

Factors that enhance and detract line managers as delivery channels of effective Human Resource Management

DEBORAH S. NTSHABELE

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Abstract

Human Resource Management is at the peak of discussion in most companies. This is after realising the importance on Human resource today's competitive landscape. Human resource gives the organisation, competitive advantages as advanced technology and systems are easily copied.

With focus on Human Resource Management, came the devolution of line managers. Line managers are not trained, nor experts on HRM, and as they take on the human resource role, the success of HRM depends on how well they can carry out their HR responsibilities.

This research looks at factors that are detractors and enhancers of the effective Human Resource Management. Four factors are identified as having an impact on the HRM and these are Workload Pressures, Competency, Recognition and Management and HR staff support.

The research methodology employed is a survey technique, which consisted of a survey questionnaire to identify, which ones are detractors and enhancers. The research identified some of these factors to fall as a detractor or enhancer depending on their positivist or negativity.



Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the requirements for the degree of master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Name

Signature

Date

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List of abbreviations

HRM	Human Resource Management
HR	Human Resource
PPC	Pretoria Portland Cement Limited
OP	Organisational Performance
E-Mail	Electronic Mail
CIPD	The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
OPM	Organisational Performance Managers

Chapter 1 Introduction to Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

Human resource (HR) plays a very important role in the business' success. Organisations recognise that people are the organisations' primary resource and hence more emphasis on HR and how they can achieve their goals through them. A common theme within the Human Resource Management (HRM) literature in recent years has been the take-up of "new style" HRM practices designed to achieve high levels of employee performance, flexibility and commitment (Francis, 2003)

In the 1980s, original writers in the area of HRM, Beer et al. (1984), stressed that in the face of increasing international competition, organisations had to focus on the value of investments in human resources as a major source of competitive advantage. Organisations realise that without HR they can go up to so far in competing as all the other techniques e.g. technology is easily copied.

The employers' focus on the management of employees was according to Millward *et al.*, 1992 and Storey, 1992, led by Government deregulation, intense competition and related productivity and efficiency pressures in domestic and

overseas markets in order to meet increasing demands for quality goods and services. In their surveys they reported employers adopting a range of “soft” and “hard” people-centred practices associated with HRM.

HRM alignment means integrating decisions about people with decisions about the results an organisation is trying to obtain. The HRM forms an important part of the organisational business strategies. With the changes in HRM, came the devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers. Storey and Sisson (1993), and Cunningham and Hyman (1999) have revealed that line managers are in the best position to adopt and deliver the most appropriate human resource management styles and practices, as they are the closest to frontline staff. This was also highlighted by Whittaker and Marchington (2003) who also suggested that line managers are in a good position to take on the role, but in partnership with human resource professionals.

Most commentators agree that over the past few years, many traditional HR practices have been devolved to line managers (Hutchinson and Wood, 1995). The emergence of performance-related HRM practices (Guest, 1991; Storey, 1992) and the general trend towards decentralisation (Hutchinson and Wood, 1995; Colling and Ferner, 1992) have contributed to this devolution as a reaction to the changing environments with which organisations are faced (Gennard and Kelly, 1997; Hoogendoorn and Brewster, 1992)

Cunningham *et al.*, 1996; Lowe, 1992; Storey, 1992 in their survey noted that some devolution from HR to the line was becoming a common trend among large organisations, often under the umbrella practice of empowerment.

The reason for HRM devolution to line managers, according to Brewster and Larsen (2000), and Budhwar (2000), could be summarized as follows:

- Helps to handle the complexities of some issues which top management find difficult to comprehend;
- it helps in terms of reducing costs;
- Line managers are faster when it comes to responding to frontline state of affairs;
- the experiential learning of line managers acquired through devolution of core HRM activities propels them towards promotion for future managerial positions, which requires higher level decision-making skills; and
- It results in creating a motivational environment, as well as effective control, as line managers are in constant contact with frontline staff.

Devolution of HRM to line managers comes with some added responsibilities though. These responsibilities, if line managers are not prepared properly for may cause problems. This came out in the study that was done by Whittaker and Marchington (2003, cited in Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003) that the devolution of

HRM responsibilities to the line has left many line managers under-prepared, under-supported, and under-trained. This gave clear indication that a holistic strategic approach to managing line managers was required.

Other writers such as Hutchinson and Wood (1995: 17) describe this devolution of responsibilities, as a partnership between HR and line managers (supported by Hall and Torrington, 1998, Currie and Proctor (2001) and Whittaker and Marchington (2003)). What they found lacking, was a clear idea of how this kind of relationship works in practice. Distinctions do, however, need to be made on the nature of the relationships the HR function has with the line managers was likely to depend on different considerations at different levels of management. At high levels, the relationship may well depend on individual HR managers and their ability to buildup good working relationships with individual line managers (Hope-Hailey *et al*, 1997).

The human resource is said to be one of the major sources of the organisation's competitive advantage (Beer *et al*. (1984), hence it is important to integrate HRM into the business strategy. The integration of HRM effectively will encourage everyone in the organisation to take responsibility for HRM, not just the HR department. This ensures that HRM is given a much more central position in any decisions that are made at the strategic or operational level, and reminds decision makers that an investment in people is a key organisational priority (Sheehan, 2005)

The devolution of HRM to Line managers has its own problems. Procter and Currie (1999) found that line managers would modify initiatives to fit with operational requirements. Similarly, Thornhill and Saunders (1998) found that line managers could undermine attempts to translate policy into practice. Vitally however, there is a real need to recognise the role that line managers have in contributing to strategy by implementing policy (Currie and Procter, 2001).

Middle managers as commented by (Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006), expressed lack of knowledge on the HRM aspects and lack of support but also the lack of time as a consequence of a heavy workload. Therefore, a feeling of insecurity and of being alone arose.

More evidence of line manager involvement in HR comes from Legge (IRS, 1995), and from Hutchinson's (1995) study that line managers are increasingly involved in recruitment, discipline and training decisions. Storey (1992) concedes that possible bias from line managers has to be considered in their claims to produce exceptional outcomes arising from their involvement, but he nonetheless saw such developments as definitely threatening for HR managers. An opportunity for line managers to increase their role and status therefore emerges under devolved management

Poole and Jenkins (1997) examined the extent of line management responsibility for HR practices, concluding that line managers were far more responsible than might have been supposed with a central pattern of line dominance in operational responsibility on most HR matters.

1.2 Research Objective

The research aims to identify the enhancers and the detractors of line managers to be the delivery channels for HRM. In the past few years HRM has been going through some changes and its alignment in the business has been the main focus. This was as result of changes in the organisations' competitive landscape and also recognising that human resource play an important role as it gives the organisation a competitive advantage. In addition, organisations have found that to optimise the employees' performance, the employees are better off reporting to line managers.

As found by Brewster and Larsen(2000), the rationale of line's involvement in HRM have five elements: to reduce costs, to provide a more comprehensive approach to HRM, to place responsibility of HRM with managers most responsible for it, to speed up decision making, as an alternative to outsourcing the HR function. Devolution of HR practices to the line, on the one hand, means line managers should become more involved in HRM at the operational level

and, on the other, that HR staffs are freed up to take on board a greater strategic role (Sisson and Storey, 2000).

Whittaker and Marchington (2003), in their research found that line managers claimed to be satisfied with the HR responsibilities that have been devolved to them and are keen to take on activities that are related explicitly to the development of their team.

Even though the research showed line managers to be satisfied with their HR responsibilities, there are those factors that could enhance or detract the line managers in achieving an effective HRM. The research aims at identifying and understanding these factors.

This study will attempt to gain deeper understanding into whether the following issues will enhance or detract line managers in being the delivery channels of effective HRM

- Workload Pressures
- Competence
- Recognition
- Management and HR staff Support



1.3 Research Scope

The scope of the research is described by the definitions of the relevant terms:-

Line Managers: The line managers in this research are those managers that have a direct responsibility for achieving the objectives of the organisation and are often identified in production terms (Production/operations/manufacturing) (Heraty and Morley, 1995). The line managers we want to concentrate on in this article are middle managers those between the highest and lowest levels who, in the words of Floyd and Wooldridge (1997: 466), 'mediate, negotiate and interpret connections between the organisation's institutional (strategic) and technical (operational) levels'.

Their responsibilities among others include people management, monitoring work processes, providing technical expertise, dealing with customers and measuring operational performance (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2003).

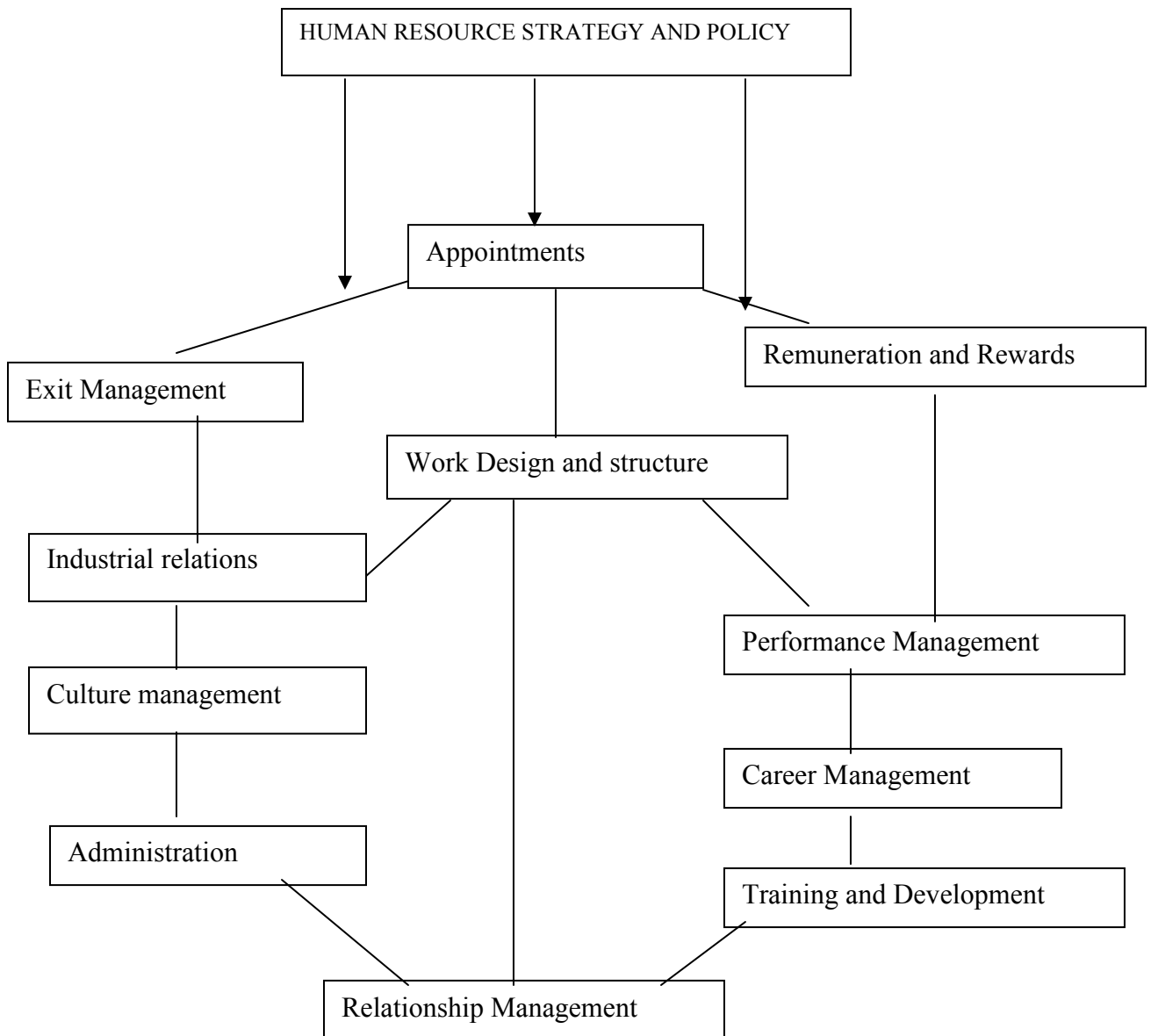
Human Resource Responsibilities: The primary tasks of the HR department are to ensure that the organisation's human resource are utilised and managed as effectively as possible. HR administrators help design and implement policies and programmes that enhance human abilities and improve the organisation's overall effectiveness. The HR work being devolved to line managers include

among others performance appraisals, redundancy selection, pay awards, recruitment, communication with and counselling of employees, sickness absence and employee development, management development, filling vacancies, grievance handling and disciplinary handling (D. Renwick,2003).

See also Figure 1 below which summaries the human resource responsibilities (Matthews, R, 1997) of which most of them are now being performed by line management. The exit management involves amongst other things retrenchments, dismissal, death, transfer, promotions. Appointments involve planning and control of resource allocation, skill and competency assessment, inductions, training and development. Remuneration and rewards involve performance incentives, remuneration structures and market related remunerations. Industrial relations involve conflict resolution, labour relations management, rules and procedures. Culture management involves change facilitations, culture development. Administrations involve employee contract, health and safety. Relationship management involves problem management, conflict management, corporate image. Performance management involves performance contracts, appraisal, recognition and performance improvements. Career management involves succession planning, individual development plans, career pathing. Training and development involves competency assessment, training programme, individual training needs analysis. Work designs and structure involves the work, design and analysis, work outputs.

Figure 1: Human Resource Management Model

(Source: adapted from Mathews, R. future HR managers Experts in change management and strategic thinking? This article first appeared in volume 15, number 7(July) 1997, of People Dynamics,24.



Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC) Background and Line responsibilities

The research survey was based on the perception of PPC's line managers.

Pretoria Portland cement consists of seven factories in South Africa in Gauteng, Limpopo, North West, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Freestate. The company employs more than 1000 employees with its head office located in Sandton.

PPC went through some structural change in the past seven years on the project on value based management. The HR team responsibilities' were completely change to focus on contributing to the strategic level of the business and was renamed the Organisational Performance (OP) Department. Table 1 defines the role played by the OP team. They focus more on the strategic HR Management, Change Management and Employee commitment.

Table 1 below shows what the HR department focus on. They focus on the strategic HRM, Change Management and employee commitment. The HR team does not concentrate on the traditional way expected for HR department, focusing on administration.

Figure 2 shows the leadership in the organisation vs. the functionality and speciality fields. The organisational triangle shows that at the lower level in the organisation, leadership is very low and increases as you go up the levels. The

operational triangle shows that at the lower level, the employees are more of specialist and as they are promoted, the organisational triangle widens and speciality narrows. The last block which is generic, does not change through out the level, example of these are risk/safety in the organisation.

Figure 1 above indicates the Human Resource Management model which contains some of the responsibilities line managers have to do as part of their HR responsibilities.

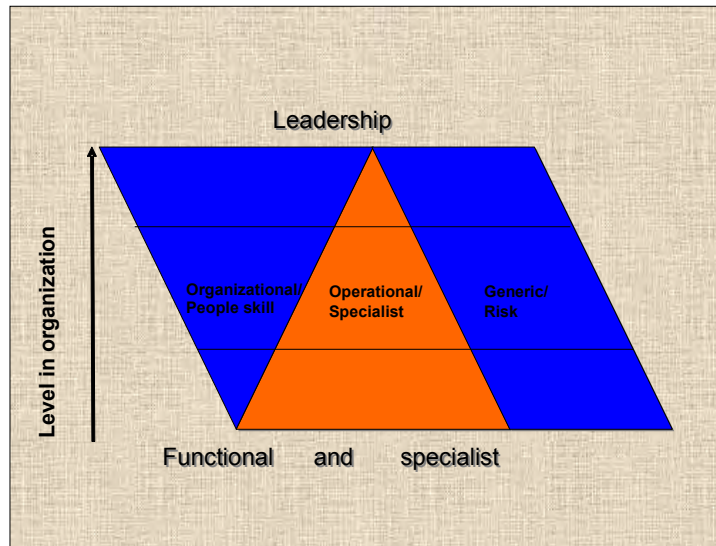
Table1: Defining HR Roles

(Adapted from Human Resource champions: the next agenda for adding value and delivering results: - Dave Ulrich.)



Figure 2: The leadership level in the organisation

(Adapted from Pretoria Portland cement OP presentation)



Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

HR is seen by most companies as an important aspect for a performing company, comparing to some years back, when HR most of the time took a back seat compared to other business activities such as maintaining product quality and service level. This mentality of treating HR as an important aspect in the business has been visible over the past years and human resource management strategies have become a focus.

HRM is seen as a way of securing competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce. The devolvement of HRM to line managers imply that they should be able to go beyond their normal technical/operational issues but deal with the “soft”, developmental humanist approach and or “hard”, situational contingent approach(Boxall,1996).

The “soft”/“hard” distinction is particularly prevalent in the work of Storey (1992). Legge (1995a, p. 35; 1995b, pp. 66-7) who suggested that in the “soft” approach, effective HRM is seen necessarily to involve a focus upon fostering employee motivation, commitment and development. It is an approach that

acknowledges the importance of HRM to the aims of the business, whilst reflecting attempts by management to create a work environment that emphasises employee development, through practices such as training, participation and communication, and the importance of having innovative, flexible, committed employees who are valued resources (Boxall, 1996; Guest, 1992; Noon, 1992;).

``Hard" HRM is, as Legge (1995a, p. 34; 1995b, p. 137) describe it, closely aligned with what is often termed ``strategic HRM". In these instances, HRM is closely linked with business strategy (Boxall, 1996; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990; 1992; Kamoche, 1994; Purcell, 1995; Schuler, 1992; Tyson, 1995; Whipp, 1992). Accordingly, it views employees as ``a resource to be used dispassionately and in a formally rational manner" (Storey, 1992, p. 26). A ``hard", contingency-based approach to HRM is often seen as an essential part of a cost-minimisation strategy.

The link between the two approaches is the central role of managers in implementing successful employee relations policies (Legge, 1995; Storey, 1992). Employees are perceived as making the most significant contribution towards implementing corporate plans, which place quality and cost control at the heart of organisational business strategies, (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995).

Although there is evidence of increased line involvement in the management of human resources, it was reported that there is still some resistance to the uptake of HR responsibilities at the line level (Cunningham and Hyman, 1995, 1999; Currie and Procter, 2001; Poole and Jenkins, 1997; Renwick, 2000). These unwillingness on the part of the line managers to take on such people management tasks, could be due to the lack of relevant training provided, and the absence of supportive surrounding management culture, systems and structures (Purcell, 2001 cited in Storey, 2001)

Martins (2007) identified a number of features of this devolvement as being of importance to the success. These, notably, included effective:

- internal channels of communicating what line managers are expected to do;
- the standards of performance they are expected to achieve and the opportunities available for skills development; the establishment of clear and appropriate levels of authority and status;
- the existence of effective performance management frameworks; and
- in the context of a project-based operational environment and a matrix-based management structure, adequate mechanisms for collaboration between line managers and those in the wider organisation in possession of resources critical to the performance of them and their teams.

The following were identified as the factors that may affect the effective HRM in an organisation. These are Workload Pressure, Competence, Recognition and Management and HR staff support. These are discussed below.

2.2 Workload pressures

As mentioned in the introduction, line managers have several responsibilities e.g. providing technical expertise and measuring operational performance. Taking over HR responsibilities may happen that they now won't have enough time to manage properly other activities they are responsible for.

Tsui, A. (1987) (Supported by Harrison; R. (1988)) emphasised that operating line managers are concerned with the production of goods or the delivery of services in the relatively short term and they must respond to the concerns or needs of the present workforce, indicating perhaps that their perspective may focus more on short term problem solving activities rather than on long term human resource strategies.

A study by Marchington *et al.* (1993) found that supervisory resistance was due also to work overload, conflicting priorities and the absence of explicit rewards linked to their role change. The perceptions of managers who are actually

fulfilling these roles and confronting these issues within organizations are therefore of considerable interest.

According to Earnshaw et al. (2000) and Renwick (2000), the line managers' HRM role or rather, the performance of it has been problematic because their primary responsibilities are in meeting service or production goals. Martins (2007) posited that line managers tend to have "many other pressing priorities than managing and developing the people working for them", and are therefore likely to take HRM issues less seriously than production or service goals.

Some line managers have yet not understood their management responsibility in the organisation. Drucker (1974) described management job to consist of five basic operations:

- (1) Setting objectives;
- (2) Organising;
- (3) Motivating and communicating;
- (4) Measurement; and
- (5) People development

HR managers have a task to convince the line managers that focusing on empowering employees will benefit the organisation's performance not in the short term but also long term. If the line managers do not see the importance of

employees in achieving goals, the organisation will suffer extensively. The HR managers should, together with line managers form a partnership that will take the organisation to a higher level. They should be proactive in assisting line managers to deal with the employee's day to day challenges. Storey (1992) identified four main types of HR practitioner; first "advisers" (internal consultants), second "handmaidens" (reactive, client/contractors of line managers), third "regulators" (interventionists monitoring the observance of employment rules), and fourth "changemakers" (who favoured engendering employee commitment), the latter being "most in tune" with HRM initiatives.

Renwick (2000) found that the workload of line managers increased as stated above but that the majority were happy about taking on extra employee relations responsibilities. He also indicated that line managers were dissatisfied with services provided by HR particularly their lack of direction, lack of leadership, and willingness to offer advice only on marginal issues.

The research done by Hoogendoorn and Brewster (1992), found that a majority of line managers did not have the time to carry out HR activities and did not feel sufficiently skilled to carry them out. Added to this are the dynamics of managerial short-termism, which can mean that there is little incentive to develop employees and also organisational restructuring means that line managers have less time to spend on day-to-day HRM issues (Currie and Procter, 2001)

This was also found by Cunningham and Hyman(1999, p. 25) in their research when line managers reported frustrations that they are not able to devote sufficient time to HR issues- such as appraisal- because "harder" priorities tend to dominate.

2.3 Competency

Line managers are usually promoted from the ranks of employees and are most of the time technical experts in their field (CIPD staff- Factsheet, Dec 2005).

They are used to be dealing with the hard approaches of the human resource management. Taking the HR responsibilities imply that line managers should be able to combine the hard and soft approaches of HRM.

Even though there is ambiguity in defining HRM, the central issue being addressed is the prime role allocated to line managers in ensuring the success of its performance outcomes. Managers are required to take on new people management roles, whether it is through a style which is "hard" and control-centred or more "soft" and facilitative. To achieve these aims, managers need a concomitant increase in their training and development in people-centered skills (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995).

Most researchers for example Cunningham and Hyman (1999) found that line managers whilst having the HRM responsibilities devolved to them, were found to lack both sufficient skills and competencies to carry out the HRM role successfully without the necessary support from HRM practitioners.

Renwick (2000) in his study noted that line managers varied as to how receptive they are to the HRM initiatives, the degree of resistance to empowerment initiatives; an inability to see the benefits of changes; and a view from HR respondents that line managers do not possess people management skills.

Fenton-O'Creevey and Nicholson (1994) also in their study of employee involvement identified difficulties experienced by middle managers, many of whom felt ill-equipped by training or experience to be effective in roles which had changed; many felt disempowered, uninvolved and distrusting of their senior management.

Lowe's study (1992), which focused on the devolution of HR activities to first line managers, found that, in general, these managers were lacking the necessary skills to take the HR activities over. Hutchinson and Wood, although identified devolution as a solid trend, identified also barriers such as lack of line manager skills, lack of line manager time, and HR managers being unwilling to let go.

McGovern *et al* (1997) identified three groups of 'organisational constraints' of which the first one covered the line manager's training and performance management. Kane and Crawford (1999) also identified that the barrier to effective HRM relates to the extent to which HRM practitioners possess the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a credible HRM programme within their organisation.

The survey done by IRS (employment review survey) in 2000, found that 60% of its respondent organisation had experienced problems with the devolution of HR activities to line managers. The two findings that were more pressing were: firstly, because line managers have many other pressing priorities than managing and developing the people working with them, it is likely that people management issues will be taken less seriously than production or service goals. Secondly, it was raised that line managers do not possess the skills and competencies necessary to perform the HR aspects of their jobs effectively without support from HR practitioners.

There were also concerns that line managers do not take the HR aspects of their role seriously, believing that what they are required to do is nothing more than "common sense" (Whittaker and Marchington, 2003, p251). This was also mentioned by Cunningham and Hyman, (1995, p.18) that many supervisors and line managers feel that competence is gained from a mixture of common sense and experience and that training is unnecessary.

2.4 Recognition

Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) highlighted the importance of the relationship between the line managers and senior managers in the success of HRM. The perception that the line managers are remunerated fairly or recognised properly (Monetary and non-monetary) for what they do, will play a role in motivating them to continue working effectively and efficiently.

The research findings in Liu and McMurray (2004)'s paper indicate that lack of reward and recognition, career opportunity and fair and equitable treatment remain the key issues affecting the team leaders' job satisfaction

The review, HRM- the devolution revolution, based upon "Line manager involvement in HRM: an inside view" by Douglas Renwick (2003) highlighted that the downside of the devolved HRM was that many managers reported feeling that they were expected to get on with HR and were doing their best but often with little recognition from the top management.

2.5 Management and HR staff support

Line managers and supervisors are stretched to their limits as times are continuously changing. The Line managers feel a lot of pressures from a lot of activities like restrictive legal environment, sophisticated technologies, restive labour force to name the few. Despite all these, they have to continue delivering high standard of service to the customers. Other challenges are retention of staff, maintaining morale and also delivering results.

The line managers are not HR experts and as a result they will continuously turn to staff experts for advice and guidance. Knowing that they are being supported and when they encounter problems or looking for advice in managing employees they know where to go, will make it easy for the line managers to cope with the challenges in dealing with their HR responsibilities.

Liu and McMurray (2003) commented that over the past few years, “with the maturity of the team structure, the trend of productivity improvement and the demand of team effectiveness, the role of team leaders have changed. It requires a more people-centred approach, higher interpersonal communication skills, and better ability to energise others and build trust”. He also highlighted that frontline leaders need support functions and systems so they may lead their teams to

plan, carry out and improve their value-adding work on the shopfloor in today's manufacturing industry.

Whittaker and Marchington (2003) reporting on the devolution of HRM to line managers, focus on two major concerns, which also implicitly draw attention to the need for broader organisational support for line managers, or otherwise, their strategic management. To acquire and retain employees, HR administrators perform critical roles like creating and implementing policies, maintaining communication, offer advice, provide services and control HR programmes and procedures. All these are to help line managers to do their work easily.

HRM involves considerable change in the role of line managers. A survey done by Cunningham & Hyman (1995) of 15 companies, found line managers were becoming far more important in the management of human resources. Typically line managers' management responsibilities would include people management, managing operational costs, providing technical expertise, organisation work allocation and rotas, monitoring work processes, checking quality, dealing with customers/clients, measuring operational performance (CIPD staff- Factsheet, Dec 2005). Line managers with their new role carry out activities which were traditionally within the remit of HR such as coaching, performance appraisal, involvement and communication, and discipline and grievances. In addition they also carry out recruitment and selection in conjunction with HR (Hutchinson &

Purcell, 2003). These indicate that line managers have more to deal with now than in the past.

The support from top management and also HR team is thus crucial but in contrast several authors, for example, (Cooper, 2001) and Lowe (1995), highlighted that, often enough senior managers and HRM managers have been accused of not providing enough support towards line managers in the undertaking of their HRM role. One of the main reasons given for this is the fear of having their own HRM role disbanded if line managers accept the responsibilities that are associated with HRM tasks devolved to them. In the study done by Whittaker and Marchington's (2003), they also have revealed the importance of the primary stakeholders of the HRM role working in partnership with line managers rather than against them, if decision making regarding HRM issues are going to be fast and effective (Renwick, 2003).

Researchers have tended to interpret the impact on HR specialist in two contrasting ways. While some see a changed but more responsible role for HR specialist (e.g. Lowe, 1992) others see the role of HR specialist being diminished as mentioned also by Cooper (2001). An alternative model, referred to as the "flexible business manager", sees a changing role for HR specialists. This role is not necessarily a diminished one because "line managers in general without support from HR specialists are unlikely to acquire sufficient competence in

people management skills to improve organisational effectiveness” (Gennard and Kelly, 1997, p. 34-35).

The feeling for the HR specialist that their role is diminishing may cause tension. The mere fact that such unnecessary tensions exist between line managers, and HRM specialist, as well as the fact that the HRM function continues to appear to be vulnerable to further contractions (Cunningham and Hyman, 1999) suggest that a much broader approach to managing line managers is required if devolution is going to be successful.

In cases of more extreme levels of devolution, Thornhill and Saunders (1998) have argued through case analysis, that the absence of a designated human resource specialist role actually results in quite negative consequences where the scope for strategic integration is significantly impaired. If line managers were left to develop the employees as they saw appropriate without clear direction from top management, there will be inconsistencies and not following of good practice procedures in the management of employees and Clark (1993) argued that this is the easiest way to lose the employees’ commitment. Kane and Crawford (1999) in their research noted three major underlying factors which are barriers to effective implementation of HRM. These were the management attitude, the deficiencies of HRM staff and the current state of HRM.

The devolution of HR to line managers can be seen as empowering the line managers. For empowerment (Schuitema – Leadership (training Notes)), the following variables should be considered:

- Means- that is the tools, systems and resources to do the work properly.
- Ability- being the know how of the job
- Accountability- being giving the employees accountability for their results and contribution.

The management and HR staff has the responsibility to supply the line managers with the means, ability and accountability as the HR is devolved to them.

In a more positive review of the area, Gennard and Kelly (1997) have suggested that extensive participation between HR and line managers can create mutual benefit for both as they jointly contribute to solve business problems

To ensure the success of the HRM, line managers need support systems to be implemented and also to be well managed. The research done by Hutchinson & Purcell (2003) found that the relationship between the line managers and the senior managers generally made a significant difference to the willingness to display discretionary behaviour in their own management activities. Beer and Spector (1985) and Dyer and Holder (1988) made the early prediction that the “most powerful of the countervailing forces probably is top management” (Dyer

and Holder, 1988, p.37). More recent writers, such as Othman and Poon (2000), Budhwar (2000), and Kane et al. (1999) continue to cite top management orientation as an important determinant of HRM success.

Brewster and Larsen (2000) in their research indicated that the frustration for the line was that they needed HR advice, but when it came it was often seen as unhelpful to them (as per Guest et al. (2001, p.67)), as the line felt they were being “policed by the rule book”.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature acknowledges the devolution of HR to line managers and that line managers need to apply both the soft and hard HRM style (Boxall, 1996). Due to line managers’ background, they are mainly technical experts in their field of employment and the soft HRM style may pose problems when performing their HR responsibilities.

The literature identified four factors which could impact on the effectiveness of HRM and these were Workload Pressure, Recognition, Competency and Management and HR staff support. The literature highlighted that line managers were not happy because they couldn’t do their HR responsibility well due to

workload. Lack of skill and support from management and HR staff were also accredited to not being able to perform their responsibility well.

Chapter 3 Research Propositions

3.1 Introduction

Ten propositions were identified from the four factors identified in the literature to have an impact on the effectiveness of HRM. These propositions will be tested on the line managers in the form of questionnaire.

3.2 Proposition 1 Workload Pressures

- **Proposition 1.1:** HR is important and is one of the top 3 Fields (e.g. Production, Quality, Customer service, Risk, Maintenance, Technical, Research and Development, Sales and Marketing) in the organisation.
- **Proposition 1.2:** Line managers are happy to do performance management.
- **Proposition 1.3:** Line managers are happy to develop the employees.
- **Proposition 1.4:** Line managers feel confident to deal with employees' grievances and disciplinary procedures.

3.3 Proposition 2 Competence

- **Proposition 2.1:** HR competence rate high as a requirement for line managers' employment.
- **Proposition 2.2:** HR competencies are acquired through training.

3.4 Proposition 3 Recognition

- **Proposition 3.1:** HR forms at least a quarter of the Line managers' performance measurement.

3.5 Proposition 4 Management and HR staff Support

- **Proposition 4.1:** The advice received from HR staff is valuable
- **Proposition 4.2:** The line managers use the advice from HR staff most of the time.
- **Proposition 4.3:** HR functions are as important to management as other activities (e.g. product line, market advantage, research and developments)

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Research Method

The survey research method was used to collect primary data as described by Zikmund, 2003. The survey objective was to gain better understanding of the line managers' perception. The primary research method comprised of a questionnaire being emailed to respondents.

The five likert scale questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent to respondents.

4.2 Population and unit of analysis

The population comprised of line managers and supervisors at the seven factories of PPC cement and Lime located in South Africa as described in the scope. The respondents selected had at least six month experience in their position. The reason for this is the assumption that they will have some experience in performing their HR responsibilities.

4.3 Size and Nature of the sample

A non- probability, purposive sample was used. The sample was selected because all the responded had employees reporting to them and had HR responsibilities to perform. The size of the sample was 70 respondents as given in appendix B. The sampling was suitable given the research objectives and the scope of the research. Punch (2000) indicates that the sample needs to be the function of the research aim and practical limitations.

To minimise the potential subjectivity in this method of sampling and improve the confidence with which the findings can be applied to the defined population, the sample was selected from various departments in the organisation which represent the whole organisation.

4.4 Data collection, processing and Analysis

The questionnaire was e-mailed to Organisational Performance managers (OPM) (originally called HR managers) at each site to distribute to the employees selected in Appendix B and some were e-mailed straight to the respondent. The reason behind selecting OPM to distribute was to ensure a better chance for selected team of completing the questionnaires they can relate to the OPM and

not the researcher. The data was collected using a survey questionnaire attached in appendix A.

The completed survey forms were e-mailed back to the researcher for compilation. The compiled data was coded to enable easy analysis. The Statistical analysis software was used for analysis.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

4.5.1 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the degree to which a comparable approach to the research would produce similar results (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Zikmund, (2003), described reliability as the degree to which the measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results. To ensure consistency the respondents were given the surveys form to complete and send directly to the researcher not their OPM for confidentiality purposes.

4.5.2 Internal Validity

Leedy and Ormrod (2001, p103) describe internal validity as the degree to which the researcher is able to draw “accurate conclusions” from the information obtained from the respondents. Validity is the ability of a measure to measure what is supposed to measure. Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire and forward the completed questionnaire to the researcher, this helped to limit the influence of the OPM’s distributing them. The questions were not personalised as a result, respondents were not rating themselves but how they perceive the current practices in the organisation.

4.5.3 External Validity

The external validity relates to the degree to which the conclusion in the research could be extrapolated to other organisations (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Due to the size and nature of the sample, the findings have limited external validity. General findings and conclusion are however possible as the sample represented various departments and regions in the manufacturing sector.

4.6 Potential Research Limitations

The following points are limitations to this study:

- The research was done based on Pretoria Portland cement Company, depending on the HR systems that exist on the company, this may be bias.
- Line managers not being open in fear of their complaints being known by their senior managers.
- Since the sample was judgmental, this may cause bias conclusion.

Chapter 5 Research Results

5.1 Demographics

Table 1: Indicates that, the sample comprises 85% men and 15% women (n = 39).

The questionnaire was sent to 70 line managers and only 39 were received back (56% response rate). Race distribution shows that 66% of the respondents were White, 16% Coloured, Indians had the lowest respondents in the sample (5%). African represents 13% of the sample.

Educational level distribution shows that most of the respondents in the sample had their bachelor's degree (34%); 31% had only their matric, 26% with diploma and very few had their post bachelor degree (18%).

The respondents' department distribution shows that majority of the respondents work in the production department (26%), and 5% of the respondents were in the risk department.

The distribution of the number of years spent with organization shows that 74% of the respondents have been with their respective organization for more than 10 years, while 5% have been with their organization between 5-10 years.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Data background was the sample size is 39 respondents.

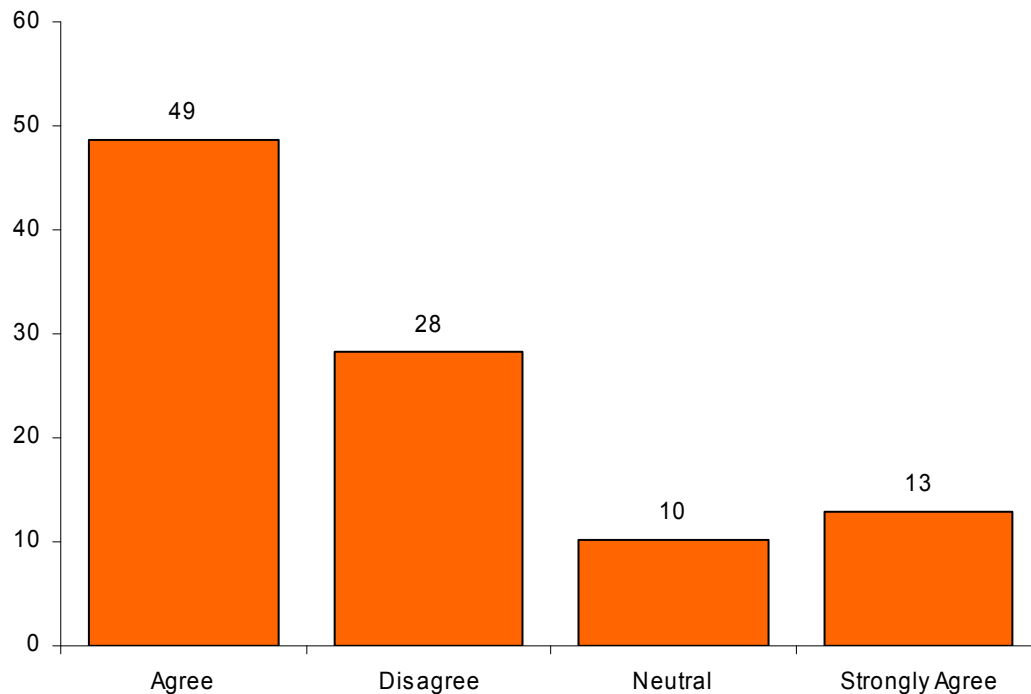
Gender	
Male	85
Femal	15
Race	
African	13
Coloured	16
Indian	5
White	66
Educational level	
Bachelor Degree	34
Diploma	26
Matric	31
Post BA	18
Department	
Risk	5
Quarry	11
Quality	18
Production	26
Administration	11
Customer Service	11
Engineering	16
No of Years Spent with Organization	
<5 Years	21
5-10 Years	5
>10 Years	74

5.2 Proposition 1: Workload Pressure

Proposition 1.1: *HR is Important and is one of the top 3 activities (e.g. Production, Quality, Customer Service, Risk, Maintenance, Technical, Research Development, Sales and Marketing) in Organization.*

Figure 3 below indicates that 49% of the respondents agree that HR is Important and is one of the top 3 activities. While about a quarter of the respondents disagreed (28%) that HR is important and is one of the top 3 activities. 10% of the respondents had no idea or were neutral about the issue.

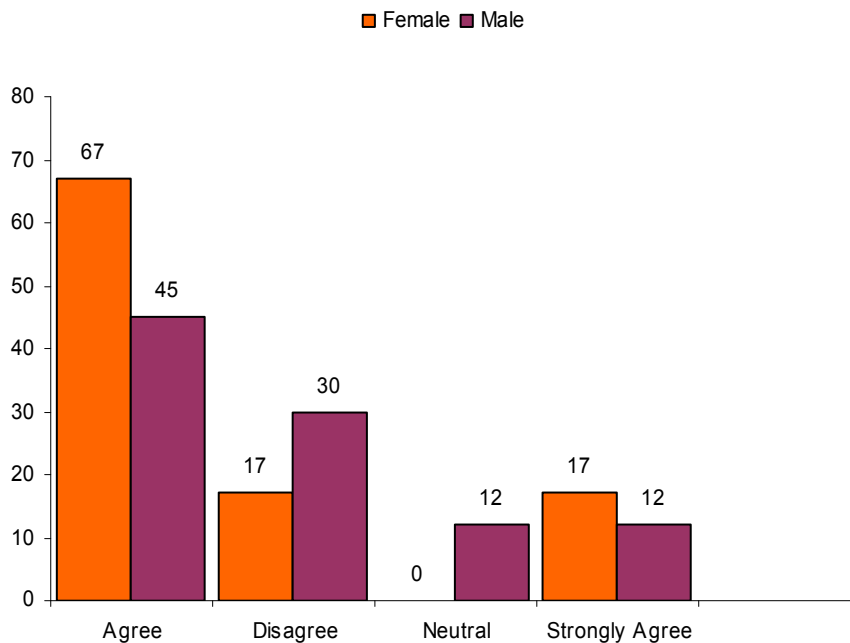
Figure 3: Response to proposition 1.1



Proposition 1.1: *HR is Important and is one of the top 3 activities (e.g. Production, Quality, Customer Service, Risk, Maintenance, Technical, Research Development, Sales and Marketing) in Organization by Gender*

Figure 4 below indicates that 67% of females agreed that HR is Important and is one of the top 3 activities, while 30% of males disagreed with the proposition. It may seem that females have more perception towards proposition 1, although the association was not supported statistically (p-value > 0.05 and 0.1)

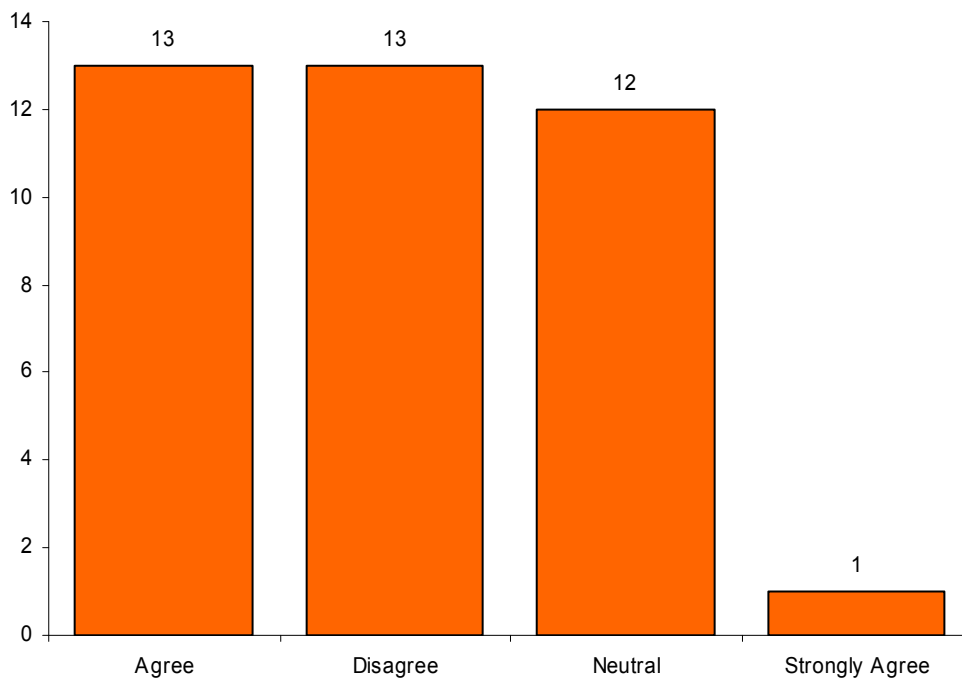
Figure 4: Response to Proposition 1.1 by gender



Proposition 1.2: *Line managers are happy to do performance management.*

Figure 5 below did not give a clear distinction between respondents perception towards proposition 2. However, the percentage of respondents who agree and disagree were the same (13%), only 1% of the respondents strongly agreed that Line managers are happy to do performance management.

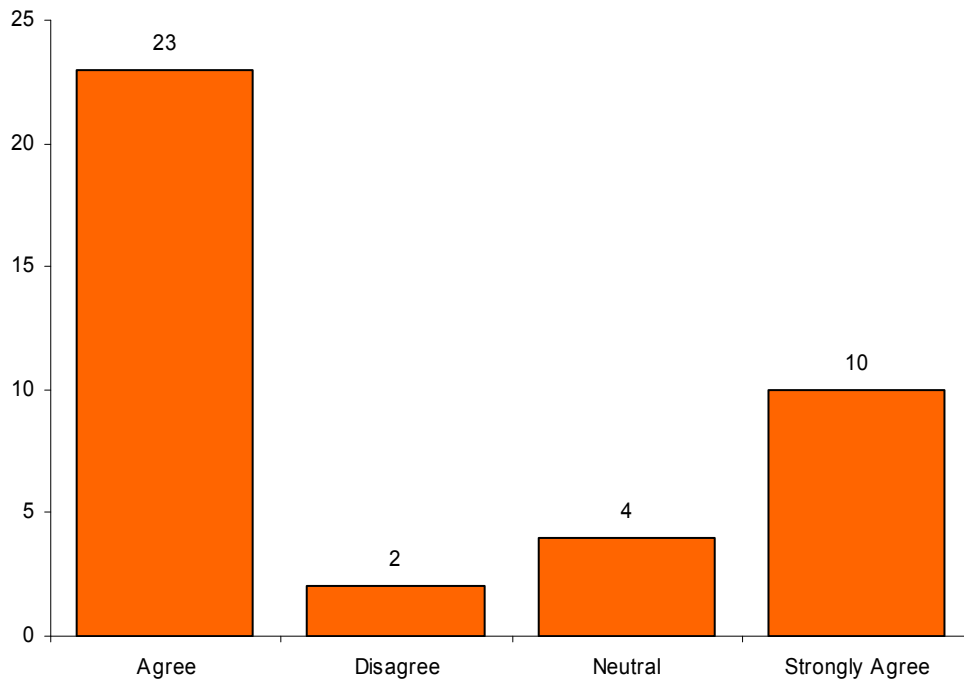
Figure 5: Response to proposition 1.2



Proposition 1.3: *Line managers are happy to develop the employees.*

Figure 6 below indicates that 23% of the respondents agree that line managers are happy to develop the employees, while 10% strongly agreed. However, only 2% disagreed. This suggests that people support proposition 3: line managers are happy to develop the employees.

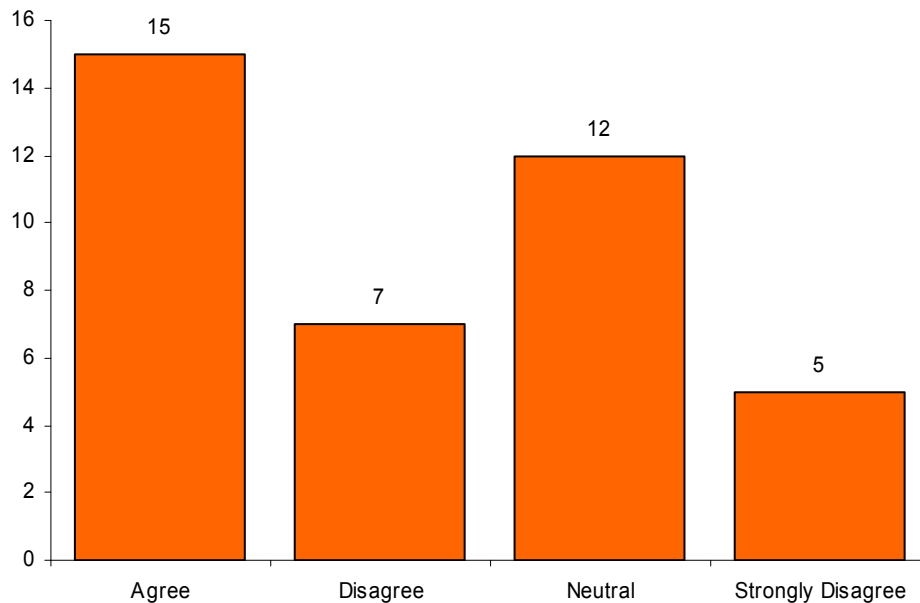
Figure 6: Response to proposition 1.3



Proposition 1.4: *Line managers feel confident to deal with employee's grievances and disciplinaries.*

Figure 7 below indicates that 15% of the respondents agree that Line managers feel confident to deal with employee's grievances, while 7% disagreed to the proposition. Although 12% of them had no idea nor perception, and 5% strongly agreed to the proposition.

Figure 7: Response to proposition 1.4

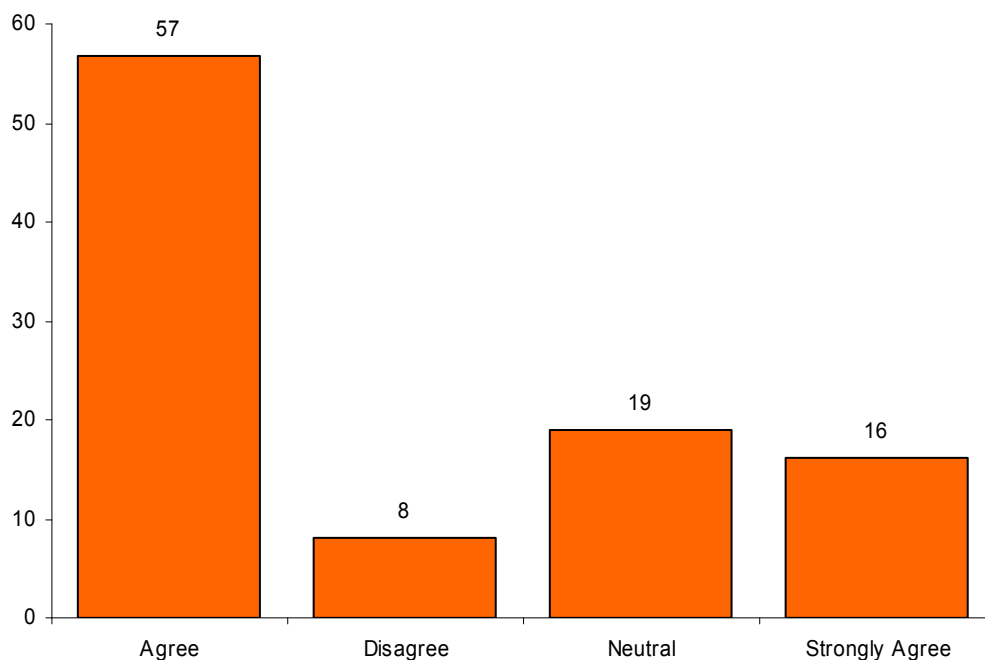


5.3 Propositions 2: Competence

Proposition 2.1: *HR competence rate high as a requirement for line managers' employment.*

Figure 8 below indicates that 57% of the respondents agreed that HR competence rates high as a requirement for line managers' employment. While only 8% of the respondents disagreed, 19% had no opinion and 16% of the respondents strongly agreed.

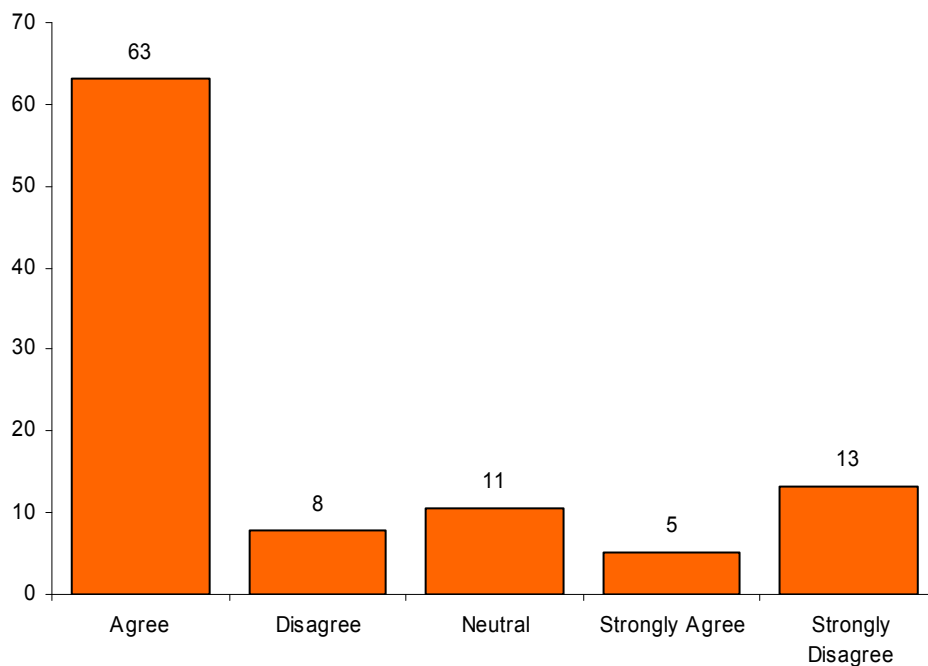
Figure 8: Response to proposition 2.1



Proposition 2.2: HR competences are acquired through training.

Figure 9 below indicates that 63% of the respondents agreed that HR competences are acquired through training. 8% disagreed. Although 11% had no opinion, 13% of the respondents strongly agreed.

Figure 9: Response to proposition 2.2

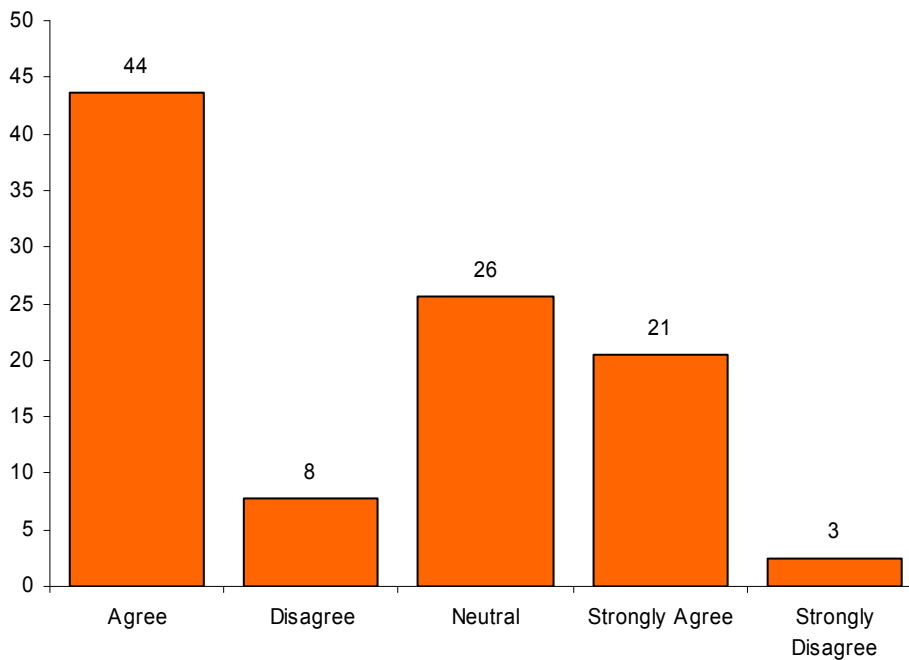


5.4 Propositions 3: Recognition

Proposition 3.1: *HR forms at least a quarter of line managers' performance measurement.*

Figure 10 below indicates that 44% of the respondents agreed that HR forms at least a quarter of line managers' performance measurement. Only 8% of the respondents disagreed. 26% had no opinion.

Figure 10: Response to proposition 3.1

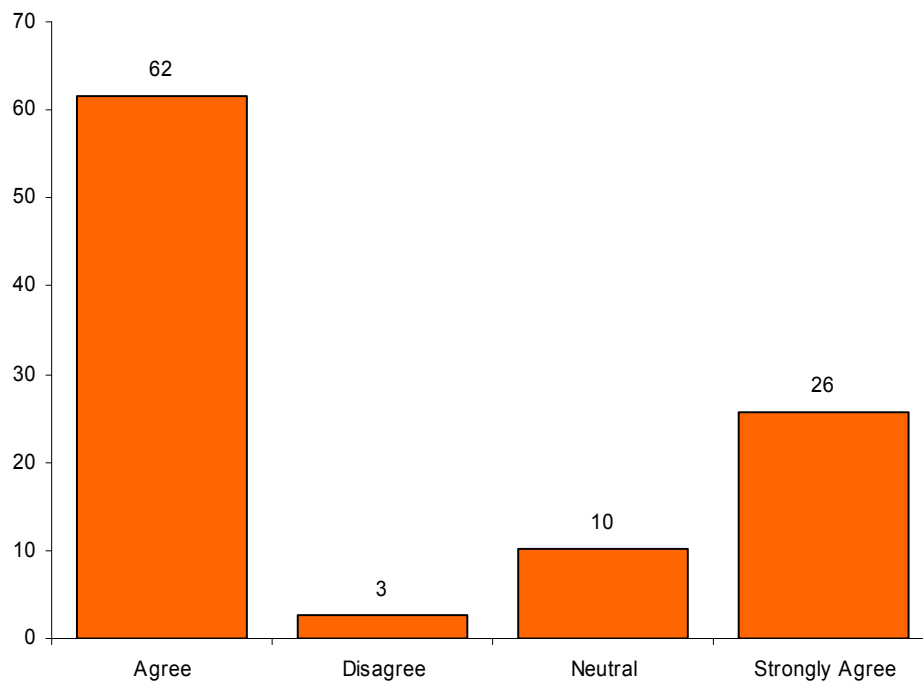


5.5 Propositions 4: Management and HR Staff support

Proposition 4.1: *The advice received from HR staff is valuable.*

Figure 11 below indicates that 62% of the respondents agreed that the advice received from HR staff is valuable. 3% of the respondents disagreed. 10% had no opinion.

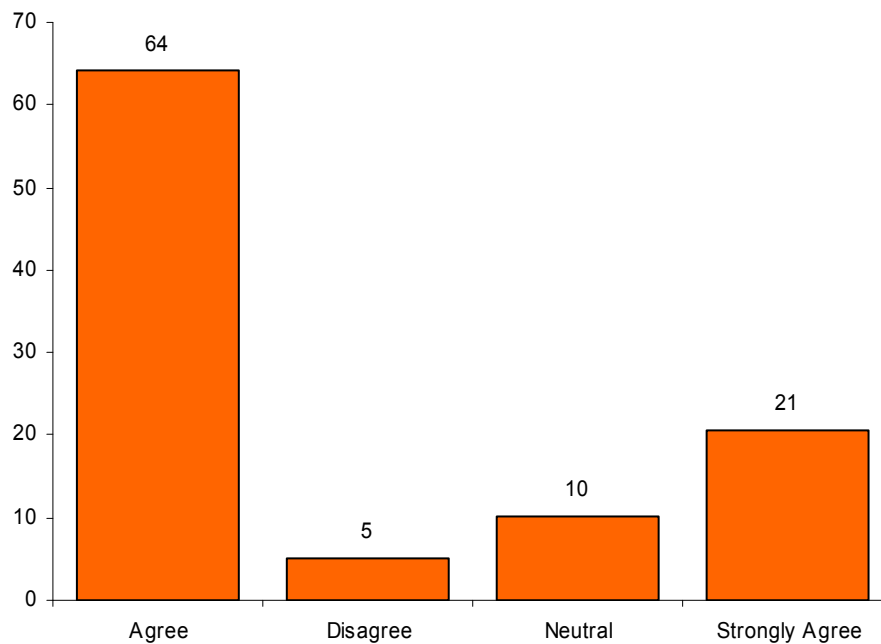
Figure 11: Response to proposition 4.1



Proposition 4.2: *The line managers use the advice from HR staff most of the time.*

Figure 12 below indicates that 64% of the respondents agreed that the line managers use the advice from HR staff most of the time. 5% of the respondents disagreed. 21% of the respondents strongly agreed, 10% had no opinion.

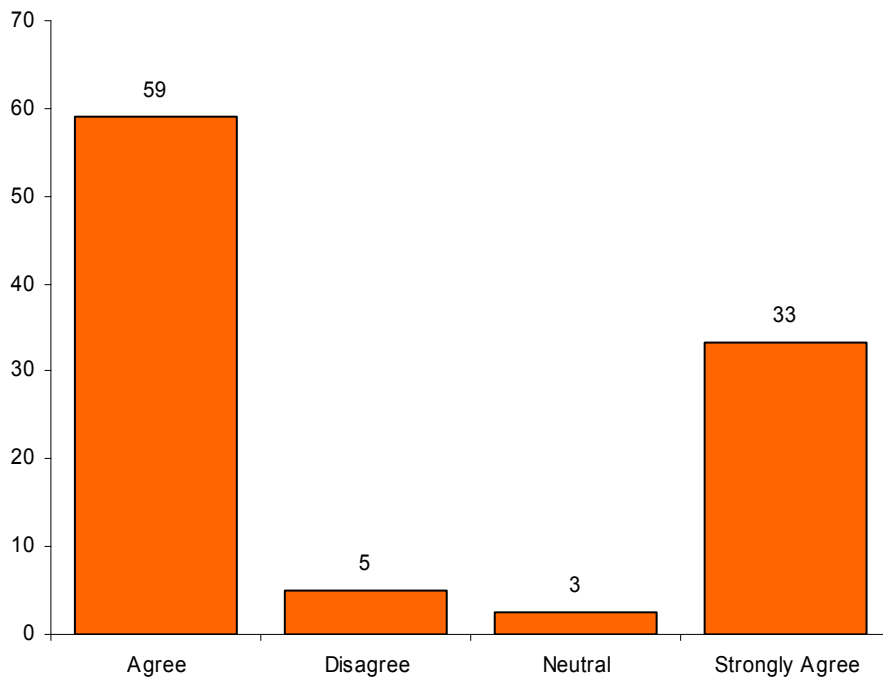
Figure 12: Response to proposition 4.2



Proposition 4.3: *HR functions are as important to management as other activities (e.g. product line, market advantage, research and developments).*

Figure 13 below indicates that 59% of the respondents agreed that HR functions are as important to management as other activities (e.g. product line, market advantage, research and developments). 5% disagreed while 33% strongly agreed. 3% of the respondents had no opinion.

Figure 13: Response to proposition 4.3



Chapter 6 Discussion of Results

6.1 Demographics

The research was done based on Pretoria Portland cement operations divisions. The company consists of seven factories situated in South Africa in the following provinces, Gauteng, Limpopo, North West province, Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces. Due to the nature of the activities performed in these factories, men are mainly employed. This is also visible from the percentage of women in the line management positions being 15 % versus 85% of the men and also because of the South African background, the highest percentage of line managers are whites.

Line managers as indicated by CIPD staff-facts sheet (Dec 2005) are usually promoted from the ranks of employees hence a high percentage of managers have matric as a qualification.

6.2 Proposition 1 Workload Pressure

- **Proposition 1.1:** *HR is important and is one of the top 3 Fields (e.g. Production, Quality, Customer service, Risk, Maintenance, Technical, Research and Development, Sales and Marketing) in the organisation.*

The literature indicates that line managers' resistance are due to work overload, conflicting priorities (Marchington et al. 1993) but this did not imply that they consider HR not important. The questionnaire handed to line managers showed that they do believe that HR is important and more than 60% ranked (see figure 3) HR to be in the top 3 fields. The line managers do realise that HR is the ticket to be competitive in today's environment and cannot be copied.

Even though most line managers see the importance of HR, 28% disagreed and 10% were neutral. This indicates that these managers haven't realised the importance of HR and this is where the HR staff are suppose to come in and guide them.

Looking at the gender, women have a higher percentage (see figure 4) of agreement as compared to men. This may indicate the strong policies and procedures the organisation have, as women in most cases have to balance the work and family and a good HR can enable and support this balance.

- ***Proposition 1.2: Line managers are happy to do performance management.***

Drucker (1974) stated setting objectives and measurement as part of the management job. The survey done showed very interesting but contradicting statement from the proposition 1.1 as the percentage agreeing (13%), figure 5, to the statement that line managers are happy to do performance management was similar to those disagreeing (13%) and neutral (12%).

The performance management forms a critical part of the organisation that is focusing on the employees as it forms a base for recognition, development and improvements. The performance management if done very well will help line managers to manage the employees to perform according to set standards as it identifies what is expected of employees in a set period.

The confusion in performance management is brought about that line managers need to discuss with their employees the progress towards achieving the set goal and give where necessary recognition and also guide, coach and mentor where the goals are falling behind and this takes most of the time. This part of guiding, coaching and mentoring may be viewed by line managers as a waste of time as they deem other things important like production targets as stated by Earnshaw et al. (2000) and Renwick (2000). The other affecting factor may also be accredited to being incompetent to deal with performance management.

- **Proposition 1.3:** *Line managers are happy to develop the employees.*

People development is according to Drucker (1974) one of the line managers' job. Figure 6 show that 33% of the line managers agreed to the statement as compared to those that disagreed and neutral, 2% and 4% respectively that they are happy to develop employees. This supports what Whittaker and Marchington (2003) found in their research that line managers were keen to take on activities that are related explicitly to the development of their team

This could also be attributed to line managers' knowledge that competent employees will perform a better, quality work and their performance will be higher.

- **Proposition 1.4:** *Line managers feel confident to deal with employees' grievances and disciplinary procedures.*

In managing the employees, the line managers have ensured that they are geared up to deal with all situations related to the employees. Figure 7 showed that 20% agreed that they are confident dealing with the grievances and disciplinary procedures with 12% being neutral and 7% disagreed. The percentage neutral is high and indicating mixed responses. This may also be accredited to competency and workload. Grievances and disciplinary also in some cases results in broken trust, confrontations of which line managers if

possible would like to avoid. This may also affect the team morale and the team performance to go down.

Summary

As found by the literature, line managers are willing to take on their HR responsibilities but due to workload and other pressing jobs they are responsible for, makes it difficult to dedicate enough time to HR responsibilities. Hence workload pressure could be a detractor for the effective HRM, as taken from the resistance in doing the performance management (Proposition 1.2) and dealing with grievances and disciplinaries (Proposition 1.4)

6.3 Proposition 2 Competence

- **Proposition 2.1:** *HR competence rate high as a requirement for line managers' employment.*

HR competencies form a basis of happy, motivated employees, hence the importance of the HR skills. 73% (figure 8) of the line managers agreed that HR competence is the requirements when they are being employed. This contradicts what Cunningham and Hyman (1999) found that line managers lack sufficient skills and competencies to carry out their HRM roles

successfully. This was also the view of other researches like Lowe (1992), Hutchinson and Wood as they found HR skills to be barriers.

The requirement for HR competency for line managers is important because first the success of HRM in an organisation depends on it and also as stated on CIPD staff-Factsheet (Dec 2005), line managers are usually promoted through the ranks, they are competent on technical fields and they may neglect the employee needs as they strive to achieve their set goal.

- **Proposition 2.2:** *HR competencies are acquired through training.*

About 63% (figure 9) of the line managers agreed that the HR skills are acquired by training which contradicts the concerns Whittaker and Marchington (2003, p251) had that line managers believe that for HR what you need is “common sense”. These concerns were raised before by Cunningham and Hyman as they found that line managers felt that competencies were gained from a mixture of common sense and experience and that training was unnecessary.

Summary

From the survey we saw that the line managers acknowledged that HR competence rates high as a requirement for line managers’ employment which imply that the recruitment teams need to be critical when selecting the

right candidate. This may affect the success of HRM. If the line managers are not competent, as found by other researchers, this will bring failure to the effective HRM. HR competencies can be both the detractor and enhancer of effective HRM.

6.4 Proposition 3 Recognition

- ***Proposition 3.1: HR forms at least a quarter of the Line managers' performance measurement.***

Performance management is used by organisations to determine the remuneration of employees and also in organisations that have gainshare and incentive schemes in place. Line managers will see that their efforts are being recognised when the HR roles forms a better part of the performance measurements.

The survey indicated that more than 60% of line managers agreed and strongly agreed (figure 10) that HR forms at least a quarter of their performance measurement. The performance measurement of line managers regarding the HR roles will ensure that they are rewarded and recognised accordingly.

Liu and McMurray (2004) in their research findings indicated that the lack of reward and recognition, career opportunity and fair and equitable treatment were the key issues affecting the team leaders' job satisfaction.

Summary

The unhappiness due to recognition of employees is identified as a key issue affecting the team leaders' job satisfaction. The line managers' role in HR need to be measured so that recognition due can be given. Since recognition affects the line managers' job satisfaction, this may detract or enhance the HRM effectiveness in the organisation.

6.5 Proposition 4 Management and HR staff Support.

- **Proposition 4.1:** *The advice received from HR staff is valuable*

The survey showed that the line managers, 88 % (see figure 11) agreed and strongly agreed that the advice received from HR staff is valuable. Considering that the line managers are promoted through ranks it is good if they found HR staff advice to be valuable as they need to ask for help from HR staff when they are in doubt in dealing with employees. The HR staff advice and guidance is valuable because without it as found by Genhard and Kelly (1997), the line managers are unlikely to acquire sufficient competence in people management skills to improve organisational effectiveness.

- **Proposition 4.2:** *The line managers' use the advice from HR staff most of the time.*

The line managers as shown in figure 12, 85% agreed and strongly agreed to these statements indicating that the information received is relevant and helpful. Considering that line managers are said not to be competent regarding people skills, the score in this survey is good. Line managers do need support from HR staff of which from the survey, they are happy with what they receive.

This contradicts what Brewster and Larsen (2000) found in their research that indicated that line manager's frustrations were due to HR advice often seen as unhelpful. HR staff is important as they need to provide support functions and systems in order to lead their team in carrying out and improving their value adding work

- **Proposition 4.4:** *HR functions are as important to management as other activities (e.g. product line, market advantage, research and developments)*

Liu and McMurray (2003) commented that maturity of the team structure, trend of productivity improvement and the demand of team effectiveness demand that the role of team leaders to change and be more people centred approach, higher interpersonal communication skills. The importance of

human resource should not be the line managers' concerns only but top management should show their commitment.

The survey indicated in figure 13 that 92% of line managers agreed and strongly agreed that HR functions are as important as other activities. The management realises that employees give the organisations the competitive advantage to enable them in being leaders.

Summary

The senior management and the HR staff play an important role as enhancers for the effectiveness of HRM, the absence of which may affect the line managers' job satisfaction. The credibility of the advices received from HR staff is important as line managers are dependent on them

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research was to identify the factors that enhance and detract the effectiveness of HRM. This chapter highlights the main findings of the research. It will also include recommendations for organisations and recommendations for future research.

7.2 Findings

The research focused on four factors that could have an impact on the successful implementation on the Human Resource Management. These factors were the following:

- Workload Pressure
- Competencies
- Recognition
- Management and HR staff support

The role of the line managers in the success of HRM implementation is critical and how they perceive HRM is of utmost importance.

- The survey showed that line managers do acknowledge their HR responsibilities and that HR is very important. The literature indicated that the primary responsibilities of line managers are in meeting service or production goals and hence their HRM role performances being problematic.
- Line managers do not seem too keen to do performance management. This supports what the literature identified that the line managers often felt frustrated as they could not devote sufficient time to HR issues. The literature also identified performance management and lack of training as one of the organisational constraints. Performance management is a base for continuous measurement of set goals and alignment of the resources needed to achieve the goals. If this is not done properly, this may impact on the HRM as it may end up with unhappy employees resulting to unhappy customers.
- Similar to performance management, line managers do not like dealing with grievances and disciplinaries which is in a way may or may not be linked to performance management.
- The survey also indicated that line managers perceive the competency in HR to be important and also that it is acquired through training not as

suggested by the literature that it is gained by a mixture of experience and common sense. The absence of skills to line managers will impact the HRM effectiveness negatively hence it is important to ensure that line managers are trained properly.

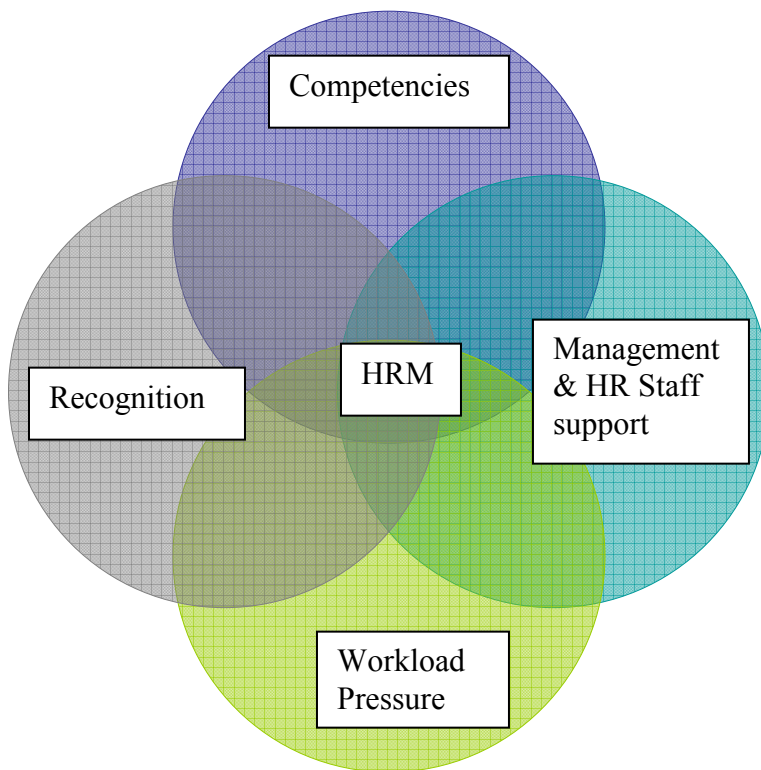
- The recognition of employees was identified in the literature as a key issue affecting the team leaders' job satisfaction. For the line managers to recognise that their HR role is being valued is when they are measured on how they are performing their HR responsibilities and this can be linked to remuneration or some sort of recognition. In the survey given to line managers they agreed that HR forms at least a quarter of line managers' performance measurement. Since recognition affects the line managers' job satisfaction, this may detract or enhance the HRM effectiveness in the organisation.
- The line managers were happy with the advice they receive from HR staff and that they make use of the advice most of the time. This is contradicting what the literature indicated that line managers were frustrated that often the advice from HR was unhelpful. The support of HR staff to line managers is crucial as they have to continuously train them and the credibility of their advices will affect the HRM effectiveness. The literature also argued that in the absence of HR support, the HRM strategic integration is significantly impaired.
- The line managers indicated that they receive enough support from management. The literature made a comment that the relationship

between the line managers and senior managers made a significant difference to the willingness of line managers to do more than expected. The literature also indicated that the management's attitude as one of the factors which could be the barriers of effective implementation of HRM.

7.3 Recommendations to stakeholders

The four factors workload pressure, competencies, recognition and the management and HR staff support are crucial to the effectiveness of HRM. These depending on the extent may enhance or detract the effectiveness of HRM. The organisations should focus on open communication channels and also actively empower their line managers by providing them with the means, ability and accountability to do the work properly. Figure 14 below depicts the model that summarises all the findings and must serve as a quick reference to organisations to facilitate the understating of the impacts of these four factors. The model depicts that the four factors identified are linked to each other and have in one way or the other affect the effectiveness of HRM, hence the HRM being in the middle. It is important to balance these factors and eliminate to issues that causes the detractors.

Figure 14 Summary Model of the factors affecting the effectiveness of HRM



7.4 Recommendations for future research

Line managers acknowledge that they are the right people to deal with the employees as it shortens decisions time delays and are the people who know more about what is going on with the employees on the day to day activities but if they are not prepared when taking the HR roles, this may result in the systems failure and unhappy employees resulting in unhappy customers. The research was based mainly on identifying the factors that may enhance and detract the effectiveness of the HRM. Further research needs to be done on

- The extent these factors (Workload pressure, Competency, Recognition and Management and HR staff support) may enhance or detract the effectiveness of HRM.
- The adequacy of the support systems in place to ensure that the line manager performs their HR responsibilities satisfactory.
- The interrelationship between the workplace pressure, competency, recognition and Management and HR staff support where the HR has been devolved to line managers.

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Appendix B: The sample

Sample		
Department	Position	Number
Quality	Chemist	7
	Manager	7
Risk	Manager	7
Admin	Accountant	
	Manager	7
Electrical	Foreman	7
	Manager	7
Customer Service	Manager	5
	Foreman	5
Production	Manager	7
	Prod. Superintendent	6
Quarry	Manager	5

Total	70
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