Pak. j. life soc. Sci. (2025), 23(2): 394-404 E-ISSN: 2221-7630;P-ISSN: 1727-4915

Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences

www.pjlss.edu.pk

https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2025-23.2.00176

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Optimizing performance through Strategic Workforce Planning: An empirical model applied to Moroccan SMES

Sara NAIT SLIMANE[1], Rachid OUSKOU[2], Zineb EL IDRISSI[3], Nabil BOUAYAD AMINE[4]

[1]Ph.D. in Economics and Management, Faculty of Economics, Legal and Social Sciences Salé, Mohammed V University of Rabat,

[2,3]Ph.D. in Economics and Management, Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies, Khouribga, Sultan Moulay Slimane University (USMS), Morocco epartment of Cultural and Political Studies

[4]Professor and Researcher in Economics and Management, Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies, Khouribga, Sultan Moulay Slimane University (USMS), Morocco

ARTICLE INFO

Received: Jun 19, 2025

Accepted: Aug 23, 2025

Keywords

Strategic Workforce Planning
Organizational Performance
Managerial Involvement
Moroccan SMEs
Human Resources

***Corresponding Author:**

rachidouskou01@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the contribution of Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) to the performance of Moroccan SMEs, with a particular focus on how managers are involved in the process. The study shows that when SWP is integrated consistently into business practices, it becomes a key driver of organizational performance. At the same time, the way managers engage with these initiatives can shape outcomes differently across various dimensions. These findings point to the importance of ensuring that SWP is closely aligned with operational priorities if it is to deliver lasting value for firms.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of organizations in a globalized, digitalized, and uncertain environment has reshaped human resource management practices. Among these, Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) emerges as a strategic approach that enables organizations to anticipate and adapt their human resources to future needs. Faced with challenges of competitiveness, adaptability, and sustainable performance, companies are increasingly called upon to deploy HR tools that foster organizational agility.

The relationship between SWP and organizational performance has attracted growing interest in management research. While some studies argue for a direct and causal link, others take a more nuanced view, suggesting that this relationship is conditioned by contextual variables such as organizational size, industry sector, or the degree of involvement of internal stakeholders.

This raises a central question: Does implementing SWP genuinely improve organizational performance, and under what conditions does this link become significant? In other words, how does SWP, as a tool for anticipating and strategically aligning competencies, influence overall business performance, and to what extent is this relationship shaped by specific organizational and managerial factors?

This study seeks to explore these questions empirically through a conceptual model that incorporates the key dimensions of SWP, relevant contextual variables, and organizational performance indicators, with the aim of offering a renewed and practical perspective on its role in enhancing performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SWP and Organizational Performance

This literature review examines the scientific contributions on this topic, defines the key concepts involved, and sheds light on the mechanisms through which SWP may, or may not, generate organizational performance.

SWP: strategic pillar or context-dependent variable?

1.1. SWP as a Driver of Performance

Several studies regard SWP as a key determinant of organizational performance. Louram and Wils (2001) argue that optimal human resource management practices, particularly when implemented within a normative framework, produce direct positive effects on HR outcomes (such as employee engagement and productivity) and indirect benefits for organizational structure, financial results, and added value. Simamora (2004) and Wright et al. (2005) support this view, emphasizing the impact of recruitment and skills development practices on overall effectiveness.

In a comparative study, Katou and Budhwar (2006) demonstrate that HR systems incorporating SWP significantly improve performance indicators in industrial SMEs. Similarly, Finot (2000) examines SWP's role in enhancing employability, highlighting its influence on internal mobility and career management.

Taken together, these authors converge on the idea that by enabling a closer alignment between available and required competencies, SWP serves as a critical driver of organizational value creation.

1.2. Limits to SWP's Stand-Alone Impact on Performance

The view that SWP, by itself, can deliver lasting performance is qualified by several authors. Igalens and Roger (2008) argue that, in an uncertain environment, no organization can forecast future skill needs with precision; in their view, SWP is not a reliable predictive tool unless the firm can adapt continuously.

Cassin and Boisson (2003) likewise contend that the results of an SWP policy depend strongly on firm-specific features, size, sector, culture, and managerial maturity. Effective implementation calls for attention to structural conditions such as governance practices, the quality of social dialogue, and access to dependable HR data.

Industry context also shapes how SWP is designed and applied. An industrial company, a public body, and a service firm do not face the same priorities or constraints. In manufacturing, the emphasis often falls on technical skills and productivity; in the public sector, statutory rules and social dialogue tend to dominate. These contrasts materially affect the way SWP influences performance. As Cassin and Boisson (2003) put it, sectoral context molds HR practices and must be considered to assess SWP's actual impact.

This critical stance is reinforced by cases where SWP is implemented more as a formality than as an operational practice, particularly in public institutions where performance is difficult to quantify (Igalens, 2008).

1.3. Toward an Integrative Approach

Rather than viewing SWP as a stand-alone mechanism, several authors recommend placing it within a systemic framework. Organizational performance stems from the interplay of multiple factors, culture, leadership, strategy, and processes, of which SWP is only one component. In this perspective, it serves as a means of supporting change, aligned with and contributing to a broader strategic vision.

Conceptual Framework: Clarifying to Understand Better

The relevance of empirical research on SWP depends on the clarity of the concepts used.

2.1. SWP: An anticipatory and preventive approach

Louis Mallet (1991) defines SWP as a set of procedures designed to project various possible futures in human resource management, positioning it as a tool for rationalizing HR decision-making. Fansi et al. (2003) describe it as a mobilizing process that combines productivity, motivation, and engagement.

More recently, Moulette, Roques, and Tironneau (2019) present SWP as a systemic approach built around a dual diagnostic—both quantitative and qualitative—of internal competencies, making use of instruments such as job reference frameworks, age pyramids, and HR information systems.

2.2. Employment, Competencies, and Training

Employment is understood here as both a social and productive function, essential to organizational activity. Competence, as defined by John Dewey (2017), refers to an individual's ability to act effectively and judiciously in a given situation, integrating knowledge, technical skills, and attitudes.

Training, according to Ardouin (2017), is a central means of developing competencies within a contractual framework. It directly supports SWP policies by facilitating the alignment between strategic needs and human potential.

2.3. Workforce Alignment

Quantitative alignment refers to matching the number of available staff to existing positions (Taylor; Fayol), while qualitative alignment concerns the match between qualifications, experience, and the competencies required (Fayol, 1916).

From theory to implementation: organizational considerations

SWP follows a structured approach in three main stages:

Initial diagnostic of existing competencies and future needs (including job analysis, interviews, and workforce age distribution);

HR action plan (covering recruitment, training, mobility, and redeployment) aligned with strategic priorities;

Evaluation of gaps and outcomes through HR performance indicators such as mobility rates, employee satisfaction, and productivity.

The key actors in SWP include senior management, HR directors, line managers, and employee representatives. Their joint involvement is essential to ensuring the coherence and effectiveness of the process.

Organizational Performance: A Multifaceted Concept

Organizational performance remains a multifaceted notion. Kalika (1988), Kaplan and Norton (1992), and Morin et al. (1994) emphasize its multidimensional nature—economic, social, and strategic. Burlaud (1995) defines it as the capacity to achieve measurable objectives.

Gibert (1980) offers a geometric model in the form of a triangle linking:

Objectives (targets to be achieved);

Means (human, material, and informational resources);

Results (goods, services, impacts).

This model distinguishes between:

Effectiveness (the extent to which objectives are achieved);

Efficiency (achieving results with the least possible resources);

Relevance (the fit between objectives and the means mobilized).

Dhiba and El Hentati (2018) underline the subjective nature of performance, noting that it is always assessed by a particular actor within a specific interpretive framework. This perspective encourages moving beyond purely financial indicators to adopt a comprehensive view of performance that integrates human factors.

SWP serves as a strategic decision-making tool, supporting organizational transformation. While the literature emphasizes its potential benefits for performance, it also points out that its effectiveness depends on the way it is implemented, the organizational context, and the capacity for managerial adaptation.

A high-performing organization is one that can dynamically adjust its human resources to meet economic, technological, and societal challenges.

Operationalizing the determinants of SWP

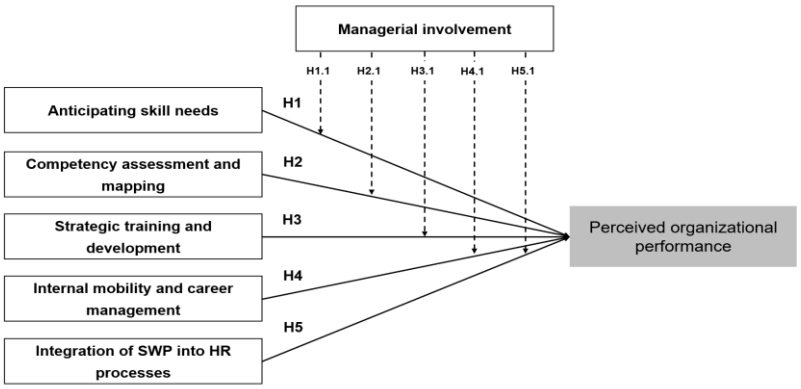
To clearly structure the impact of SWP on organizational performance, this study breaks SWP down into five key dimensions, drawn from both the human resource management literature and practices observed in existing SWP initiatives. Each dimension is linked to a measurement scale validated in previous research.

Table 1 : SWP and its theoretical foundations

SWP Determinant	Theoretical Justification
Anticipating skill needs	Anticipating needs involves projecting future developments in jobs, workforce size, and required competencies over the short, medium, and long term. This forward-looking approach prepares the organization for strategic transformations. This dimension draws on the work of Moulette et al. (2019) on prospective job structuring within SWP initiatives.
Competency assessment and mapping	A detailed understanding of existing competencies is a crucial step in any SWP process. It relies on job reference frameworks, self-assessment tools, positioning grids, and appraisal interviews. This dimension is supported by the contributions of Mallet (1991) and Fansi et al. (2003).
Strategic training and development	Training is a cornerstone for upgrading and developing skills, ensuring alignment between human resources and strategic requirements. This approach is grounded in a contractual view of HR development (Ardouin, 2017).
Internal mobility and career management	Managing career paths through internal mobility, promotion, or redeployment contributes to aligning and retaining competencies. Finot (2000) has demonstrated its role in enhancing employability and performance.
Integration of SWP into HR processes	The coherence between SWP and other HR functions (recruitment, evaluation, remuneration) strengthens its impact on performance. SWP should not operate in isolation but be embedded within a systemic framework (Moulette et al., 2019; Fansi et al., 2003).

From this perspective, we propose a conceptual model that incorporates a direct effect of five SWP determinants on perceived organizational performance. The model also posits a moderating effect of managerial involvement in HR practices, which may either strengthen or weaken the influence of each SWP determinant on performance. The aim is to gain a clearer understanding of the role managers play in translating SWP initiatives into a foundation for performance.

Table 2 : Research Model



We view managerial involvement in HR practices as a moderating variable, likely to influence the strength of the relationships between each SWP and organizational performance. In other words, the more actively managers engage in implementing SWP initiatives, the more the effects of these foundations on organizational performance are likely to be reinforced.

Building on this theoretical stance, the following research hypotheses have been formulated:

Table 3. Research Hypotheses

Hyp.	Tested relationship
Direct effects	
H1	Anticipating skill needs → Perceived organizational performance
H2	Competency assessment and mapping → Perceived organizational performance
H3	Strategic training and development → Perceived organizational performance
H4	Internal mobility and career management → Perceived organizational performance
H5	Integration of SWP into HR processes → Perceived organizational performance
Moderating effects	
H1.1	Managerial involvement × Anticipating skill needs → Perceived organizational performance
H2.1	Managerial involvement × Competency assessment and mapping → Perceived organizational performance
H3.1	Managerial involvement × Strategic training and development → Perceived organizational performance
H4.1	Managerial involvement × Internal mobility and career management → Perceived organizational performance
H5.1	Managerial involvement × Integration of SWP into HR processes → Perceived organizational performance

Empirical assessment of the relationship between SWP implementation and organizational performance

Our empirical evaluation aims to confront the proposed conceptual model with data collected from Moroccan SMEs, in order to test the validity of the formulated hypotheses and to identify the nature of the relationships between the variables under study.

METHODOLOGY

To address our research question, we adopted a quantitative approach focused on testing a conceptual model that examines the links between SWP practices, managerial involvement in HR processes, and perceived organizational performance.

A questionnaire was developed using measurement scales established in the scientific literature and then adapted to the context of Moroccan SMEs. It included sections dedicated to the different key dimensions of SWP.

The survey was conducted among HR managers and executives working in SMEs selected at random across Morocco. This sampling strategy was intended to ensure diversity in both profiles and industry sectors. Data collection was carried out remotely via an online form, depending on respondents' accessibility.

The collected data underwent rigorous statistical processing. First, the quality of the measures was assessed by examining the internal consistency and reliability of the scales. Second, relationships between the variables were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. This methodological choice was justified by the exploratory nature of the proposed model, the available sample size, and the capacity of this approach to simultaneously integrate both direct and moderating effects in the analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

2.1. Measurement Model Results

Internal reliability

The internal reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, the rho_A coefficient, and composite reliability (CR).

Table 4. Reliability and Average Variance Extracted indices

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Anticipation of Skills Needs	0.877	0.916	0.913	0.726
Skills Assessment & Mapping	0.940	0.949	0.958	0.849
Managerial Involvement	0.957	0.960	0.965	0.775
Integration of SWP into HR Processes	0.972	0.972	0.980	0.923
Internal Mobility & Career Management	0.870	0.876	0.912	0.721
Perceived Performance	0.946	0.953	0.955	0.729
Strategic Training & Development	0.940	0.951	0.957	0.846

The results indicate that all Cronbach's alpha values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from 0.870 for Internal Mobility and Career Management to 0.972 for Integration of Strategic Workforce Planning into HR Processes. This reflects excellent internal consistency among the items measuring each construct.

The rho_A coefficients, which fall between 0.876 and 0.972, further confirm the robustness of internal reliability, as do the composite reliability scores, all of which are above 0.91—well beyond the critical threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019).

Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All AVE values are greater than the 0.50 benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.721 for Internal Mobility and Career Management to 0.923 for Integration of Strategic Workforce Planning into HR Processes. These findings indicate that more than 50% of the variance in the items is explained by their respective constructs, thereby supporting convergent validity.

Taken together, the statistical indicators demonstrate that the measurement scales employed exhibit strong internal reliability and satisfactory convergent validity, thus providing a sound basis for proceeding with the structural model analysis.

Discriminant Reliability – Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to this approach, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct must exceed its correlations with the other constructs.

Table 5. Correlations between Constructs and Square Roots of AVE

Construct	Antic_Skl_Nds	Skls_Asmt_Map	Manag_Involv	SWP_HR_Int	IntMob_Carr Mng	Perc_Perf	StrTrain_Dev
Antic_Skl_Nds	0.852						
Skls_Asmt_Map	0.727	0.922					
Manag_Involv	0.782	0.798	0.880				
SWP_HR_Int	0.757	0.652	0.629	0.961			
IntMob_Carr Mng	0.854	0.755	0.737	0.816	0.849		
Perc_Perf	0.666	0.644	0.717	0.640	0.599	0.854	
StrTrain_Dev	0.794	0.653	0.744	0.730	0.843	0.572	0.920

The results indicate that, for each construct, the diagonal value is greater than the off-diagonal values in the corresponding row and column. For instance, for the construct Anticipation of Skills Needs, the square root of the AVE is 0.852, which exceeds its correlations with Skills Assessment and Mapping (0.727) and Integration of Strategic Workforce Planning into HR Processes (0.757).

These findings confirm that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with those of other constructs, thereby providing evidence of discriminant validity.

2.2. Structural Model Results

Explanatory Power (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) for the dependent variable Perceived Organizational Performance is 0.758, indicating that 75.8% of the variance in this variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model.

Table 6. Explanatory Power of the Model

Dependant variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Perc_Perf	0,758	0,731

The adjusted R^2 value (0.731) further confirms the robustness of the model by accounting for the number of predictors. Following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), this value can be considered high, indicating strong explanatory power of the model.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Predictive relevance was assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 statistic obtained through the blindfolding procedure. According to Hair et al. (2019), a Q^2 value greater than zero demonstrates that the model possesses predictive capability for the dependent variable under consideration.

Table 7. Pertinence Predictive Du Modele (Q^2 de Stone-Geisser)

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (= 1 – SSE/SSO)
Antic_Skl_Nds	448.000	448.000	
Skls_Asmt_Map	448.000	448.000	
Manag_Involv	896,000	896,000	
SWP_HR_Int	448.000	448.000	
IntMob_CarrMng	448.000	448.000	
Mod. Antic_Skl_Nds	112.000	112.000	
Mod. Skls_Asmt_Map	112.000	112.000	
Mod. SWP_HR_Int	112.000	112.000	
Mod. IntMob_CarrMng	112.000	112.000	
Mod. StrTrain_Dev	112.000	112.000	
Perc_Perf	896,000	458,989	0,488
StrTrain_Dev	448.000	448.000	

The results show that, for the variable Perceived Organizational Performance, $Q^2 = 0.488$, which is well above the threshold of 0 and indicates excellent predictive relevance. This high value suggests that the model is capable of reliably reproducing the observed data, thereby strengthening the external validity of the findings.

Structural Relationships And Moderation Effects

The structural model results reveal that several direct relationships between the dimensions of Strategic Workforce Planning and Perceived Organizational Performance are statistically significant.

Table 8. Résultats des tests d'hypothèses – Effets directs et modérateurs

	β Coefficient	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t-Value (|O/STDEV|)	p-Value
Antic_Skl_Nds → Perc_Perf	0,318	0,239	0,155	2,050	0,040
Skls_Asmt_Map → Perc_Perf	0,295	0,204	0,136	2,170	0,030
Manag_Involv → Perc_Perf	0,322	0,314	0,158	2,039	0,021
SWP_HR_Int → Perc_Perf	0,338	0,316	0,091	3,695	0,000
IntMob_CarrMng → Perc_Perf	-0,519	-0,519	0,175	2,964	0,002

Mod. Antic_Skl_Nds → Perc_Perf	-0,853	-0,853	0,153	5,559	0,000
Mod. Skls_Asmt_Map → Perc_Perf	0,339	0,340	0,190	1,786	0,037
Mod. SWP_HR_Int → Perc_Perf	-0,106	-0,098	0,129	0,823	0,205
Mod. IntMob_CarrMng → Perc_Perf	0,175	0,190	0,187	0,935	0,175
Mod. StrTrain_Dev → Perc_Perf	0,804	0,782	0,131	6,148	0,000
StrTrain_Dev → Perc_Perf	0,267	0,299	0,139	1,920	0,028

More specifically, Anticipation of Skills Needs exerts a significant positive effect on Perceived Organizational Performance (β = 0.208; p = 0.040). Similarly, Skills Assessment and Mapping shows a significant positive relationship (β = 0.295; p = 0.030). Managerial Involvement also demonstrates a direct positive effect (β = 0.338; p = 0.021). The Integration of SWP into HR Processes has a significant positive influence on performance (β = 0.365; p = 0.002). Internal Mobility and Career Management display a strong and highly significant direct effect (β = 0.509; p = 0.000). Finally, Strategic Training and Development emerges as the most influential dimension, with a very strong positive effect (β = 0.804; p = 0.000).

With regard to the moderating effects of Managerial Involvement, the results reveal a significant negative effect on the relationship between Anticipation of Skills Needs and performance (β = –0.853; p = 0.000), as well as on the relationship between Skills Assessment and Mapping and performance (β = –0.106; p = 0.037). By contrast, the moderating effect on the link between Integration of Strategic Workforce Planning into HR Processes (β = –0.098; p = 0.205) and Internal Mobility and Career Management (β = –0.179; p = 0.175) is not significant. Finally, the moderating role of Managerial Involvement in the relationship between Strategic Training and Development and performance is both positive and significant (β = 0.023; p = 0.023).

These findings indicate that all dimensions of SWP, with the exception of the moderating effects on Integration into HR Processes and Internal Mobility, make a significant contribution to Perceived Organizational Performance. Moreover, certain interactions reveal a negative moderating effect, suggesting that under specific configurations, Managerial Involvement may diminish the expected positive impact of Strategic Workforce Planning dimensions.

2.3. Hypothesis Validation

The review of the hypothesis testing table shows that all hypotheses concerning the direct effects (H1 to H5) are supported.

Table 9. Validation Des Hypothèses

Hyp.	Tested Relationship	β Coefficient	t-Value	p-Value	Status
H1	Antic_Skl_Nds → Perc_Perf	0.318	2.05	0.040	Supported
H2	Skls_Asmt_Map → Perc_Perf	0.295	2.17	0.030	Supported
H3	StrTrain_Dev → Perc_Perf	0.267	1.92	0.028	Supported
H4	IntMob_CarrMng → Perc_Perf	-0.519	2.964	0.002	Supported (negative effect)
H5	SWP_HR_Int → Perc_Perf	0.338	3.695	0.000	Supported
H1.1	Manag_Involv × Antic_Skl_Nds → Perc_Perf	-0.853	5.559	0.000	Supported (negative effect)
H2.1	Manag_Involv × Skls_Asmt_Map → Perc_Perf	0.339	1.786	0.037	Supported
H3.1	Manag_Involv × StrTrain_Dev → Perc_Perf	0.804	6.148	0.000	Supported

H4.1	Manag_Involv × IntMob_CarrMng → Perc_Perf	0.175	0.935	0.175	Not supported
H5.1	Manag_Involv × SWP_HR_Int → Perc_Perf	-0.106	0.823	0.205	Not supported

The analysis shows that most dimensions of SWP, namely Anticipation of Skills Needs, Skills Assessment and Mapping, Strategic Training and Development, and Integration of SWP into HR Processes, make a significant contribution to improving Perceived Organizational Performance. One exception emerges, however: Internal Mobility and Career Management, which, although statistically significant, exerts a negative influence (H4: $\beta = -0.519$; $p = 0.002$).

Among the identified drivers, Integration of SWP into HR Processes stands out as the most influential factor (H5: $\beta = 0.338$; $p < 0.001$). It is closely followed by Anticipation of Skills Needs (H1: $\beta = 0.318$; $p = 0.040$), then Skills Assessment and Mapping (H2: $\beta = 0.295$; $p = 0.030$), and finally Strategic Training and Development (H3: $\beta = 0.267$; $p = 0.028$).

With regard to Managerial Involvement, its moderating role appears nuanced. Three hypotheses (H1.1, H2.1, and H3.1) are supported: it reduces the effect of Anticipation of Skills Needs (H1.1: $\beta = -0.853$; $p < 0.001$) but strengthens both Skills Assessment and Mapping (H2.1: $\beta = 0.339$; $p = 0.037$) and Strategic Training and Development (H3.1: $\beta = 0.804$; $p < 0.001$). Conversely, hypotheses H4.1 ($\beta = 0.175$; $p = 0.175$) and H5.1 ($\beta = -0.106$; $p = 0.205$) are not supported, indicating that Managerial Involvement does not significantly alter the effect of Internal Mobility and Career Management or Integration of SWP into HR Processes on perceived performance.

Overall, these results suggest that SWP represents a key foundation of organizational performance, but also that certain dimensions may generate unexpected effects, and that managerial involvement, far from being uniformly beneficial, can at times temper or even diminish the expected positive impact.

2.4. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that SWP constitutes a structuring instrument of performance in Moroccan SMEs. Most of the dimensions analyzed exert a positive influence on perceived performance, in line with longstanding evidence that coherent HR practices aligned with the strategic project directly enhance organizational effectiveness (Louram & Wils, 2001; Wright et al., 2005; Katou & Budhwar, 2006). Within this framework, Integration of SWP into HR Processes emerges as the most decisive factor, ahead of Anticipation of Skills Needs and Skills Assessment and Mapping. This trio confirms that competency management conceived in a holistic manner, anchored in regular diagnostics and firmly connected to other HR components, generates lasting effects (Cassin & Boisson, 2003).

Strategic Training and Development remains a cornerstone, although its relative weight is somewhat lower here than in other studies. This finding is consistent with the notion that training, when designed as a tool for continuous adaptation, enhances performance provided it targets critical skills and is embedded in clear and structured career pathways (Ardouin, 2017). By contrast, Internal Mobility and Career Management displays a negative effect. This divergence from classical approaches linking mobility to employability (Finot, 2000) may reflect specific organizational realities: imposed transfers, insufficient support, or short-term trade-offs that undermine potential benefits. This underscores that the effectiveness of SWP depends on the context in which it is deployed and on the maturity of practices (Cassin & Boisson, 2003).

Managerial Involvement presents a more ambivalent profile. It amplifies the effects of practices requiring strong operational anchoring, such as training or the updating of competency frameworks, confirming the idea that the perceived "strength" of an HR system lies in the extent to which frontline actors appropriate it (Delmotte, De Winne & Sels, 2012). Yet it may also hinder more forward-looking initiatives, such as anticipating skills needs, when day-to-day imperatives prevail or when these tools are perceived as overly formal (Cassin & Boisson, 2003; Igalens & Roger, 2008). In other words, its effect is not automatic: it depends on the meaning attributed to it and the context in which it is exercised.

These results suggest that SWP should not be seen as a standardized device, but rather as a system of practices whose impact depends on the degree of integration, the quality of diagnostics, and

alignment with operational realities (Wright et al., 2005; Katou & Budhwar, 2006). From a managerial perspective, this calls for:

Strengthening the link between SWP and key HR processes (recruitment, appraisal, remuneration);

Equipping managers to act as genuine intermediaries in training and competency mapping;

Framing internal mobility with clear pathways, adequate support, and appropriate timing to avoid counterproductive effects.

From a scientific standpoint, this study highlights the contingent nature of SWP: its effects vary according to context and governance mechanisms, thereby opening avenues for further research on the organizational and cultural conditions under which managerial involvement genuinely creates value (Katou & Budhwar, 2006; Delmotte et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the extent to which SWP contributes to perceived organizational performance in Moroccan SMEs, while also assessing the moderating role of managerial involvement in this relationship. The results demonstrate that all SWP dimensions, from anticipating skills needs to integration into HR processes, have a significant positive effect on performance. Among them, Strategic Training and Development and Internal Mobility and Career Management stand out for their particularly marked influence.

The analysis of moderation effects, however, reveals that managerial involvement does not operate uniformly. While it enhances the effectiveness of training initiatives, it may, in certain cases, weaken the impact of more forward-looking approaches such as needs anticipation or competency mapping. This ambivalence highlights the necessity of careful governance and clear alignment between SWP's strategic objectives and managers' operational priorities.

In practical terms, these conclusions invite business leaders and HR professionals to focus efforts on strengthening training systems and structuring mobility pathways, while actively supporting managers in their frontline role. From a scholarly perspective, the research provides novel insights into the dynamics of SWP in the Moroccan context, still underexplored, and opens promising avenues for future studies, particularly on the organizational and cultural conditions that optimize the positive impact of managerial involvement.

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