

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF ZIMBABWEAN URBAN COUNCILS

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Abstract

With awareness of the negative impacts of climate change, natural resource shortages and social inequalities, organisations in all sectors are increasingly recognising the importance of integrating the principles of sustainability into their operations and strategies to enhance their resilience. The integration calls for a multifaceted approach. However, existing literature reveal the involvement of internal factors in the sustainable strategic management practices in organisations at the expense of external factors. This study, therefore, explores the influence of stakeholder engagement (an external factor) in the practice of sustainable strategic management in organisations. The study adopts a descriptive survey design of the quantitative research approach. A total of 2 931 employees drawn from six urban councils in Zimbabwe consisting of managers and practitioners, formed the population of the study. A sample of 344 was drawn from the population using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s determination table. Data were collected using a questionnaire whose internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) test was used to measure the suitability of data for factor analysis, while the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was done for its adequacy. The results of the study show a positive and significant relationship between the engagement of both internal and external stakeholders and the practice of sustainable strategic management in organisations. It is, therefore, recommended that a policy framework be developed guiding urban councils in Zimbabwe on the inclusion of stakeholders in their practice of sustainable strategic management to enhance their resilience. However,

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further research is recommended with a different methodology and targeting different organisations on how stakeholder engagement influences the practice of sustainable strategic management.

Keywords: external stakeholders; internal stakeholders; management styles; organisational culture; organisational resilience; service delivery; stakeholder theory; sustainable development goals

INTRODUCTION

The practice of sustainable strategic management is inarguably the survival strategy for both profit and non-profit-making organisations. Businesses need not focus solely on the short-term aspects but rather focus on the long-term aspects within the operation environment. In an effort to deal with the challenges encountered in the business environment, there is colossal need and desire to concentrate on variable customer needs, seasonal changes and fluctuations which tend to play a pivotal role in deterring the adoption of long-term strategic management practices. The majority of companies operating within the various industries, however, tend to concentrate on prioritising short-term profitability instead of concentrating on the investments that have the capacity of offering long term returns for the businesses. This, therefore, denotes that variable affecting organisations in the business environment need to be well understood, such that long term sustainable goals can actually be put in place to enhance business operational capacities.

Organisational culture is believed to be among the chief factors hindering the successful implementation of sustainable strategic management in organisations. According to Hernandez and Cook, (2023), the effectiveness of strategic management depends largely on the ability of the organisation to align its organisational objectives with its sustainability goals. The absence of coherence becomes a challenge in the alignment of sustainability goals with organisational objectives results. The misalignment usually occurs as a result of ingrained organisational cultures that have the capacity and capability of

prioritising performance instead of sustainable results and outcomes (Mukonori & Qutieshat., 2025).

Similarly, the effective implementation of sustainable strategic management practices in organisations is also believed to be affected by the misalignment with organisational vision. Brown *et al.* (2020) asserts that despite the fact that the various top management within the majority of different organisations acknowledges the importance of sustainability, they prevalently encounter a significant number of challenges in turning sustainability ideas into practice. This is based on the understanding that the lack of alignment between the vision of an organisation and sustainable practices has the capability of undermining the various environmental initiatives and exposing organisations to several harms. This is because modern consumers are increasingly emphasising on critical aspects that have to do with eco-friendly environment and corporate responsibility in business activities.

Poor implementation of sustainable strategic management practices in organisations is also being attributed to the system of management. For instance, Khan *et al.* (2020) discovered that one of the critical aspects that impacts on the adoption and implementation of sustainable strategic management practices in organisations is mainly due to the complexity of internal management systems within the food industry. The results of the research revealed that intricacies are prevalent when it comes to supply chain systems. The industrial processes are complex and the distribution processes need robust flexible management approaches which have the capability of smoothly integrating the aspect of sustainability in business activities. Moreover, Green and Patel (2020) observe that ineffective management approaches lack adaptability capacities and capabilities which are a prerequisite in the facilitation of sustainable activities such as resources optimisation and waste reduction within industries. Furthermore, Jones, Smith and Taylor (2022) are of the belief that lack of embracing change by management has a capacity of hindering significant motivation of innovation and adaptation which subsequently disturb various efforts being put towards inclusion of sustainability within the organisations.

Integrating sustainability into strategic management practices requires a multifaceted approach. Sustainability in strategic management is best understood through a combination of mechanisms, rather than from a single perspective. The existing literature (Brown et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Green & Patel, 2020; Jones et al., 2022) mainly focused on the influence of internal factors of an organisation (i.e., culture, management style and strategic alignment) on the ability of an organisation in practising sustainable strategic management. Thus, a gap exists as to the impact of external factors on the adoption of sustainable strategic management practices in the same organisations. Therefore, in addressing the gap, this study explored the influence of stakeholder engagement in the effective adoption of sustainable strategic management practices focusing on Zimbabwean urban councils.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sustainability is becoming topical in the context of management of both profit and non-profit organisations in the contemporary era. With increasing awareness of the negative impacts of climate change, the shortage of natural resources and social inequalities, organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of integrating sustainability principles into their strategies and operations. This integration calls for organisations to adopt a multifaceted approach. However, existing literature shows that more of internal factors than external factors are considered and involved in the practice of sustainable strategic management in organisations. This study, therefore, explored the influence of stakeholder engagement, as an external factor which enhances sustainable strategic management practices in organisations concentrating on Zimbabwean urban councils.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research study sought:

- To examine the impact of internal stakeholders on sustainable strategic management practices for organisational resilience of Zimbabwean urban councils.

- To analyse the role of external stakeholders in the practice of sustainable strategic management for organisational resilience of Zimbabwean urban councils.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Stakeholder Theory was developed by Freeman in the 1980s and emerged as a response to the growing dynamism and complexity of the environment in which organisations operate (Adigüzel & Erdil, 2020). The theory posits that an organisation is a social construct made of interaction of various stakeholders. According to Freeman (1984), organisations need to guarantee the security of all parties affected by their various institutional activities. This is because organisations are viewed as centres of a network of stakeholders, a concept system of exchanging services, information, influence and other resources. Thus, the theory suggests that all individuals or groups that have a stake in the organisation are to be considered in the strategic management process as organisations are managed with the purpose of creating value for customers, suppliers, owners, employees and local communities (Freeman *et al.*, 2020).

The assumption of the stakeholder theory is to describe the management of relationships and communication with stakeholders, directly or indirectly are affected by the activities of the organisation, to add value to the organisation in the business sector (Adigüzel and Erdil, 2020). The theory also provides an examination of the kind of relationship established between business management and internal and external stakeholders. It further provides an examination and in-depth analysis of the decisions that affect stakeholders to enhance profitability and sustainability of the organisation. The theory is described as not only an examination of the relationship between businesses, consumers and customers, but also with the employees who are working towards the goals and objectives of an organisation (Freeman, 2020).

The stakeholder theory has become an innovative approach for organisations concerned with generating value in increasingly dynamic

and multifarious environments (Barakat & Wada, 2021). Through assuming the existence of several interconnections in relationships, the theory emphasises the need to increase the value of each stakeholder group without lessening value from one to the other, that is avoiding trade-offs circumstances (Barakat *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the theory was chosen for the study as it provides essential perspectives on sustainable strategic management in urban councils. Its concentration on the ethical integration of stakeholder interests offers a framework for tackling the complex difficulties inherent in these service organisations. By engaging and collaborating with stakeholders, urban councils may develop innovative sustainable strategies that meet social expectations and accomplish corporate objectives. This strategy cultivates resilience and adaptation in an ever-changing environment.

SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

In recent years, sustainability has become an increasingly important concept for governments, organisations and individuals (Brundtland, 1987; Alkhodary, 2021). According to the Brundtland report (1987), the essence of sustainability is meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similarly, Ali (2021) noted that as consumers demand socially and environmentally responsible products and services, businesses recognise that sustainability is crucial for lasting success. Thus, as Banerjee (2018) concluded, integrating sustainability into strategic management provides a framework for achieving business goals and it can lead to new business opportunities, reduced costs, improved brand reputation and a positive impact on society and the environment.

Sustainable strategic management is defined as the process of formulating and implementing strategies that combine three aspects, which are economic goals, social responsibility and environmental care (Kozar, 2023). It is a modern management concept that assumes profit generation while interacting with society and the environment. This strategy, as Marileide *et al.*, (2020) proclaimed, assumes a better understanding of new consumer needs related to the natural

environment and, most importantly, undertakes efforts to reduce harm and even reverse negative effects of business activities. Sustainable strategic management considers environmental aspects and sustainability objectives, incorporating them into the overall strategy to contribute to the green economy and long-term organisational longevity (Sołoducho-Pelc & Sulich, 2020). It involves incorporating environmental, social and economic considerations into an organisation's strategic planning and decision-making processes (García López *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, David (2017) stresses the benefits of sustainable practices which include cost savings, innovation, reputation and employee engagement and provides guidance for companies seeking to integrate sustainability into their strategic management practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing prioritisation of sustainability issues by profit and non-profit making business organisations marks a paradigmatic shift in organisational management towards more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable practices (Adiatma, 2025). Leal Filho (2020) argues that sustainability should be an integral component of strategic management, as it provides a framework for businesses to align their economic, social and environmental goals. According to Jackson (2025), this trajectory aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in this case, SDG #3 (Good health and well-being), SDG #6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG #7 (Affordable and clean energy) and SDG #11 (Sustainable cities and communities), by fostering inclusive participation and equitable economic opportunities. Therefore, integrating sustainability into strategic management is essential for organisations to achieve long-term resilience, competitiveness and responsible growth. Adiatma (2025) further alludes that embracing sustainable practices not only addresses global challenges, but also enhances organisational value, stakeholder loyalty and overall performance.

ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

In today's uncertain conditions and changing environment, organisations face countless challenges. According to Hamidavi Nasab (2023), regardless of size, all organisations are vulnerable to external threats and disasters. Therefore, for organisations to develop strong strategies, flexibility and adaptability becomes necessary. Since threats are unavoidable, organisations must be flexible in responding to them. As such, flexibility of organisations in the face of external threats has been interpreted as resilience. The adverse impact of natural disasters and economic crises on organisational operations highlights the need for organisational resilience (*ibid.*). Organisations need to develop resilience capabilities to manage the unforeseen while maintaining high performance. Thus, organisational resilience has been defined from the perspective of organisational capabilities, capacities, characteristics, results, processes, behaviours, strategies, approaches, performance, among others (Hillmann and Guenther, 2021). For instance, Liu and Yin (2020) defines organisational resilience is defined as the ability of an organisation to effectively absorb, develop a situation-specific response to and eventually create new ways of doing business and flourish as a result of hardship. In other words, Ducheck, *et al.* (2020) define organisational resilience as the ability to assess potential threats and respond effectively to unexpected events while Sekaran *et al.* (2021) define it as the ability and capacity of organisations to cope with various crises and challenges and to return to normal conditions in critical situations.

At the level of the organisation, resilience provides an important insight into how organisations are able to overcome significant disruptions and maintain operations during periods of hardship. According to Burnard and Ran (2019), capabilities or mechanisms of resilience relate to organisational features such as flexibility and redundancy, responsiveness, agility, velocity, visibility, supply chain management and teamwork. Within an ever changing and often turbulent environment, understanding resilience and the associated capabilities is

essential in development of an organisation. As the operating environment of an organisation becomes increasingly complex and indefinite, the organisation may no longer be able to effectively interpret how the environment will affect and impact performance (*ibid.*). The general perspective of resilience is that organisations should be able to continuously learn, to be flexible, agile, prepared and ready to adapt. The changes that occur as a result of advances in technology, climate change and changes in customer tastes, among others, prompt that organisations continually adapt to remain relevant.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The growing and acknowledgement of the importance of stakeholders to the success of the organisation result in many of them seeking to implement effective stakeholder involvement and management practices. By the way, Freeman (1984) cited in Khuong *et al* (2021) defines stakeholders as any group or individual who can affect or are affected by the activities and objectives of an organisation. The development and maintenance of effective relations with all stakeholders is a part of the stakeholder perspective on value creation. As Schaltegger *et al.* (2020) indicated, integrating ecological and social impacts into the idea of value creation is a defining characteristic of sustainability-oriented businesses. The engagement involves identifying different categories of stakeholders, gathering information about them, identifying their missions in an organisation, predicting their behaviour, determining their strengths and weaknesses, identifying their strategies and developing and implementing a strategy for managing them. After defining, classifying, prioritising and assessing the multiple stakeholders of an organisation, it is crucial to categorise them based on their influence and interest in an organisation. In that case, Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) invented the influence-interest matrix categorising the individual stakeholders according to their level of influence and interest in organisational decisions as shown on Figure 1.

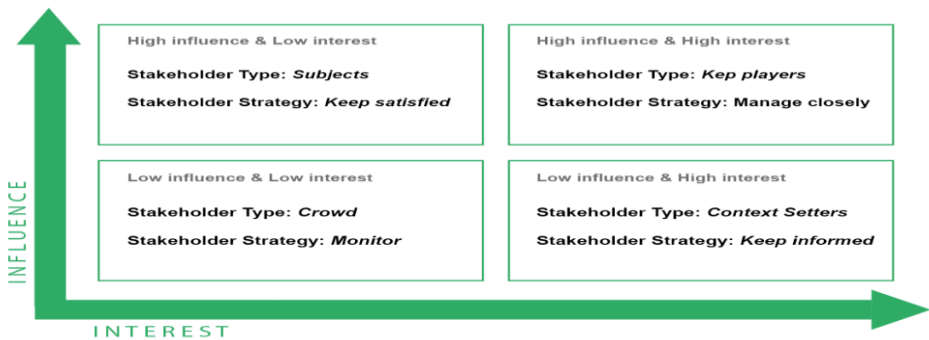


Figure 1: A matrix for stakeholder influence-interest (*Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997 cited in Sandeep, 2025*)

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Primary or internal stakeholders are perhaps the most influential groups in a business organisation. They are directly involved in the formation, design, structure and conduct of a business. According to Sandeep (2025), internal stakeholders are thus defined as the groups or individuals who directly participate in business operations. These include managers, shareholders, company executives, employees and labour unions, among others. The levels of motivation, loyalty and support of managers and employees to an organisation are critical if the organisation is to achieve its intended goals. Unions are an aggregation of employees who seek to protect employee interests and the working conditions of employees. Sandeep (2025) further states that unions have varying degrees of importance to organisations, depending on their ability to influence organisational actions.

Organisations that have managed to align the environmental intent with their routine functioning have the backing of the senior leadership team (*ibid.*). The guidance and commitment of top management shape the environmental inclination of the organisation. In their study, Williams *et al.* (2014) cited in Sandeep (2025) found the commitment of top leadership to the mission to have a moderating relationship with organisational outcomes. The senior team was found to facilitate the conversion of the mission of the organisation into its actions through the creation of systems and structures, communication and continuous

monitoring of the actions to check progress concerning the organisation's mission.

Internal stakeholders such as employees form valuable contingency resources for organisations to rely on in times of hardship. They find an organisation more attractive when they discover a positive image of the organisation towards the environment and social consciousness. According to (Sarami *et al.* (2025), organisations are motivated to follow sustainable operational practices due to the expectations of the customers, environmental statutes, the personal values and ethics of managers and the need for aesthetics-greens imitating. The factors, including the support of top management, the provision of internally aligned resources and supervision, have been described as primary components of internal stakeholder influence (Ahmed & Farid, 2020; Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, from the aforementioned discussion, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: - *The engagement of internal stakeholders positively and significantly influences the practice of sustainable strategic management for organisational resilience.*

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

External stakeholders are individuals or groups outside the organisation that can affect or be affected by its activities. According to Ahmed and Farid (2020), these consist of the public (i.e., the community), media and the government, among others. External stakeholders can influence the decision-making of an organisation by exerting direct or indirect pressure. Their acceptance of the socially responsible positioning of the organisation is important in gaining their support. Organisations can formulate and manage the perceptions of external stakeholders through direct corporate actions and communication. Similarly, government intervention plays a crucial role in sustainable strategic management practices of organisations. As emphasised by Azimli *et al.* (2024), organisations are expected to comply with government directives in terms of regulations and pieces of statutes on regular basis. Regarding sustainability, there is external motivation from both the government and other industries towards following environmentally friendly

practices which an organisation has to comply with. Adherence to such directives is important for making an organisation more responsible and environmentally friendly (*ibid.*). Similarly, customers are an important stakeholder in sustainable strategic management practices of organisations. Of late, organisations have begun offering sustainable products in response to customers' preferences for greener alternatives (Liu and Yin, 2020). This is because customers are no longer judging the performance of organisations only on the basis of economic dimension, but also on social and environmental performance. In this regard, loyal consumers and long-term suppliers are willing to tackle adversity together with organisations by providing necessary and even unexpected support and resources. For instance, organisations that are more responsive to customers' needs, not only by complying with the terms of each transaction, but also by connecting with customers through sincere communication, are more likely to obtain valuable information about customers and to perfect their strategies and tactics to offer what is actually important to the customer stakeholder (*ibid.*).

Organisations with good stakeholder relationships usually pay more attention to community and society needs rather than just fulfilling their own needs, so that they are more likely to engage in community-centric recovery by coordinating with cross-sector partners which include government, suppliers and non-profit organisations. Through participation in community-centric recovery, organisational flexibility can be enhanced in two ways. Firstly, organisations can develop deeper insights into society and identify overlooked societal needs that set the stage for subsequent innovation by focusing on the social and environmental challenges facing communities. Secondly, organisations can also benefit from the blurring of boundaries in cross-sector partnerships that would inspire innovative ways of working and novel approaches to solving problems (*ibid.*). Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: - The engagement of external stakeholders positively and significantly influences sustainable strategic management practices in organisations.

EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

While existing literature provides valuable insights into corporate sustainability, critical aspects of stakeholder engagement necessary for benchmarking and evaluating sustainability initiatives are frequently overlooked. The absence of structured frameworks limits the development of actionable strategies, leaving organisations without clear guidance on fostering meaningful engagement.

Thakur and Singh (2020) explored the role of stakeholders in promoting sustainable development in the hospitality industry. The authors argue that stakeholder engagement is crucial for the implementation of sustainable practices in this industry. The results of the study revealed that stakeholders such as customers, employees and the community play an essential role in promoting sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. Based on the findings, the authors therefore recommended that organisations should engage stakeholders to identify their sustainability concerns and prioritise them in their sustainability strategy. On the other hand, Cruthers (2020) studied the factors contributing to successful adoption and implementation of strategic plans in mid-sized Ontario municipalities in Canada. Consisting of a multi-stage review of qualitative facts from public documents, the primary focus of the study was a high-level review of municipal websites for each of the 142 Ontario municipalities so as to determine the extent to which formal, strategic plans were being implemented. The second stage involved the expanding of the data collection on a smaller subset of municipalities from the first stage to evaluate the implementation success of strategic management practices and explore the inclusion of prioritisation in strategic planning and management processes. The involvement of stakeholders was found to be one of the factors contributing to successful adoption of strategic plans in the Canadian municipalities.

Efigenia and Kalambehambe (2020) assessed the factors affecting strategy implementation in public sector organisations in Namibia. The study used a mixed research method where qualitative data was collected using interviews and quantitative data was collected through

use questionnaires from 40 employees. Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that inadequate resources, mainly in terms of finance and human resources, unclear communication strategy, poor organisational structure, lack of support from various stakeholders and lack of leadership in taking corrective measures, were among the causes of poor strategy implementation at the chosen organisation. Similarly, Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) carried out a study on strategy implementation barriers and remedies in public sector organisations in South Africa. A qualitative research design based on a multiple case study approach was utilised for the study while data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The involvement of stakeholders was found to be one of the barriers to strategy implementation in public sector organisations in South Africa. Furthermore, Ansah and Peprah (2022) explored the link between stakeholder engagement and strategic planning in the Ghana Forestry sector. A systematic literature review was employed in the study. The aim was to identify possible opportunities for developing governance structures that enhance stakeholder participation in policy and strategic planning. The link between stakeholder engagement and strategic planning in the forestry sector was found to contribute to the sustainable management of the resources in the sector.

RESEARCH GAP

A closer examination of existing literature reveals their limitations, highlighting the need for a dedicated focus on stakeholder engagement. These empirical perspectives reveal gaps in literature that the research study sought to address. Empirical literature reviewed exposes geographical gaps as most of the studies were done outside Zimbabwe (Cruthers, 2020; Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar, 2021; Ansah and Peprah, 2022). Therefore, to close the gap, the current study focuses on Zimbabwean organisations. The other gap noticed was the target group (population) for the study wherein mainly private organisations were targeted for study (Thakur and Singh, 2020; Ansah and Peprah, 2022). The study addresses the gap by focusing on urban councils which are public sector organisations in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, a methodological gap was noticed wherein systematic literature reviews

and qualitative research methods were mainly used in previous studies (Cruthers, 2020; Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar, 2021; Ansah and Peprah, 2022). To addresses this this gap, the current study employed a quantitative approach.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive survey design of the quantitative research approach. The design was chosen because of its important characteristic of being able to deal with one or few variables as in the study. With a descriptive design the research was also able to describe preferences, practices, characteristics, commonalities or differences among the variables. It was also possible to gather data on a limited number of variables from a large number of subjects which can be used for many different topics and populations. The questionnaire was used to collect data and for reliability evaluations on quantifiable data, the instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for each research item was higher than 0.7, making the instrument typically suitable and acceptable. To determine whether the 344-sample drawn from a population of 2 931 using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970)’s determination table, was sufficient for the component analysis, the sampling adequacy assessment, Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. The KMO test was used to measure the suitability of data for factor analysis, thus it tests the adequacy of the sample size while the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

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

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

CONVERGENT VALIDITY

According to Shrestha (2021), convergent validity was used to measure the level of correlation of multiple indicators of the same construct that are in agreement. Thus, the factor loading of the items, composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) have to be calculated to determine convergent validity (Hair, *et al.*, 2014, in Shrestha, 2021). The value of AVE and CR ranges from 0 to 1, where a higher value indicates higher reliability level. AVE is more than or equal to 0.5, confirming the convergent validity. A measure's convergent validity, according to Franke and Sarstedt (2019), alludes to how well it correlates with other methods used to evaluate the same idea. The discriminant validity of an empirically novel construct establishes that it encompasses phenomena that other constructs in a model do not. (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015; Franke and Sarstedt, 2019). The prerequisite for causative indicators from a measurement model to sufficiently explain the variation in the hidden variable they are intended to measure is known as convergent validity (Wang, French & Clay, 2015).

The model's convergent validity was investigated and assessed. To forecast the measurement model and generate more accurate parameter values, maximum likelihood estimation was used. Some of the measurement model fit metrics taken into account are CMIN/DF (2/DF), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted GFI (AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. (RMSEA). The evaluation model identified the appropriate model fit measures (2/DF=2.987, 0.917 CFI, 0.059 RMSEA, 0.962 GFI, 0.926 AGFI, 0.942 NFI and 0.943 TLI).

Results from CMIN/DF 3-4 indicate a good model match (Zadow *et al.*, 2017). 2/DF must be less than 3 to be accepted, claim Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017). The GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI and CFI of a model must be close to 1, but the RMSEA must be less than 0.07 for it to be deemed appropriate (Monteiro, Soares & Rua, 2017). Moreso, Bagozzi and Yi (1988) suggest that a cut-off value of 0.6 be used for normalised factor

loadings. Higher critical ratios were also thought to be appropriate and significant (Bagozzi & Yi, 1981; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In Table 2, the critical ratios (CRs) and adjusted factor loadings (λ) for the categories used to assess convergent validity are shown.

Table 2: Constructs, Items, λ and CR (*Survey data, 2026*)

Construct	Items	Λ	CR
Internal Stakeholders	SHI1	0.648	8.123***
	SHI2	0.895	10.922***
	SHI3	0.788	9.976***
External stakeholders	SHE1	0.894	11.984***
	SHE2	0.827	10.241***
	SHE3	0.899	12.001***

Notes: ~ CR is fixed; *** significant at $p < 0.001$

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Stakeholders’ engagement in the practice of sustainable strategic management for resilience of urban councils in Zimbabwe was analysed. The engagement of external and internal stakeholders were the variables used for analysis. The results are as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on stakeholders’ engagement and sustainable strategic management practices

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean response	Std. Deviation
External stakeholders’ engagement	241	1	5	2.19	Disagree	.654
Internal stakeholders’ engagement	241	1	5	3.15	Neutral	.808
Overall	241			2.44	Disagree	.712
Valid N (listwise)	241					

The research sought to analyse whether urban councils relate well with their key stakeholders. External stakeholders’ engagement scored a mean score of 2.19, while internal stakeholders’ engagement scored a mean score of 3.15. This implies that respondents were disagreeing

with the engagement of external stakeholders while they were neutral on the engagement of internal stakeholders. Therefore, the overall mean score of 2.44 corresponds with disagree mean response which implies that respondents were disagreeing on the existence of good relationship between urban councils and their stakeholders. The relationship is bad.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES TESTING (H1 AND H2)

In line with Mishra and Alok (2017) and Ragab and Arisha (2017)'s assertions, the research tested hypotheses to support as true or false, the statements of claim or associations between study variables. The testing was guided by the following research hypotheses.

H₁ - The engagement of internal stakeholders positively and significantly influences the practice of sustainable strategic management for organisational resilience.

H₂ - The engagement of external stakeholders positively and significantly influences sustainable strategic management practices in organisations.

A Standard Regression Weight (SRW), Critical Ratio (CR) and probability (p) were used in the determination. Standard regression weight was used to correct for heteroscedasticity (Turner, 2015). Accordingly, Benter and Chou (1987) set the expected condition of SRW as $(1 < \text{SRW} > 0.09)$. This therefore, means that SRW values must not exceed 1 and, as such, values above 0.09 are preferred. On the other hand, Hair *et al.* (2014) assert that critical ratios are expected to be enough above 2 ($\text{CR} > 2$) at the significant level p value of less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, Hair *et al.* (*ibid.*) indicate that a hypothesis should meet more than one of the required statistics to allow for the acceptance of the proclamations and, more importantly, that the p value must not be too much above the stated cut-off of $p < 0.001$. Thus, the lower the p value, the greater the confidence and the lower the chances of data errors (Field, 2005). The results of hypotheses are presented in Table 4 summarising the hypotheses which were supported (H₁ and H₂).

Table 4: Results of Hypotheses testing (H_1 and H_2) (*Survey data, 2026*)

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H_1	SHI→ SSMP	-0.329	-8.502***	Supported
H_2	SHE→SSMP	-0.151	-8.281***	Supported

Notes: SRW standardised regression weight, CR critical ratio, *** significant at $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.56$.

Results presented in Table 4 clearly show that internal stakeholders (SHI) engagement is a significant predictor of sustainable strategic management practices. A standardised regression weight of -0.329 implies that the engagement of internal stakeholders in Zimbabwean urban councils as it obtains now is negatively related to sustainable strategic management practices as it is not happening. Similarly, the engagement of external stakeholders (SHE) was found to be statistically significant at 0.001 in explaining variability in sustainable strategic management practices in Zimbabwean urban councils. An SRW of -0.151 implies that there is a negative association between engagement of SHE and sustainable strategic management practices as a unit change in the factor would lead to a 0.151 unit change in the opposite direction in strategic management practice. Therefore, the two factors were found to be significant in explaining sustainable strategic management practices.

The results shown on Table 4 are, therefore, presented and interpreted as follows:

H_1 hypothesis was supported (SRW = -0.329, CR = -8.502, $p < 0.001$). This means that the engagement of internal stakeholders has an effect on sustainable strategic management practices in urban councils in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study confirm the findings of a study by Cruthers (2020), Thakur and Singh (2020) and Ansah and Peprah (2022) where the engagement of stakeholders was found to be critical in the practice of strategic management in Canada. The results also confirm the assumption of the Stakeholder theory which emphasises on the relationship between businesses, consumers, customers and employees who work towards the attainment of the goals and objectives of an organisation (Freeman, 2020).

H₂ hypothesis was also supported (SRW = -0.151, CR = -8.281, p < 0.001). This, therefore, implies that the engagement of external stakeholders has an impact on sustainable strategic management practices in urban councils in Zimbabwe. The results confirm the findings of studies by Efigenia and Kalambehambe (2020), Thakur and Singh (2020), Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) where poor relationships with stakeholders was found to be impeding the practice of strategic management in various organisations. The findings also confirm the assumption of the Stakeholder theory which emphasises on the need for organisational management to build relationships and communication with stakeholders, who are directly or indirectly affected by the activities of the organisation. The findings were then reduced to a conceptual framework as diagrammatically presented on Figure 2.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework was developed which depicts key concepts, variables, relationships and assumptions that guided the study as shown on Figure 2.

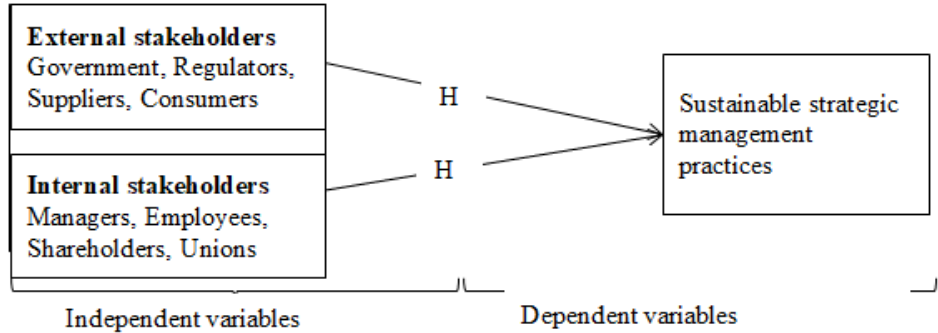


Figure 2: Influence of stakeholders’ engagement on sustainable strategic (Author’s construction, 2026)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the study reveal a positive and significant relationship between stakeholder engagement and adoption of sustainable strategic management practices in organisations. The poor engagement of both internal and external stakeholders on sustainable strategic management

practices by Zimbabwean urban councils can be attributed to their poor resilience as evidenced by continued collapse of service delivery capabilities in these critical organisations. As such, it is recommended that a policy framework be developed guiding urban councils in Zimbabwe on the adoption of sustainable strategic management practices for their resilience. However, further research is recommended with a different methodology and targeting different organisations to validate the influence of stakeholder engagement in the practice of sustainable strategic management.

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