

Perceived Tone at the Top and Enterprise Security Risk Management Adoption in Kenya's Chartered Universities

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This research investigates the influence of top executive commitment on Enterprise Security Risk Management (ESRM) adoption based on the perspectives of security executives from Kenya's public and private chartered universities. The study integrated institutional and diffusion of innovation theories to explain the fundamental role of the tone at the top in driving ESRM institutionalization. The study adopts a multistage sampling technique and a mixed-method approach based on a concurrent triangulation design. The initial stage involved randomly sampling 52 universities, among them 27 public and 25 private chartered universities, using Yamane's (1967) formula. The largest ten chartered universities were then purposively selected for focused interviewing, while the remaining 42 were subjected to questionnaire research. Security executives in the selected universities participated in the study, and the response rate was 77%. Quantitative data was analyzed using Spearman's correlation analysis and Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR) while thematic analysis was adopted for qualitative data. Results show that top executive commitment positively and significantly influences ESRM adoption in Kenya's chartered universities. OLR (Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2) results indicate that management commitment explained 55.2% of the variance in the level of ESRM adoption. The quantitative findings show that although top university executives may take security issues seriously, they often wait for long periods before implementing the recommendations made by security professionals. The study proposes that university executives should make security risk management an institutional priority and design mission statements that elevate leadership commitment into a policy requirement. Further, these executives should form an ESRM framework to expand their participation in security reviews and develop clear security responsibilities. The results from the study advance development in universities by underscoring the role of the tone at the top in the institutionalization of ESRM in higher education.