within the alignment dimension of TDF which claim that lack of support for LMs leads to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012). Lack of support for LMs can take varied forms, such as resource constraints, organisation's bureaucracy manifested in lack of support for innovative ideas and ineffective processes. In this regard, the alignment dimension of TDF is helpful in explaining the cause of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The results are partially related to Evans (2015) whose study showed some traits of using the dimension for the same purpose.

### ***Monitoring dimension***

Section 4.2 indicate that LMs deviated from the talent development budget policy in part due to a lack of HRD enforcement of the policy. Consequently, an inconsistency was created between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. In addition, the section interpreted that the results fall within the monitoring dimension of TDF which claims that lack of TM monitoring mechanisms on LMs leads to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (Teague and Roche 2012). Given the above, the monitoring dimension of TDF guided in explaining the causes of the inconsistencies between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The results partially align with Whittaker and Marchington (2003), Evans (2015) whose studies showed traits of using the dimension for the same purpose.

However, the study results do not provide evidence for the claim that FDF and TDF analysed the external aspects of the actual involvement dimension confirming the limitation of the frameworks' of not going beyond the analysis of internal aspect to include external aspect of the actual involvement dimension.

Third, the claim rests on the fact that the study results show that the institutional isomorphism concept (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) addressed the limitations of FDF and TDF by analysing the external aspect of the actual involvement dimension by providing an extended explanation of why the actual involvement differs from the intended involvement in TM in CSO? This is evidenced by the discussions of the study results in line with classes of institutional isomorphism.

### ***Coercive isomorphism***

Section 4.2 show that low leadership independence inhibited LMs' involvement in TM creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This is because the change in government led to a change in CSO's leadership which in turn led to a change or cessation of some TM programmes. When such a development occurred, LMs failed to fulfil their TM prescribed roles. In addition, the section interpreted that the results fall within the coercive isomorphism which argues that organisations operations are influenced by both formal and informal pressures imposed on them by other organisations on which they depend (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). The pressure in question could be the need to comply with employment laws, persuasion, or an invitation to join a collision or government mandate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Thunissen and Buttiens 2017:395). In this context, the inconsistency between the prescribed involvement of LMs in TM and the actual involvement of LMs in TM is attributed to coercive forces manifested in low leadership independence emerging from the executive arm of the government in which the CSO depended on. Given the above, the coercive isomorphism guided in explaining the external causes of the inconsistencies between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The results partially align with Sidan and Al Ariss (2014) whose study exhibited features of using the dimension to analyse the impact of external contextual forces on TM implementation.

### ***Mimetic isomorphism***

Section 4.2 show that the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited LMs' involvement in TM to the extent that it created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic left CSO with no choice but to copy other organisations' COVID-19 pandemic response strategies which had proven successful during this particular time as it was a new pandemic. Response strategies copied included streamlining the operations with some employees working from home to decongest the premises, cancellation of TM programmes such as talent development, and PMS among other things. Consequently, LMs failed to perform their prescribed TM roles creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. In addition, the section



interpreted that the results fall within the mimetic isomorphism of the institutional isomorphism which argues that mimetic isomorphism affects organisations to the extent that they are left ignorant of the processes or strategies that might lead them to desired outcomes and consequently compel them to copy strategies from a successful organisation to survive (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Against this background, mimetic isomorphism guided in explaining the external causes of the inconsistencies between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The results partially align with Sidani and Al Ariss (2014) whose study exhibited features of using the dimension to analyse the impact of external contextual forces on TM implementation.

Against this background, the study results generated a coalesced framework for analysing the prescribed and actual dimensions of involvement resulting from the merging of the institutional isomorphism concept, FDF and TDF. Thus, the coalesced framework comprises the following dimensions, (1) task responsibility, (2) decision making power, (3) financial power, (4) TM expertise, (5) delegation problems, (6) alignment problems, (7) monitoring problems, (8) institutional isomorphism. The study's contribution rests on the fact that it has pushed the boundaries of using the institutional isomorphism, FDF and TDF by combining them into an integrated framework that analyses the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO.

## **6.0 Conclusions, and limitations of the study**

The study found that LMs initiated, proposed, implemented TM decisions and acquired TM expertise implying that they were moderately involved in TM, overall. Additionally, the study found that institutional forces reflected in external contextual factors (e.g, low leadership independence and the COVID-19 pandemic) coupled with delegation, alignment and monitoring forces manifested in internal factors (e.g. CSO bureaucracy, resource constraints, disposition of TM stakeholders) inhibited LMs' involvement in TM to the extent of creating and inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Based on the two study results, the study inductively generated a coalesced framework that combines FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism to analyse the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The study results are limited to the CSO since the study was based on a single case study. Therefore, future studies are needed to empirically test the coalesced framework in commercial banks.

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