

EXAMINATION OF EMPLOYEE FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANISATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY: PERSPECTIVE OF A PUBLIC ENTITY

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Abstract

The influence of employees' challenges on productivity at a provincial department in KwaZulu-Natal has been notably affecting the overall provision of houses and sanitation (service delivery). According to the Annual Performance Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16, the improvement of efficiency and quality of human settlements' services is one of the strategic goals which focuses on the overall organisational productivity; however, it fails to consider employees' day-to-day challenges. Thus, the primary purpose of this paper is to investigate challenges at an operational level and determine the impact they have on productivity. Using a quantitative approach, a questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of 180 employees within the department. Applying factor analysis, the findings indicate Leadership as having the highest impact while Work-Life Balance displayed the least impact on Organisational Productivity. The results of this study are beneficial to other local, provincial and national public entities.

Keywords: Productivity; Leadership; Work-Life Balance; Factor Analysis; Performance Appraisal; Employee Benefits

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1 Introduction

Globally, there is an increasing need for organisations to strive for efficiency and this trend does not preclude public entities. This assertion is buoyed by several interventions introduced by the South African government, such as the Public Service Regulations of 2001, the White Paper on Human Resources Management of 1997 and the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997. Tshishonga (2014) purports that, in South Africa, human resources development is critical in redressing the legacy of apartheid, service delivery backlogs and expediting the implementation of developmental policies. Skills shortages and deficiencies have detrimental effects on the delivery of basic services such as water, sanitation, houses and infrastructure. Gaffoor & Cloete (2010) claim that the demand for more efficient and effective delivery of services in South Africa has increased in recent years. These demands fuelled service delivery protests and boycotts in South Africa, where complaints escalated due to poor services and, in some instances, the non-existence of service delivery (Netswera & Phago, 2011).

The promulgation of the Housing Act no. 107 of 1997 legislated and extended the provisions set out in the Housing White Paper and enabled the legal foundation for the implementation of the government's Housing Programme. The Department of Human Settlements (2014) indicates that the Housing Act aligned the National Housing Policy with the Constitution of South Africa and clarified the roles and responsibilities of the three spheres of government, namely; national, provincial and municipal. The Housing Act also highlighted the administrative procedures for the development of the National Housing Policy.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is twofold: firstly, to explore the challenges experienced by employees in a local government department that can influence organisational productivity; and, secondly, to determine the impact of these challenges on the provision of service delivery (housing and sanitation) to civil society.

2 Literature review

Contemporary economic theory illustrates several methods of efficiency of production factors which are supported by scientific inquiry and statistical indicators. Productivity is a ratio to measure how well an organisation converts input resources (labour, materials, machines, money) into goods and services (Tokarčíková, 2013). Various definitions are found on productivity. The Oxford dictionary (2007) describes productivity as “the efficiency with which things are produced” while Dorgan (1994) defines productivity as “the increased functional and organisational performance, including quality” and Rolloos (1997) claims that “productivity is that which people can produce with the least effort”. Janssen (2010) asserts that several researchers have attempted to create holistic concepts, but that it has also resulted in confusion, differences of opinion and contradictory definitions. Nda & Fard (2013) describe employee productivity as the measure of output per unit of input economically. Rohan and Madhumita (2012) adopt a different view and see employee productivity as the log of net sales over total employees.

Shahzaib et al. (2013) indicate that, in today’s modern and dynamic working environment, most organisations focus more on the overall well-being of an employee as opposed to other valuable resources. Gruman and Saks (2011) mention that the Human Resources department is critically important as organisations depend on their employees to accomplish goals and objectives. The employees can drive the organisation to its success or failure (Ramendran et al. 2013). Henning (cited in Shahzaib et al. 2013) asserts that happy employees are productive employees. Amah and Ahiauzu (2013) suggest that organisations need to reconfigure their workplace in a manner that will allow employees to feel as an integral part of the organisation. This feeling may result in their willingness to take initiatives and influence productivity in a positive manner.

According to Kim, Song and Lee (2013), a decline in employees’ productivity is likely to be perceptible when employees receive unclear job descriptions, have feelings of uncertainty, lack motivation and hold negative attitudes about their employment. The more employees lack motivation, having unclear job description and portray negative job attitudes, the more likely they are to face challenges in performing their employment duties. The extent to which this happens depends primarily on the attitudes, personalities of employees and the management approach.

There is a substantial amount of extant literature on employee challenges and how they influence productivity. Among the various employee challenges and for the purpose of this study, the following were identified: organisational policies; employee benefits; job performance; workplace relationships; leadership; and work-life balance.

2.1 Organisational policies

Organisational policies are formulated to provide a mechanism to direct the processes, behaviour and functioning of employees to enhance the performance of an enterprise. Mazerolle and Eason (2013) argue that some policies established by organisations are somewhat unsupportive of employees. Katou and Budhwar (2010) are of the opinion that organisational policies impact on employees’ job performance, particularly Human Resource Management (HRM) policies. Wright and Snell (1998) suggest that HRM policies improve employee skills that affect employee behaviours, which, in turn, have an impact on business performance. It is implied that organisations that implement imprecise HRM policies are likely to witness an adverse influence of these policies on their employees, resulting in poor organisational performance. However, the influence of HRM policies on business performance, either directly or inadvertently through HRM outcomes, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but, on the contrary, they can be complementary (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

Ashraf and Khan (2013) believe that organisational policies that ignore to support the workforce are deemed to be unhealthy by most employees. The effectiveness of organisational policies can be realised, whereby the employees feel they are part of the organisation as a result of clear policies tabled before them. Buck et al. (2011) hypothesized that challenges related to organisational policies may result in a decrease in job satisfaction, impacting adversely on employee performance.

2.2 Employee benefits

Ju, Kong, Hussin & Jusoff (2008) define employee benefits as any form of compensation provided by the organization other than wages or salaries that are paid for in whole or in part by the employer. According

to Ekere and Amah (2014), employee benefits constitute an integral part of the remuneration package. These benefits are seen to provide economic security for employees and, as a consequence, improve staff retention rates. A study conducted by Kwak and Lee (2009) reveal that some employee benefits are significantly associated with performance. The study also revealed that certain types of employee benefits do not make employees motivated for improved performance.

In another study by Kamau (2013), conducted in the public sector in Kenya on fringe benefits and their effects on employee productivity, revealed the following:

- Security benefits contributed to employee self-development, thus concluding that employment security benefits have a positive effect on employee productivity; and
- The health of the workforce is inextricably linked to the productivity of the workforce.

2.3 Job performance

Job performance or performance appraisal is the ‘process of observing and evaluating an employee’s performance, recording the assessment, and providing feedback to the employee’ (Muller, Bezuidenhout and Jooste, 2011). DeNisi and Pritchard (2006) define performance appraisal as ‘a discrete, formal, organizationally sanctioned event which is based on clearly stated performance dimensions and/or criteria that guide the appraisal procedure’. Cleveland, Mohammed, Skattebo and Sin (2003) described four (4) purposes of performance appraisal:

- To draw distinctions among people;
- To distinguish a person’s strengths from his/her weaknesses;
- To implement and evaluate human resource systems in an organisation; and
- To document personnel decisions.

Performance appraisals have been used to improve performance and build both job satisfaction and organisational commitment (DeCarlo & Leigh, 1996; Jaworksi & Kholi, 1991). In a study conducted by Cardy and Dobbins (1994), they argue that, for performance appraisal to positively influence employee behaviour and future development, employees must experience positive appraisal reactions.

2.4 Workplace relationships

The social exchange between employees is deemed to be imperative in terms of enabling organisational commitment amongst employees (Wu, Turban and Cheung, 2012). Wu et al. (2012) describe social exchange as ‘an individual’s voluntary actions towards another person that are motivated by an expected return from another person’. Social skills among employees allow them to effectively communicate with each other to enable a concerted effort towards accomplishing organisational goals. Schein (2006) asserts that a shared value is a set of social norms that define the rules or framework for social interaction and communication behaviours of society’s members. Academics and practitioners argue that the performance of an organisation is dependent on the degree to which the values are widely shared (Pascale and Athos, 1981; Denison, 1990; Kotter and Heskett, 1992).

2.5 Leadership

Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) state that an effective leader influences the followers in a desired manner to achieve desired goals. Omolayo (2007) believes leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of employees in an effort to achieve organisational goals. A leader can be defined as ‘a person who delegates or influences others to act’ so as to implement specified objectives (Mullins, 2010). Ionescu (2014) states that leadership is essential in building and developing an appropriate cultural model, which is an important vector of organisational change processes in modern organisations.

One factor that researchers regularly cite as an important contributor to organisational performance within the public sector is leadership. The study by Muterera (2012) suggests that governmental entities that are serious about improving their performance can benefit from incorporating transformational leadership theory as an integral component of leadership training. These findings are supported by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter (1990) who state that transformational leadership theory is deemed to improve the subordinates’ performance by changing the motives and values of employees.

2.6 Work-life balance

Greenhaus and Allen (2006) define work-life balance as ‘the extent to which an individual’s effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are compatible with the individual’s life priorities’. Nauert (2013) claims that employees are subjected to numerous challenges relating to balancing their lives and work commitments. Chittenden and Ritchie (2011) state that most organisations are striving to formulate policies that are inclusive in nature. However, on the opposite end, Nauert (2013) argues that the support services offered by organisations are not sufficient as this may require a shift in organisational culture. Susi and Jawaharrani (2010) conducted a study which examined employee engagement and explored workplace culture and work-life balance policies in order to promote employee engagement in their organisations with an aim to increase employees’ productivity and retain them. The findings indicate that employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today’s competitive marketplace. In addition, work-life balance is increasingly important for engagement and affects retention rates.

3 Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative approach. Primary data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires to employees of different departments regarding roles and responsibilities carried out and the functioning of the department. Secondary data was collected from desktop research. The designed structured questionnaire contains a set of statements which the respondent provides a level of agreement with the specified statements. Convenience sampling techniques were employed and data was collected from 180 respondents.

A statistical software for analysis, namely, IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 was used to analyse the data. Factor analysis and reliability tests were carried out. Factor analysis either confirms the construct and its measuring items, or identified sub-factors within the construct while reliability (Cronbach Alpha) identifies the degree of reliability and internal consistency among the measuring items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy tests whether the partial correlations among variables are small. Bartlett's test of sphericity determines whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the factor model is inappropriate. The data collected through the distribution of questionnaires as an instrument was captured in SPSS for analysis purpose and are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability table for the research variable

Research Variable	No of items	Cronbach Alpha (α)
Organizational Policies	6	0.776
Employee Benefits	3	0.818
Job Performance/Performance Appraisal	4	0.783
Workplace Relationship	4	0.889
Leadership	10	0.906
Work Life Balance	6	0.677
All Research Variables	33	0.926

The Cronbach alpha score for the six items was 0.926, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered “acceptable” in most social science research citations (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

4 Findings

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test for the research variables are found in table 2. The Bartlett's test was calculated for each of the factors. The research variable 5 “Leadership” produced the best result with regards to the Bartlett's test with a χ^2 of 868.792, degree of freedom of 45 and a significance level of 0.000000. The research variable 6 “Work Life Balance” produced a lower result, in contrast to the other research variable with a χ^2 of 183.010, degree of freedom of 15 and a significance

level of 0.00000. Overall, all the research variables produced an excellent result with a χ^2 of 2827.816, degree of freedom of 528 and a significance level of 0.00000. The Bartlett test of sphericity for all the research variables was appropriate for this research study as it yielded a *p*-value smaller than 0.0001. This value indicated that the correlation between the variables was sufficient and appropriate for factor analysis. With respect to the KMO measure of sampling adequacy, the research variable 5 “Leadership” produced the highest value with a value of 0.906, and the research variable 2 “Employee Benefits” produced the lowest value with a value of 0.634. The overall research variables produced a value of 0.866. High values (close to 1.0) for a measure of sampling accuracy generally indicate that a factor analysis may be useful with one’s data. If the value is less than 0.50, the results of the factor analysis probably will not be very useful. Therefore, it can be concluded that the collected data and the questionnaire are adequate, reliable and valid.

Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test for the research variables

	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.759
Organizational Policies		Approx. Chi-Square	264.158
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	15
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.634
Employee Benefits		Approx. Chi-Square	277.932
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	3
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.699
Job Performance / Performance Appraisal		Approx. Chi-Square	193.446
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	6
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.800
Work Relationship		Approx. Chi-Square	387.030
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	6
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.906
Leadership		Approx. Chi-Square	868.792
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	45
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.688
Work Life Balance		Approx. Chi-Square	183.010
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	15
		Sig.	.000
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.866
Overall Research Variable		Approx. Chi-Square	2827.816
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	528
		Sig.	.000

The factor matrix presents the initial factor loading. The degree of generalization found between each variable and each factor is referred to as ‘Factor Loading’. The farther a factor loading is from zero in the positive direction, the more one can conclude the contribution of a variable to a factor. The factor matrix

can be rotated by *equamax*, *quartimax*, *varimax*, and *promax* for the purpose of establishing a higher correlation between variables and factors. In order to obtain a meaningful factor loading, the principal component matrix tested by rotating the matrix by *equamax*, *quartimax*, *promax*, and *varimax*. Of all the orthogonal rotation methods, Quartimax with Kaiser Normalization produced the best result by converging in the 6th iteration, as shown in Table 3. As a result, the Quartimax rotation method is employed for the purpose of this analysis. The rotated factor matrix and factor transformation matrix are presented in Table 3 and Table 4, respectively. Table 4 shows that factor 6 with factor 5 has the highest result with a value of 0.827 and factor 4 with factor 3 has the lowest result with a value of 0.634.

Table 3: Rotated factor matrix^a

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
OP1				.513		
OP2				.835		
OP3				.767		
OP4				.518		
OP5				.589		
OP6				.405		
BE1			.493			
BE2			.803			
BE3			.840			
JP1						.590
JP2						.622
JP3						.463
JP4						.607
WR1		.774				
WR2		.789				
WR3		.763				
WR4		.833				
LE1	.700					
LE2	.720					
LE3	.747					
LE4	.805					
LE5	.724					
LE6	.815					
LE7	.808					
LE8	.725					
LE9	.740					
LE10	.507					
WLB1					.525	
WLB2					.803	
WLB3					.753	
WLB4					.813	
WLB5					.706	
WLB6					.516	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Quartimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 5 shows the contribution of each factor to organizational productivity. The first factor “Organization Policies” has an impact of 32.173% out of 61.610% which translate to 52.220%. The second factor “Employee Benefits” has an impact of 41.708% out of 61.610% which translate to 67.697%. The third factor “Job Performance” has an impact of 42.278% out of 61.610% which translate to 76.738%. The fourth factor “Work Relationship” has an impact of 52.375% out of 61.610% which translate to 85.011%. The fifth factor “Leadership” has an impact of 57.266% out of 61.610% which translate to 92.949%. The sixth factor “Work Life Balance” has contributed 61.610% to the overall impact. The remaining 38.390% is considered to be the impact of some extraneous factors, for example, works motivation and organization downsizing.

Table 4. Factor transformation matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	.806					
2		.742				
3				.810		
4			.634			
5						.656
6					.827	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Quartimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 5. Eigenvalues and percentage variance

Factor	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.617	32.173	32.173
2	3.146	9.535	41.708
3	1.838	5.570	47.278
4	1.682	5.097	52.375
5	1.614	4.891	57.266
6	1.434	4.344	61.610

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

5 Conclusion

This paper has illustrated the application of the principal component method of extraction in factor analysis to determine the challenges considered to influence organizational productivity at a public entity. Six variables, namely: Organizational Policies, Employee Benefits, Job Performance, Workplace Relationship, Leadership and Work-life balance were considered in this study. The results obtained indicate Leadership as having the highest impact while Work-Life Balance displayed the least impact on Organisational Productivity. The findings in this study corroborate with academic literature on leadership which indicates that it is an important contributor to organisational performance within the public sector (see Muterera, 2012).

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