

# The Impact of Human Resource Management on Social Worker's Performance in Rural Areas: Evidence From Selected Social Workers at Capricorn District in Limpopo Province

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**Abstract:** There is no doubt that social workers are rendering professional quality services to vulnerable groups across the globe. In South Africa, however, social workers face challenges impacting their daily performance. This study explored the impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure (HRMI) on social workers' performance in rural areas. A qualitative research method was used to collate in-depth information from 30 social workers. A purposive sampling method was employed to purposefully select social workers who met the criterion. Primary data was obtained through Semi-structured interviews with social workers and secondary data from books and journals. The findings revealed that there is a lack of office space, a shortage of equipment such as official phones, computers, and stationery; and poor supervision which affects service delivery. The findings further revealed that the infrastructure consists of old buildings that are not conducive to human habitation or office space and of lack transport. Therefore, this paper proposes the following recommendations: that all necessary resources for the effective performance of social work duties be provided. It is further recommended that the infrastructure of the office space should be rehabilitated for a conducive working environment and there should be a provision of transport.

**Keywords:** Human resource management, Infrastructure, Performance, Performance management

## 1. Introduction

Human resource management and infrastructure is a strategic approach to the efficient and effective management of officials in an organization to an extent that they have a superior competitive advantage (Eneh & Awara, 2016:27). The strategic importance of human resources and infrastructure's role in organizational performance is receiving increasing recognition worldwide. Human resources and infrastructure were executed in South Africa and worldwide to improve knowledgeable and dedicated employees to the organization to meet employees' desires, aspirations, objectives, principles, and dignity (Rui, Zhang & Shipman, 2017).

Human resource management plays a key role in organizational performance in a lot of institutions. It is enhanced by the practice of appraisal rewards, career guiding, improving conditions, training, improved communication, and conditions, as well as development, selection, and recruitment (Abualoush, Bataineh, Masa'deh & Alrowwad, 2018). Organizations locally and internationally have aimed to get high profits and achievements, as such, they must apply their human resource management

effectively and efficiently (Sauce, 2022). In addition, organizations must be aware of human resource management more realistically and keep their human resources up to date (Sauce, 2022).

Most importantly, managers play significant roles in the purpose achieving organizational and a making profit. These roles examine the influence of human resource management on organizational performance (Mansor, Abu, Kamil & Nasir, 2014). According to Sauce (2022), good infrastructure such as offices and transport in the workplace contributes a lot to boosting employee productivity, increasing profits, increasing peace and tranquility, as well as reducing stress and making employees work hard (Sauce, 2022). Human resource management and infrastructure have important and unique influences on the departments' performance in South Africa and other countries. This paper was based on the impact of human resource management on social work performance.

## 2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

HRM and infrastructure play a significant role in the employee's performance. There have been issues

around the lack of competency in human resource management and the lack of provision of infrastructure to social workers. However, it is unclear if this has an impact on the employee's daily performance. This has contributed to the employees' poor performance (Nzanywayingoma & Yang, 2019:165). This paper aims to find out the impact of human resource management and infrastructure on social workers' performance: evidence from social workers from six different municipalities (Blouberg, Molemole, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Polokwane Cere, Polokwane Mankweng and Polokwane Seshego) in the rural areas within Capricorn District and the following are the objectives:

- To find out the impact of Human Resource Management and infrastructure on social workers' performance.
- To evaluate and monitor the performance of social workers.
- To suggest strategies that can be implemented in the study.

The key research questions were:

- What is the impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure on social workers' performance?
- How are social workers' performances assessed and monitored?
- What are the strategies that can be implemented to address the emerging issues

### 3. Conceptual Perspectives

#### 3.1 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a practice focusing on selecting, training, recruiting, and human resource development in an organization. It's therefore associated with the supervising of an individual's dimension. Furthermore, it also focuses on activities that focus on the use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated and smooth functioning of an organization. Lastly, other functions include preparation, obtaining, developing, applying, and supporting employees in the accomplishment of the organization (Gamin, 2021). Essentially, Human Resource Management (HRM) is a practice focusing

on selecting, training, recruiting, and facing challenges impacting an organization (Eneh & Awara, 2016:28). It's therefore associated with supervising an individual's dimension. It has various activities that focus on the adequate use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated and smooth function of an organization. Additionally, other functions include; acquiring, developing, planning, obtaining, preparing on, and maintaining 'hr resources' towards the achievement of goals in the organization (Maxwell & Singh, 2021:128). Lastly, due to increased emphasis on Human Resource practices, it is thus recommended that Human resources must understand the critical nature and importance of the effectiveness of all Strategic Human Resource Management Practices which include: training, planning, reward, recruitment, selection, and promotion in creating value for the organization (Eneh & Awara, 2016:28).

#### 3.2 Performance

Within the public sector, as quoted by Matei (2006), and cited by Ion and Criveanu (2016:181), the concept of performance is found at the intersection of three dimensions in the implementation of the orientations followed by the organization with the tools of its policy. Then the focus goes to target groups such as customers, users, and other public sector agents as given by the organization. Finally, to achieve desired results, institutional resources are effectively used. The concept of performance itself remains a difficult concept to understand, however, it can be used as an initial starting point for the researcher. Performance functions from a specific objective are ruled by their relevance to the environment, by a set of selected features and It comprises elements that are both static and dynamic (Folan, Browne & Jagdev, 2007:615). Performance in investigational circumstances includes the mental meaning, which has resonance with other fields of research, particularly the use of performance measurement; while, in linguistics, actual versus theoretical usage of language is denoted as performance – again we have the pre-set standard or strategy (knowledge of a language) against which performance is judged (actual language use), thus this definition is equivalent to those already examined (Folan *et al.*, 2007:618).

#### 3.3 Infrastructure

According to Weber (2010), infrastructure is usually defined as the total of all materials, personal and

institutional assets, as well as circumstances and facilities available to an economy based on the division of labor and its economic units which contribute to realizing the assimilation of factor remuneration, given an allocation of resources. According to the Masterclass (2022), Infrastructure refers to the physical, social, and economic systems that support society. Firstly, Infrastructure improvement is seriously aimed at the smooth process of a current, industrialized nation. Secondly, it is classified into two major aspects: hard and soft infrastructure. Electrical grids, roads highways, and bridges, buses, and trains are regarded as physical components that support our daily life, which is called hard infrastructure, is the physical components that support daily life, such as electrical grids, roads, bridges, and highway systems, as well as the goods that make them operational such as mass transit, buses, and trains. The economic and social components and human capital such as hospitals, telephones, and economic facilities are regarded as soft infrastructure.

### 3.4 Performance Management

According to Armstrong & Taylor (2014:62), Performance management can contribute to the development of high-performance culture in an organization by delivering the message that high performance is important. The management of organizational performance is continuing responsibility of top management who, with the help and advice of HR, plan, organize, monitor, and control activities and provide leadership to achieve strategic objectives and satisfy the needs and requirement of stakeholders.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Human Resource Management's Goals

Throughout the years, Human Resource Management has been widely criticized due to different concerns such as engaging the labor force, handling relations, training and improvement approach, acceptance of expected change, and employee health and well-being as listed by Armstrong and Taylor (2014:4). In addition, it has more promises than service delivery as well as is morally suspected. Moreover, it is overly uncertain, simplistic, prescriptive, and precise. Lastly, HRM has been claimed to be manipulative concerning shaping human behavior at work and placing excessive emphasis on business needs (O'Riordan, 2017:8). HRM's main goals assist the organization by achieving its objectives

through HR strategy development and implementation within business strategies. Secondly, it assists in creating a high-performance culture for growth and productivity. Lastly, HRM has been claimed to be manipulative in shaping human behavior at work and placing excessive emphasis on business needs (O'Riordan, 2017:9).

### 4.2 The Impact of Human Resource Management on Employee Performance

According to Burke, Allisey and Noblet (2013:2), four reasons focus on HRM in the public sector and these reasons are as follows: firstly, there is a lack of information on HRM in the government sector in the literature; secondly, the HR role of the government is to ensure effective service delivery; thirdly, the importance for agencies to maximize investment and the level of public investment in civil services and; lastly, challenges affect public sector agencies due to the scale of the workforce (Burke *et al.*, 2013:2). Unfortunately, the listed four reasons have negative implications on the volume of demands faced by public sector organizations as well as the amount to which public sector services can meet these demands (Burke *et al.*, 2013:3). In addition, the recipients and providers are also affected by the listed above reasons, as such, the recipients and providers will benefit from research that focuses on addressing the issues faced in the public sector (Burke *et al.*, 2013:3). Hence, it is crucial to draw greater attention to challenges faced in the public sector utilizing a mixture of literature reviews, empirical research, and case studies. This will enable employees with solutions or directions on how they can manage challenges (Burke *et al.*, 2013:4).

According to Sharma (2021:159), HRM contains an assessment of employees such as helping with rewards and remunerations, motivation conserving good relations with labor and trade unions; thus, providing employees with health, welfare, and security through observing the labor regulations of the country in the study (Sharma, 2021:159). Furthermore, HRM also aims to place individuals on assigned tasks hoping to have improved production. As such, HRM utilizes the information and contributions from psychology and economics input as listed in Table 1 on the following page by Sharma (2021:159).

According to Sharma (2021:159), Employee Concerns-Human Resources focus only on individuals while in

**Table 1: The Table of HRM Multidisciplinary Activities**

<b>Competitive Challenges</b>	<b>Workforce</b>	<b>Worker's Worries</b>
1. Globalization	7. Preparation	15. Life Span Distribution
2. Machinery	8. Employment	16. Feminine and Masculine Problems
3. Employ Control	9. Enlistment	17. Scholastic Aspect
4. Human Capital	10. Job	18. Employees' Rights
5. Responsiveness	11. Design	19. Privacy Issues
6. Cost Containment	12. Training	20. Work Attitudes
	13. Appraisal	
	14. Communication	

Source: Sharma (2021:159)

HRM the focus is on the recruitment, selection, and preservation of people within the workplace.

### 4.3 The Impact of Infrastructure on Employees' Performance

There is a direct impact of infrastructure on labor productivity, and an indirect impact of infrastructure on total factor productivity which has a long-term growth impact in South Africa (Zondo, 2020). This provided an innovative way of exploring the effect of the organization on the total factor of production and labor production which allows a clearer difference between the direct and indirect effects of the organization (Fedderrek & Bogetics, 2006:2). According to Fedderrek and Bogetics (2006:2), the Impacts of infrastructure have yielded contradicting outcomes with little robustness. According to Sadmanov (2015:11), transport, water, gas, and electricity were found to increase the chances of unemployment in rural areas and diverse infrastructure sections have diverse effects on a better quality of life and the alleviation of poverty. According to the Masterclass (2022), infrastructure promotes the exchange of goods and services and business operations, and it enables economic growth. In addition, disruptions to the supply chain can have disastrous effects on a region's economy. Critical infrastructure aims to reduce the number of disruptions to the workforce, importing and exporting, and economic activities.

### 4.4 Monitoring Performance in the Workplace

Performance usually involves a composite of capacity, information, abilities, experience, and

inspiration. Inability to achieve can be an outcome of the lack of these reasons: perform work knowledgeably (capacity), required data perform work correctly (information), inspiration with a positive interest when doing work accordingly as well as working hard without any anticipations (Tshabalala, 2015). Performance measurement has cost implications, whereby certain levels of achievement qualify for benefits such as bonuses (Tshabalala, 2015). However, the measurement of performance has cost implications, whereby there is a standard for one to qualify for remuneration benefits. The two components, which are key result areas (KRAs) and core management criteria (CMC) are used as criteria to assess the performance of employees. The KRA covers the main areas of work, as well as concentrating on activities that can assist the department to achieve effectively (Tshabalala, 2015). The study findings concur with the above literature that social workers are also measured through the KRAs and are given scores that determine an appraisal of incentives for their hard work.

## 5. Research Methodology

The research technique used in the study was a qualitative approach. De Vos, Strydom and Fouche (2011:64), state that qualitative research design focuses on answering questions about the complicated nature of the problem to describe and understand the problem from the participant's opinion. According to Neuman (2006:220), the purpose of exploratory research is to study and understand the issue or phenomenon to develop primary ideas and move forward with refined research questions by concentrating on the "what" question. Therefore,

social workers in six different municipalities under the Capricorn district were interviewed such that there will be knowledge for the researchers to gain towards the study.

## 5.1 Sampling Methods and Sample Size

Neuman (2006:219) refers to sampling as a lesser set of circumstances a researcher chooses from a large population and popularises to the population. The study sample was based on the targeted population of social workers in six different municipalities in the Capricorn district (Blouberg, Lepelle Nkumpi, Molemole, Polokwane Ceres, Polokwane Mankweng and Polokwane Seshego). According to Dinneka (2015), firstly, the social worker's role is to advocate for the rights of those people who are disempowered by the community to empower people. Secondly, social workers help clients express their difficulties, find solutions, and enforce interventions to grow and enlarge the abilities of clients to deal with their problems. Purposive sampling was adopted which falls under the non-probability sampling method. According to Babbie and Rubin (2010:179), purposive sampling is selecting participants based on the researchers' judgment about which ones will be more representative of the whole population. A qualitative approach was used for the study. 30 (5 from each municipality) participants were interviewed.

## 5.2 Data Sources

Kumar (2014:171) explains there are major two approaches to gathering information about a circumstance, a human being, and a problem. These data can be characterized as primary and secondary data. Data collected using the first approach is collected from the primary data, whereas the sources used in the second approach are secondary data. Primary data was collected from social workers working in six different municipalities in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Then, Journals, articles, books, the internet, legislation, and other literature sources assisted in the study.

## 6. Data Collection Procedure

Permission was requested in a form of a letter to the department of social development for the study. The purpose was to seek permission to interview social workers in the municipalities. Rubin & Babbie (2008:70) state that the main principle of research

ethics is that participation must be voluntary. Each participant should have information and understand the risk, effects, and benefits of being part of the research, and they are not to be forced if they wish to decline or withdraw from the study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:143). All the social workers from the 6 different municipalities voluntarily participated and signed an agreement form to be in the study.

## 6.1 Data Collection Methods

The method used for collecting data was semi-structured interviews. De Vos *et al.* (2011) explain the method as it's used to acquire a comprehensive description of a particular topic. During interviews, the Interview schedule was used to obtain information from 30 participants from six different municipalities.

## 6.2 Data Analysis

In this study, information was collected in a form of qualitative data. To process data, thematic analysis was used. This analysis method allows for analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Furthermore, the data set will be organized and described. In detail, unfortunately, it has been found that thematic analysis also analyses and interprets the topic researched (Braun & Clarke, 2006:77-101).

## 6.3 Area of Study

Figure 1 on the following page represents the area in which the study was in the Capricorn district. These municipalities are in Limpopo province. As per Stats SA Census (2011), Blouberg Municipality is found in the Northwestern boundary of the Republic of South Africa with Botswana and Zimbabwe where the Limpopo River serves as the border between the municipality, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Blouberg is 95km away from Polokwane and obtains 21 wards with 162 629 people. It is a rural municipality under the control of a tribal chief, whilst Polokwane is found in the middle of Limpopo Province. It contains well-known areas such as Polokwane Ceres, Mankweng and Seshego, with a population of 628 999 people. Lastly, the Molemole Local Municipality, which is within Capricorn District and is around 60 km north of Polokwane has a stats of 108 321 people. Lepelle-Nkumpi is within a close distance of 45 km from Polokwane, and it is under the tribal chiefs with other municipalities such as Sekhukhune with 230 350 people.

**Figure 1: Map of Capricorn District**



Source: Municipalities.co.za

## 7. Results and Discussions

The paper aimed to explore and present the information gathered from the participants in terms of the impact of HRM and infrastructure on their performance: evidence was from social workers in six different municipalities in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Data was gathered through interviews and observation with respondents working in different municipalities, with a sample of 30 social workers. The information gathered was subjected to qualitative analysis through thematic coding. Due to the analytical framework, the interviews studied a variety of problems. The findings follow from social workers.

### 7.1 Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

#### 7.1.1 Gender and Age of Participants

Personal profiles of the participants were as follows: the majority of the participants were women and men, with ages ranging from 32 to 45 years. The findings suggested that both men's and woman's performance is affected by human resource management and the infrastructure in their workplace.

#### 7.1.2 Educational Achievement

The findings showed the similarities of the social worker's qualifications for a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work which is attained in different South African Universities. The difference is that most of these participants have pursued their studies and have acquired their master's, degrees, and other post-graduate diplomas. The findings imply that most participants are overqualified for their current positions and there are no promotions in their workplace.

## 8. Findings From Social Workers Working in Six Different Municipalities

The following were the key results from the study:

### 8.1 The Impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure on Employees' Performance

Capricorn district is situated in Limpopo province and is subdivided into six municipalities and social workers were the participants of the study. Based on the findings from the social workers, human

resource management and infrastructure have a massive influence on the worker's daily work and the productivity of their organizations or departments. However, there is not enough literature to substantiate that both human resource management and infrastructure have an impact on performance. Most literature focused more on the influence of HRM on workers' daily work.

Findings from participants were that infrastructure and human resources are the most important thing that should be taken into consideration since there is a lack of resource management. Investing in infrastructural design can help employees satisfy the biggest asset of the company, your employees. The findings also revealed that the facilities that they are working in are old, not conducive for all kinds of clients (disabled, pregnant, and elderly) and that they do not have transport to do home visits. According to the Masterclass (2022), employees cannot function without basic needs such as facilities, access to clean drinking water, food, medical attention, and transport and communications systems.

The findings also reveal that human resource management is important in their day-to-day work. There is poor supervision between the social workers and their supervisors due to the ratio of supervisors versus supervisees. Shortage of equipment such as official phones, computers, and stationery which are the basic need for rendering services to clients was found to be another factor that has a huge impact on their performance. Garmin (2021) agrees with the findings, that HRM also focuses on activities that focus on the use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated, developed, and supported employees in the accomplishment of the organization. Other social workers stated that their performance is poor due to their own personal reasons, such as marital and financial problems. And others revealed that they have been requesting transfers to work near their families with no luck, as result, this has affected their morale and it had led to poor performance at work.

## **8.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Employee Performance**

Social workers are expected to contract or sign a performance agreement in which the Performance is assessed through a performance development management system. According to Tshabalala

(2015), PMDS is nothing more than a tool to control employees' performance to the extent it rewards excellence, and ensures that they develop excellently. Thus, deficient performance should be identified and addressed quickly to prepare employees for appraisals and not be used as means to retaliate, thus, prejudicing, and penalizing subordinates. According to Armstrong (2014:58), organizations should develop a 'performance high culture for improvement of performance, setting goals, and monitoring performance. The other characteristic is to align performance management processes to the goals and objectives set to achieve.

Based on the evidence from social workers, their performance is assessed, monitored, and evaluated by their supervisors and then it will proceed to the moderation committee. The evidence also shows that after they have been assessed, those who have achieved and were scored highly are awarded incentives. Although some evidence also revealed that there is unfairness (assessment done with a personal vendetta than assessing the actual work) during the assessment, and as a result, this also leads to deficient performance of employees. The findings were also validated in terms of the Public Service Regulation (2001), as amended, that all workers in the government sector must be assessed. This is because workers' performance assessments should be related and conversant with the organizational performance evaluation.

## **8.3 Strategies to Improve the Performance of Employees**

Evidence revealed that the employee's performance is the most important thing in the organization since it leads to productivity and as a result there is a need to improve the performance of the employees. The findings revealed that social workers need the services of an employee wellness program so that their morale can be uplifted. As such, the department needs to improve its conditions. This can be done by making employees happy by improving the transport system, reducing their workload, introducing a qualification-based salary, or promoting workers once they get higher qualifications. Previous studies done by human resource management suggested indicators for measuring the performance of the employee. The indicators were as follows measured quality that must be rejected or redone through workout percentage: the satisfaction of customers which is measured through the feedback of

customers and loyalty of customers Customer (Njanja, Maina, Kibet & Njagi, 2013). According to scholars, the increment in public servants' wages will contribute to the reduction of power abuse and the efficient public sector in the system. The more employees are treated fairly, the better the working environment and more productivity in the organization.

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was evident that there is a massive impact of HRM and infrastructure on the daily social workers' performance. Regardless of the low sample of social workers working in rural areas used in the study, other useful findings were identified. Based on findings, it was found that employee performance is not only affected by human resource management and infrastructure but the other causes which were their personal and financial problems. From the above information presented, therefore findings from the study recommendations are supported. This paper recommends that all necessary resources for the effective performance of social work duties be provided. Furthermore, the infrastructure of office space should be rehabilitated for a conducive working environment. That will enable them to work in a conducive environment for employees at those six municipalities. The evidence from the study states that the morale of participants is low due to a lack human of resource management and this has resulted in deficient performance in the workplace, therefore there is a needs to maintain partnerships with other stakeholders to acquire assistance with infrastructures and resources and ensure that there is a provision of transportation/ cars to smooth service delivery.

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