

Critical Success Factors for Improved Organizational Performance

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Abstract. The need for optimum organizational performance necessitated the assessment of the possible impact of human resource management (HRM) on both management and organizational performance of construction organizations. The study adopted a quantitative survey approach wherein information was solicited from HRM Personnel, Senior Management, Departmental Managers, and Union Representatives within a Grade 9 construction organization in South Africa using structured questionnaire as the research instrument. Data gathered were analyzed using mean item score, standard deviation and Pearson moment correlation. The reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach alpha test, while the normality of the data gathered were tested using Shapiro-Wilk test. The findings of the study revealed that managers are key in ensuring that employees are motivated and well trained. Also, communication between both parties should be clear with no ambiguity. Additionally, compensation and benefits, promotional opportunities and performance and appraisal systems should be fair. Moreover, employees' performance and commitment to a firm is influenced by their level of motivation. It is believed that the findings of this study, when applied within construction organizations in South Africa, will assist management in improving their HRM activities in order to achieve better organizational performance.

Keywords: Human Resource Management Practices, Employee Performance.

1 Introduction

HRM is one of the oldest management theories, which affords organizations competitive advantage over its competitors. Beer et al. [1] reported on the HRM notion, emphasizing the necessity to advance HRM beyond selection and compensation to wider issues that entail a more strategic and widespread outlook on a firm's workforce. One school of thought noticed that overseeing individuals is more troublesome than handling plant and capital [2; 3]. Organizations that have studied how to deal with their human resource (HR) would have a significant advantage over others because the efficient management of HR requires sound HRM systems [4]. Armstrong [5] termed HRM as a strategic methodology to the management of a firm's most valued asset, its employees. Likewise, Johanson [6] noted that HRM is an element within a company

38 intended to maximize employee performance in the light of the organization's
39 objectives.

40 Human Resource Management is an essential component for labour turnover,
41 productivity as well as the financial growth of any organization. Similarly, HRM plays
42 a pivotal role in employee's retention and their productivity, [7]. There are numerous
43 factors that affect this aspect, like inadequate incentives, inadequate wages, salaries or
44 allied benefits, poor reward system and lack of health and safety (H&S) facilities. [8;
45 9]. According to Mansour, [10] and Jahanian et. al., [11] employees get frustrated due
46 to an imbalance in their work and their personal life and fail to render optimum
47 performance. In addition, it was observed that job stress and unfair treatment by the
48 HRM department or manager demotivates even talented employees, [12].

49 Increasingly, companies are considering the integration of new work practices such
50 as problem-solving teams, better communication with workers, job security, flexibility
51 in job tasks, training workers for multiple jobs and greater reliance on incentive
52 systems. Additionally, the adoption of HRM planning, training and development,
53 compensation, and benefits, recruitment, and selection produce higher levels of
54 productivity than the more traditional approaches that involve rigid job definitions,
55 hourly pay, and stringent work rules.

56 It is based on this knowing that this study assessed the critical success factors for
57 improved organizational performance in a South African construction company.

58 **2 Literature Review**

59 According to Hellriegel and Slocum [13], performance is the efforts made by the
60 employees in an organization at different levels. These efforts lead to the achievement
61 of goals and improved organizational performance [14]. Organizational performance is
62 based on employee performance, for example, improved employee performance is
63 tantamount to improved corporate performance. Moreover, one school of thought
64 reports a strong correlation between employees' performance and corporate
65 performance [15; 16; 17]. Similarly, the study by Armstrong and Baron [6] echoes a
66 positive correlation between employee performance and organizations' productivity
67 and growth. The study by Hutchinson and Purcell [18] finds that managers are the most
68 significant factor explaining discrepancies in employee performance. Furthermore, the
69 study reveals that managers are also one of the most important elements in increasing
70 firm commitment from employees. Moreover, the study indicates that managers can
71 make a difference in employee attitude [19]. Likewise, line managers play an important
72 role in executing HR policies [20]. Drucker [21] describes the job of a manager as
73 consisting of five basic operations: (1) Setting objectives, (2) Organizing, (3)
74 Motivating and communicating, (4) Measurement and (5) People development.

75 In addition, Padilla-Velez [22] noted that strengthening the relationship between
76 managers and their employees yields positive results in terms of employee
77 performance, motivation, and lower absenteeism. Therefore, the relationship between
78 employers and employees needs to be cordial for an effective communication and
79 proficient performance. Employee relations have a great impact on the success of the

80 entire company. Hence, the creation and reconciliation of internal employee relations
81 among different departments are of utmost importance for the efficient operation of a
82 company and improved employee performance [23]. Moreover, Ahmed and Rafiq [23]
83 claim that in an organization, understanding, and confidentiality, trust and loyalty help
84 in achieving good relations. AlDamoe [24] suggests that a well-maintained employee
85 relationship serves three purposes: Firstly, it helps in tackling and administering
86 conflict in the work place, hence minimizing disruptive behaviour. Secondly, it assists
87 employers to recognize and avoid conflicts prior to their occurrence, which helps
88 employees concentrate on their professional development and support organizational
89 goals. Lastly, it creates a work culture that considers the interests and well-being of the
90 employees. On another note, the study by Wollack et al. [25], on work values classifies
91 employee performance factors into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic
92 factors include: (1) Pride in work – The gratification an employee feels when doing
93 their job well. (2) Job involvement – The level at which the employee takes an active
94 interest in fellow colleagues and the firm's purpose and contributes to job-related
95 decisions. (3) Activity Preference – The preference of an employee to keep himself or
96 herself active and busy at work. (4) Upward Striving – The aspiration to seek a higher
97 work position, thus improving the standard of living. Meanwhile, the extrinsic factors
98 include: (1) Attitude towards earning – The value that an employee places on earning
99 money on the job. (2) Social Status of Job – The impact the job has on an employee
100 from the point of view of other people. (3) Responsibility at work – The level of
101 responsibility that an employee is entrusted with.

102 **2.1 Human Resource Practices and Employee Performance**

103 *Recruitment and Selection and Employee Performance*

104 Recruitment and selection are the primary processes to evaluate staff [26; 27].
105 Recruitment and selection are the identification, attraction, and selection of suitable
106 individuals to meet the job requirements of the company. Qureshi et. al [28] note that
107 HRM practices are positively correlated with employee performance. However,
108 recruitment and selection and T&D affect employee performance more than the other
109 practices. Likewise, Huselid, [29] found, through observing HRM practices, that
110 recruiting and selecting the right individuals increases employee performance,
111 enhances organizational performance, and contributes to decreasing employee
112 turnover. Moreover, it has been specified that a good recruitment and selection
113 programme provides a positive influence in increasing employee commitment,
114 efficiency, work quality and performance [30].

115 *Training and Development on Employee Performance*

116 Tzafirir [31] points out that T&D is an essential tool for producing and enhancing human
117 capital. The investment in T&D programmes makes employees feel indebted to the
118 firm. Moreover, T&D is necessary for employees to execute particular tasks, especially
119 when the task requires specific abilities and knowledge. Qureshi et al. [32] conclude
120 that there is a significant positive link between T&D and employee performance.

121 *Compensation & Benefits and Employee Performance*

122 According to Collins and Clark [33], Compensation and Benefits (C&B) is the primary
123 HRM practice used by companies to appraise and reward their employees' efforts.
124 Likewise, Caruth and Handlogten, [34] note that workers are motivated when there are
125 monetary rewards proportionally linked to their performance. Therefore, the effective
126 implementation of a C&B system creates employees' willingness to perform better
127 [35]. Leonard [36] distinguishes between companies following long-term incentive
128 plans who acquire a greater increase in return on equity, and those companies that
129 ignore such plans. In addition, the study by Teseema and Soeters [37] reports a positive
130 relationship between C&B practices and employee performance.

131 *Labour Relations and Employee Performance*

132 According to Armstrong [5] labour relations is the interaction between employee and
133 employer and amongst themselves. Abdullah [38] highlighted that relations between
134 employees affect employee performance and that problems usually arise from
135 differences in work experience, age and demographics. The differences give rise to
136 differences of opinion and lead to conflict that could affect the workers' performance.
137 This is apparent from the research by Omuya [39] which concludes that the relationship
138 created by the team or groups has a positive impact on employee performance. The
139 study by Ernawati and Ambarini [40], noted that labour relations has a significant
140 influence on employee performance. Furthermore, Ernawati and Ambarini [40] stated
141 that labour relations have a significant influence on employee performance. Therefore,
142 employee-employer relations can be improved through efficient HRM practices,
143 implemented by the organization.

144 *Health & Safety and Employee Performance*

145 Muchemedzi and Charamba [41] define occupational health and safety (OHS) as a
146 science concerned with health issues relating to the working environment. Oxenburgh
147 et al. [42] maintain that the health and safety (H&S) of all personnel is closely linked
148 to the company's productivity. Furthermore, the Health and Safety Executive [43]
149 argues that a healthy and happy labour force is more productive. This leads to increased
150 investment in H&S to decrease or eliminate accidents, in turn resulting in increased
151 productivity gains. Furthermore, the Health and Safety Executive [43] confirms
152 describes that genuine performance gains can be realized by those firms that invest in
153 high-level H&S practices.

154 *Performance Appraisal of Employees' Performance*

155 Research has shown that employee evaluations, also known as performance appraisals,
156 are vital for the operation of the organization and the enhancement of employee
157 performance [44; 45]. Rating the employees is essential as it helps to identify the
158 individuals for leading positions in the company. A suitable work review of the
159 individuals must be conducted in order to reward them appropriately. The

160 implementation of the performance appraisal system is a complicated and challenging
161 task because it needs an accurate and fair appraisal of employee performance.

162 **3 Research Methodology**

163 The study adopted quantitative methods in examining the impact of human resource
164 management practices on organizational performance in a South African construction
165 company. As per the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grading
166 system, the construction company is a Grade 9 contracting firm, thus classifying the
167 company as a large construction company. The quantitative approach adopted for this
168 study has enabled the examination of relationships among variables, using descriptive
169 and inferential statistics that yielded results that can be easily generalized. A structured
170 questionnaire was designed and distributed to Human Resource Management
171 Personnel, Senior Management, Departmental Managers, and Union Representatives.
172 Out of the fifteen purposefully selected respondents, thirteen were returned thus
173 yielding a return rate of 87%. Pawar [46], highlights that a questionnaire may consist
174 of open-ended and closed-ended questions with a definite purpose that is correlated
175 with the objectives of the research. Open-ended questions require respondents to
176 document their thoughts and feelings, while closed-ended questions are limited to and
177 guided by the options given by the researcher. The questionnaire for this study
178 comprises of closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale, to measure the
179 attitudes of the respondents by choosing a factor from a number of factors ranging from
180 'Excellent' to 'Very Poor'.

181 The consistency of results across items was measured with Cronbach's Alpha,
182 which yielded an alpha value of 0.872 for management performance and alpha value of
183 0.933 for employee performance. There are diverse reports from researchers about the
184 tolerable values of alpha, which range from 0.70 to 0.95 [47; 48; 49]. Nevertheless, the
185 study by George and Mallery [50] indicates that any value above 0.7 is acceptable.
186 Hence, the Cronbach Alpha for this study proves that the questionnaire used is reliable.
187 The Shapiro Wilk test was conducted to ascertain the significance level for management
188 and employee performance, and a p-value of 0.586 and 0.389 were noted, which is
189 above the threshold of 0.05 thus indicating that the data gathered were normally
190 distributed (i.e. they are parametric in nature). Furthermore, the relationship between
191 management and employee performance were tested using Pearson's Correlation,
192 based on the p-value of 0.001 and the correlation value of 0.802, is significant at 1%
193 level of significance. Also, the data gathered were analyzed using percentage for the
194 demographic information of the respondents, while mean item score (MIS), and
195 standard deviation (SD) were used to rank the identified barriers as rated by the
196 respondents. The factor with the highest MIS was ranked first followed by the next in
197 a descending order. However, where two or more factors had the same MIS the factor
198 with the lowest SD was ranked first as suggested by Pawar [46]. More so, factors with
199 MIS of 3.00 and above were consider significant factors.

200 4 Findings and Discussions

201 4.1 Critical success factors for managers and employee performance

202 This section of the work explores the critical success factors for managers and
 203 employee performance. Table 1 depicts various employee performance success factors.
 204 Part A of the table shows a list of indicators to measure management factors and part B
 205 shows a list of indicators measuring employee factors. For management factors, the
 206 results show that ‘adequate work experience’ (MIS=4.31; SD=0.480), ‘be
 207 knowledgeable’ (MIS=4.31; SD=0.480) and ‘commitment to company goals’
 208 (MIS=4.31; SD=0.630) rank first. ‘Encourages teamwork’ (MIS=4.230; SD=0.832)
 209 ranked second and ‘shows initiative’ (MIS=4.08; SD=0.862) ranks third; ‘has the
 210 required skills’ (MIS=4.00; SD=0.707) and ‘shows a sense of responsibility’
 211 (MIS=4.00; SD=0.725) rank fourth. Furthermore, ‘has the ability to train new
 212 employees’ (MIS=3.85; SD=0.555) and ‘motivates employees’ (MIS=3.85; SD=0.689)
 213 rank fifth. Lastly, ‘communication skills’ (MIS=3.77; SD=0.725) ranks sixth.

214 For employee factors, the results reveal that ‘cooperates with management’
 215 (MIS=4.00; SD=0.577) ranks first, ‘is willing to work overtime’ (MIS=3.92;
 216 SD=0.954) ranks second, ‘shows interest in work’ (MIS=3.85; SD=0.899) and ‘general
 217 work practice’ (MIS=3.85; SD=0.376) rank third. Furthermore, ‘shows a sense of
 218 responsibility’ (MIS=3.77; SD=0.832) and ‘shows a willingness to improve work
 219 attitudes’ (MIS=3.77; SD=0.725) rank fourth. Moreover, ‘shows pride in work’
 220 (MIS=3.69; SD=0.947), ‘being motivated’ (MIS=3.69; SD=0.855) and ‘general work
 221 habits’ (MIS=3.69; SD=0.480) rank fifth. Lastly, ‘shows initiative at work’ (MIS=3.46;
 222 SD=0.776) ranks sixth.

223 **Table 1.** Employee Performance

Management Performance	MIS	SD	R
Adequate work experience	4.31	0.480	1
Be knowledgeable	4.31	0.480	1
Commitment to company goals	4.31	0.630	1
Encourages teamwork	4.23	0.832	2
Shows initiative	4.08	0.862	3
Has the required skills	4.00	0.707	4
Shows a sense of responsibility	4.00	0.725	4
Has the ability to train new employees	3.85	0.555	5
Motivates employees	3.85	0.689	5
Communication skills	3.77	0.725	6
Employee Performance			
Co-operates with management	4.00	0.577	1
Is willing to work overtime	3.92	0.954	2
Shows interest in work	3.85	0.899	3
General work practice	3.85	0.376	3
Shows a sense of responsibility	3.77	0.832	4

Shows willingness to improve work attitudes	3.77	0.725	4
Shows pride in work	3.69	0.947	5
Being motivated	3.69	0.855	5
General work habits	3.69	0.480	5
Shows initiative at work	3.46	0.776	6

224 MIS=Mean Item Score; SD=Standard Deviation; R=Rank

225 4.2 Correlation between HRM Practices and Management and Employee 226 Performance

227 Table 2 shows the relationship between HRM Practices and management and employee
228 Performance. The results of the analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship
229 between management performance and two of the HRM practices, labour relations and
230 recruitment and selection, with p-values of 0.046 and 0.018 respectively. Furthermore,
231 the results indicate that employee performance is significantly affected by recruitment
232 and selection with a p-value of 0.028.

233 **Table 2.** Correlation between HRM Practices and Management and Employee Performance

		Management Performance	Employee Performance
Recruitment & Selection	Pearson Correlation	0.642*	0.606*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018	0.028
	N	13	13
Performance Management & Appraisal	Pearson Correlation	0.304	0.396
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.313	0.180
	N	13	13
Training & Development	Pearson Correlation	0.071	0.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.818	0.886
	N	13	13
Compensation & Benefits	Pearson Correlation	0.499	0.496
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.082	0.085
	N	13	13
Health & Safety	Pearson Correlation	0.397	0.197
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.179	0.518
	N	13	13
Labour Relations	Pearson Correlation	0.560*	0.388
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.046	0.190
	N	13	13

234 *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

235 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

236 The results of the Shapiro Wilk test of normality indicate that neither management
237 performance nor employee performance are not significant at either the 5% or the 1%
238 significance level. The null hypothesis (H0) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis
239 (H1) is rejected. Therefore, this shows that the data are normally distributed. The results
240 of the correlation analysis of the measured data on the relationship between
241 management performance and employee performance reveal that there is a significant
242 relationship between management performance and employee performance. This is in

243 accord with the study by Purcell et al. [19] who noted that line managers could make
 244 real differences in employee attitudes and behaviour. Likewise, Hutchinson and Purcell
 245 [18] find that managers are the most important factor in explaining variations in
 246 employee job satisfaction and job performance. Findings from the Pearson's
 247 Correlation show that there is a relationship between Employee Performance and
 248 Labour Relations and Recruitment and Selection. This is supported by the study of
 249 Qureshi and Ramay [28] who note that HRM practices are positively correlated with
 250 employee performance and that Recruitment and Selection and T&D affect employee
 251 performance more than the other practices. Furthermore, Ernawati and Ambarini [40]
 252 confirmed that Labour Relations have a significant influence on employee
 253 performance.

254 **5 Conclusion and Recommendation**

255 It can be deduced that employee performance increases when the workforce is well
 256 managed and motivated. The study revealed the importance of the managers being the
 257 driving force in ensuring that employees are motivated and well trained. Likewise,
 258 communication between both parties should be clear with no ambiguity. Additionally,
 259 compensation and benefits, promotional opportunities and performance and appraisal
 260 systems should be fair. Moreover, when employees are highly motivated, they identify
 261 with the firm and they perform their functions with a sense of responsibility, humility,
 262 and efficiency.

263 Managers must consider employees' values when determining ways to motivate
 264 their workforce in order to attract and retain employees. It is evident that the
 265 behavioural aspects of management have a direct effect on the employees. Hence, it is
 266 important that the relationship between management and employees should remain
 267 cordial. Moreover, it is imperative that the company maintains fair Recruitment and
 268 Selection and Labour Relations practices because of their direct correlation with
 269 employee performance.

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