Integrating organisational and individual performance management systems for improved foster care service delivery

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Abstract

Despite efforts by the South African government to manage public sector performance, the Department of Social Development (DSD) is facing lawsuits for failing to provide public value to the foster care placement beneficiaries. This article examines the integration of organisational and individual performance management systems to enhance foster care service delivery in Waterberg District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. A parallel convergent mixed-method research design was adopted, and drew on the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and thematic analysis to analyse the impact of integrating organisational and individual performance management systems amongst social workers. The PCA findings accentuate the significant role of strategic human resources management, work experience, and performance management delivery systems. Furthermore, performance targets as critical elements to enhance effective foster care service delivery in South Africa is highlighted. In complementing the PCA findings, the thematic analysis attributed the failure to manage and address the challenges associated with the backlog in foster care by the Department of Social Development as a consequence of misalignment between strategic intent, workforce, and internal integration between different programmes at the operational level, in particular between social work and community development programmes. Peer review procedures should be designed to enhance the effectiveness of the performance management deployment system. Consequently, strategic human resource management practices should correspond with the department's resources and needs to enhance performance and service quality.

Keywords: Integrated; Organisational Performance, Individual Performance; Foster Care Service Delivery; Department of Social Development; South Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

New Public Management (NPM) responds to the Public Administration constraints and could be adapted adequately to meet the demands of a dynamic market economy. NPM focuses on a decentralised management system underpinned by monitoring and evaluation, performance management and accountability (Robinson, 2015; Munzhedzi, 2021). According to Andersen, Boesen, & Pedersen, (2016), performance management is considered an element of the NPM framework and a significant component to ensure a high level of accountability in the public service through performance standards. Moreover, NPM demands a paradigm shift from input to output and outcomes. Two types of performance: Individual and Organisational are key towards public sector service delivery. Individual performance refers to each individual's efforts during a performance cycle, which could be evaluated by management based on one or more criteria, including but not limited to teamwork, people skills, organisational skills, job satisfaction, and employee retention. On the other hand, organisational performance refers to the following government activities: planning, implementing, evaluating, and reporting the effectiveness of its policies and programmes (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020). An organisational performance management goal is to implement systematic controls in the management process to steer and regulate the activities of an organisation to achieve agreed-upon objectives (Mackie, 2008; Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020).

The NPM was adopted as a necessary strategy in Section 9 of the South African Treasury Regulation (2012) to promote effective, efficient, economical, and equitable service delivery. Per the NPM, Section 195 of Chapter 10 of the Republic of South Africa Constitution, 1996, crafted the introduction of the Performance Management Delivery System (PMDS) in Public Administration by empowering the Public Service Commission to propose measures to ensure efficient, effective, and efficient performance. The adoption of the NPM in the public service was meant to solve pre-existing public administrative performance management challenges. However, twenty-six (26) years after the transitional reforms of democracy, the NPM has not fully succeeded in adequately enhancing the South African public sector performance management systems (Klenk & Reiter, 2019; Munzhedzi, 2021). National departments such as the Department of Social Development (DSD) still face litigation for failing to provide the beneficiaries public value to foster care placement. The DSD, in particular, has failed to execute its obligation to create foster care placement extension orders timeously. This led to a lapse in placement orders, backlog and non-renewal of foster care grants by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) (DPME, 2019; Maregele, 2019). Measuring individual and organisational performance serve as a pointer to understanding what is considered high or optimal performance in the public sector. It is a requirement for accountable, transparent, and development of the democratic dispensation's goals (Beeri, Uster, & Vigoda-Gadot, 2019). Ghosh, Long & Murphy (2017) posits that the most effective performance management and measurement systems incorporate both quantitative

and qualitative measures. Employees will have a better understanding of what determines success if an organisation can capture and report on quantitative benchmarks for average and high-performance standards. The article expects to resolve the performance conundrum in the DSD by utilising the parallel convergent mixed methods research design to identify the impact of coordination on the performance management system applied within the DSD in the Waterberg District in Limpopo, South Africa to enhance effective foster care service delivery.

Three research questions are addressed, namely:
- How does aligning individual performance impact on organisational performance, achieve goals and effective quality service delivery when rendering foster care services?
- What is the impact of adopting the strategic role of Human Resources Management (HRM) on coordination and alignment to enhance the implementation of PMDS?
- Is the quantitative performance scale suitable to enhance service standards?

The article may benefit the DSD to enhance coordination and implementation of the PMDS. Moreover, recommendations will be provided on the benefits of replacing contemporary HRM with the strategic role of Human Resource Management to align PMDS, adopt appropriate approaches to measure performance, and communicate goals and objectives effectively to enhance efficient service delivery. It also adds to the existing literature on human resource management, in particular, PMDS policy implementation, by refining the system to harmonise with other components of the organisation. Ultimately, this study enhances both employee and organisational performance in public administration.

The article is structured as follows: the introduction is followed by a literature review on management and organisational performance; materials and methods, results, discussion, and finally, conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance, according to Ile, Eresia-Eke & Allen-Ile (2011:55); Chalem, Okar, Choqui & El Alami (2016), is a multidimensional concept that goes beyond a mere setting of goals. Before the organisation can manage performance, it must fully appreciate the concept so that everyone who is involved can have some shared meaning and understanding to avoid ambiguities during the implementation phase.

Munzhedzi (2021) views performance through different organisational level lenses, and suggests that the number of outcomes achieved at the organisational and individual levels must be linked to the totality of accomplishments. Thao & Hwang (2015); and Ghosh, Long & Murphy (2017) contend that merely achieving necessary behaviour and results cannot be considered performance if the quantity and quality of production, output timeliness, job participation, performance of completed work and efficiency thereof is not considered. As a result, performance is a combination of behaviour and results,

including the amount and quality of those outputs and the consumption and utility of resources (time, physical, and financial) to complete and produce the results.

Performance management is characterised by setting clear corporate policies, resource aims and strategies to outline strategic intent. The goals are divided into specific targets and standards which are monitored regularly (Govender & Bussin, 2020). Kapur (2020) argued that performance management is a strategic and incorporated approach aimed to enhance employee performance through developing the capabilities of both individual and team to maximise and sustain organisational performance. According to Govender & Bussin, 2020, this could only be accomplished by enabling both supervisors and employees to enhance organisational direction, traction, speed and ensure that these always remain focused on achieving the organisations strategic objectives.

Govender & Bussin (2020) submit that performance management is continuous in nature and does not only involve the identification, measurement and development of the performance of an individual and team. It links individual performance and teams with the organisation's overall goals and objectives. Similarly, Beeri *et al.* (2019) argue that performance management plays a critical role in creating employee awareness of the value of their contribution towards organisational success. The process creates a platform of dialogue between the supervisors and those under their supervision. This helps to ensure that individual employee and team behaviour is aligned towards the organisation's goals, objectives and not deviate from the focus.

Performance management is underpinned by two prominent theories, namely goal setting and control theories. These theories are necessary to evaluate the DSD performance in rendering effective service delivery. The goal-setting theory suggests that during planning, all parties involved in the organisation, including employees at low levels, need to be brought included to set goals they intend to achieve in the future to enhance both individual and organisational performance (Locke & Latham, 2006). Most importantly, Locke & Latham (2006) argue that employee involvement in this regard does not only serve as a requirement to enhance commitment and acceptance of the goals, but necessary to achieve goal effectiveness and cultivate a better understanding thereof. Relating the theory to the DSD, employee behaviour is influenced by conscious goals and intentions. Goal-setting is three-pronged. It clarifies performance expectations in a supervisory relationship between employees and across sub-units within an organisation. Thus, it serves as a reference structure for task feasibility (Khumalo, 2015). Similarly, the control theory complements the goal theory by underlining the significance of aligning all the systems actions with the overall goals and objectives of an organisation (Brown, O'Kane, Mazumda & McCracken, 2018). The theory advocates the need to monitor and evaluate employees constantly based on organisational standards and the same employees to be rewarded accordingly (Akanksha & Indra, 2016). Furthermore, it underscores the need for proper recruitment and retention of employees with necessary skills and competencies. The goal theory is more relevant when evaluating

the consistency of the system's output with predefined performance measurements; simultaneously, it allows amendments in the advent of any deviation by those who control the system. This model provides a competitive advantage and the organisation can be in a sound position to cope with changes from the external environment. This is probable only if the organisation executes control and performance management more effectively and efficiently. Ultimately, rewarding employees and acknowledging their performance could also be utilised as another means of controlling 'employee' performance (Akanksha & Indra, 2016).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article adopted the mixed methods approach to expound upon the impact of integrating individual performance management to ensure effective foster care service delivery in the DSD. A mixed-method approach is defined as a social inquiry which employs two or more research approaches, processes, and theories (Kumar, 2014; Creswell & Clark, 2011). According to Kumar (2014), the two overarching reasons for using this approach in a research study are related to the ability to provide correct answers to all research questions in all circumstances, and utilising more than one method, is likely to provide a more robust and comprehensive image of the problem than a single approach. The convergent parallel design was used in which quantitative and qualitative data was gathered concurrently and the results were combined to offer a complete overview of the investigation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The qualitative findings complemented those of the quantitative, and focused on themes which relate to the challenges of aligning individual and organisational performance to render effective foster care service delivery in the DSD.

3.1 Quantitative method

The quantitative strand was based on a structured questionnaire presented to 80 randomly selected social workers from a sample of 187 in the DSD, Waterberg District, in Limpopo, South Africa This corresponds to Qualtrics' (2021) sampling guidelines, which recommends that an appropriate representative sample should be at least 20-30 percent of the population. A sample size calculator was utilised to calculate the latter, at 95% Confidence Interval, and +/-5% margin of error (Qualtrics, 2021). The structured questionnaire explored three research objectives: First; identify the impact of aligning individual performance on organisational performance, achieve goals, and effective quality service delivery when rendering foster care services. Second, to determine the impact of SRHRM on coordination and implementation of PMDS and communicate goals. Third, the impact of quantitative performance measurements on the quality of services. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was utilised to analyse the findings. PCA is a popular exploratory data analysis approach to manage multicollinear data that cannot be addressed by standard regression analysis (Hess & Hess, 2018; Casal, Losada, Barreira & Maneiro, 2021).

3.1.1 Model Specification

The PCA data analysis modelling entails extraction of few orthogonal linear relationships between variables which captures related information from a set of variables by transforming these interconnected parameters into a new set of non-correlated variables known as principal components effectively (Anyadike, 2009). The PCA reduces data by breaking it down into smaller connected categories from a broad range of variables. Each group identifies the underlying dimension of the contributory variables which constitutes the group (Arai, Tsubaki & Sagisaka, 2021).

According to Arai, Tsubaki & Sagisaka (2021), the PCA is premised on the following basic formulae:

Assuming $X = (x_1, x_2, ..., x_p)$ the original random vector. Also assuming $y_1, y_2, ..., y_p$ represent the linear combinations of the original variables so that they are new variables. Then,

$$y_1 = w_{11}x_1 + w_{12}x_2 + ... + w_{1p}x_p \qquad (1)$$

$$y_p = w_{p1}x_1 + w_{p2}x_2 + ... + w_{pp}x_p \qquad (2)$$

Where the coefficients w_{ij} are the weights of the jth variables ($j = 1, 2, ..., p$) for the ith -new variable. The values of w_{ij} ($j = 1, 2, ..., p$) are called factor loadings of ith - principal component. These are determined to maximise the variance of the new variables, meeting equations 3 and 4.

$$\sum_{j=1}^{p} w_{ij}^2 = 1 \sum_{j=1}^{p} w_{ij}^2 = 1 \qquad (3)$$

$$\sum_i \sum_j w_i w_j = 0 \sum_i \sum_j w_i w_j = 0 \qquad (4)$$

Equation 3 is used to correct the new variables and equation scale, while equation 4 implies that the new axes are orthogonal to each other (Arai *et al.,* 2021).

The PCA accounts for the overall variance of variables. The components represent the variable common variance (Hess & Hess, 2018). The unobserved latent factor is a perfect linear variable for data reduction (Hess & Hess, 2018). The variables are standardised to quantify the principal components (Mean= 0 and Standard Deviation (SD)= 1). The key components, extracted from the correlation matrix calculated on standardised variables, become eigenvectors.

The PCA allows for translation of organisational and individual performance management system factors to enhance foster care service delivery into new predictor variables, referred to as Principal Components (PC), while retaining as much precision as possible. For example, the first transformed PC captured the most information about organisational and individual performance management system indicators adopted by DSD social workers, and each subsequent PCs explained less information of the

same organisational and individual performance management system variables. The Kaiser criterion was used to calculate the number of significant principal components (PC), which states that only Eigenvalues greater than 1 is retained and following Tabachnick & Fidell (2001) loadings greater than 0.4 are interpretable. The primary advantage of utilising the PCA in this study is that each is uncorrelated, capturing unique information within each individual's organisational and individual performance management system indicator which affects foster care service delivery.

The factor loadings were analysed using factor analysis. According to Hess & Hess, (2018), the initial loadings are satirical because these do not reflect a "simple structure." The PCA used the Promax (Oblique) rotation to enhance interpretability, which was influenced by Gorsuch (1983) and McLeod *et al* (2001). The Promax rotation attempts to match a target matrix with a straightforward structure (Hess & Hess, 2018).

3.2 Qualitative method

The qualitative strand draws on non-probability purposive sampling utilised through semi-structured interviews administered to ten key informants from the DSD Waterberg District, Limpopo. The purposive sampling technique was utilised based on the researcher's judgement of the selected sample which provided the best information to achieve the intended objectives of the study. The respondents were selected based on their level of experience at the DSD. The sample size was based on data saturation, that is, interviews were conducted with the available key informants at the DSD Waterberg District, Limpopo. The key informants were selected not because they are representative of the general population, but consider the ability to respond to critical issues being studied (Lavrakas, 2008).
The professional profiles of the key informants (respondents) is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Selected key 'informants' profiles

Respondent number	Gender	Designation	Years of experience
1	Female	Generic Social Worker	8 'years' generic social work
2	Male	Social worker -Probation services	7 'years' probation services
3	Male	Social Worker- NGO's funding	10 'years' NGO's funding and monitoring
4	Male	Social Worker-Statutory service coordination	10 'years' statutory services
5	Male	Generic Social Worker	7 'years' generic social work
6	Female	Social Worker-Statutory service coordination	12 'years' statutory services

7	Female	Social Worker- NGO's funding	13 'years' NGO's funding and monitoring
8	Male	Generic Social worker	3 'years' generic social work
9	Male	Generic Social worker	5 'years' generic social work
10	Female	Generic Social worker	4 'years' generic social work

Source: Authors iterations

The generated responses were analysed through the thematic analysis overarched by the objectives of the study, namely: *Impact of aligning social worker performance to render foster care services; Impact of SHRM on coordination and implementation of PMDS and communication of goals;* and *Impact of quantitative performance measurements on the quality of rendered services*. The thematic analysis involves identifying themes and patterns in individual and group attitudes, behaviour or values. Five steps underpin the approach, namely: familiarising with data; developing initial codes; scouring and reviewing themes; exploring, defining and identifying themes and analysing and compiling conclusions. The validity of the approach is to gather data and then allow patterns of experiences or perceptions to evolve from the new information (Carey, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings separately, that is, the quantitative outcomes is followed by the qualitative. The quantitative findings were drawn from PCA through structured questionnaires acquired from 52 randomly selected social workers responsible for rendering foster care services in the Waterberg District. The qualitative findings were extracted from the thematic analysis on ten purposively selected key informant interviews from the DSD Waterberg District, Limpopo.

4.1. Quantitative results

This sub-section presents the principal component analysis of structured questionnaires gathered from a random sample of 80 social workers employed in the DSD in Waterberg District. Of the 80 distributed questionnaires, 52 were returned. The 52 respondents comprised of 34 females and 18 males.

4.1.1 Principal Component Analysis

The promax rotation drawing on the Kaiser Normalization was utilised in PCA extraction. The PCA extracted four (4) components with Eigenvalues greater than 1. The components accounted for 77 percent of the total variation. This implied that the PCA explained 77 percent of the organisational and individual performance management system to enhance foster care service delivery. The total variance is reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	12.423	56.466	56.466	9.987
2	2.042	9.282	65.748	6.816
3	1.436	6.529	72.277	9.264
4	1.042	4.735	77.012	7.236
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				

Source: SPSS Iterations, 2021

The recommendations provided by Tabachnick & Fidell (1996) that loadings which are greater than 0.4 can be meaningfully interpreted, Table 3 below presents the factor loadings to the 4 components acquired through the PCA Promax rotation analysis.

Table 3: Promax Rotated Component matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Experience and understanding of PMDS		0.926*		
Systems Alignment		0.861*		
Impact of PMDS on performance		0.754*		
Performance alignment		0.682*	0.439*	
Implementation of PMDS			0.845*	
PMDS enhancement of Unity of purpose			0.550*	
PMDS Achievement of purposes			0.585*	
Cultivation of learning and growth	0.661*		0.433*	
Cultivation of Performance based culture	0.709*			
Alignment of strategic needs & workforce	0.546*			
Purpose served by strategic direction	0.436*			0.640*
Provision of strategic direction	0.792*			
HRM contribution on coordination	0.865*			
Integration of HRM and strategies	0.910*			
Account of HRM strategies to needs	0.917*			
HRM support to implementation	0.427*			
Purpose of targets on work				
Impact of targets on quality				0.784*
Impact of target on validity and reliability				0.591*
Validity and reliability of reported data			0.590*	
Meaning of achieved targets on performance			0.557*	0.738*
Evaluation of outcome and impact			0.717*	0.463*

- Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
- Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
- Rotation converged in 24 iterations.
    * The significant loadings exceeding +/-0.40

Source: Author's SPSS Iterations, 2021

4.1.1.1 Impact of aligning performance for social workers to render foster care services

The Eigenvalue of 12.423 was positive loaded on cultivation of learning and growth (.661); Cultivation of Performance based culture (.709); Alignment of strategic needs and workforce (.546); Purpose served by strategic direction (.436); Provision of strategic direction (.792); HRM contribution on coordination (.865); Integration of HRM and strategies (.910); Account of HRM strategies to needs (.917); and HRM support to implementation (.427).

4.1.1.2 Impact of SRHRM on coordination and implementation of PMDS and communication of goals

The Eigenvalue of 2.042 was positively loaded on Experience and understanding of PMDS (.926); Systems Alignment (.861); Impact of PMDS on performance (.754); and Performance alignment (.682). *Consequently, on the same objective,* the Eigenvalue of 1.436 was positively and significantly loaded on Performance alignment (.439); Implementation of PMDS (.845); PMDS enhancement of Unity of purpose (.550); PMDS Achievement of purposes (.585); and Cultivation of learning and growth (.433).

4.1.1.3 Impact of quantitative performance measurements on the quality of services

The Eigenvalue of 1.042 was positively loaded on Purpose served by strategic direction (.640); Impact of targets on quality (.784); Impact of target on validity and reliability (.591); Meaning of achieved targets on performance (.738); and Evaluation of outcome and impact (.463).

4.2. Qualitative results

In this sub-section, the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews from a sample of ten key informants (social workers working at five different municipalities within Waterberg District DSD) was examined. The responses were analysed utilising the thematic analysis. The findings complement the quantitative findings which are presented under similar objectives below.

4.2.1. Impact of aligning performance for social workers to render foster care services

In analysing data related to the first objective, identify the impact of social worker performance in rendering effective foster care services, an overarching theme is discussed.

4.2.1.1. Duplication of services

According to all ten key informants, the departmental programmes operate in isolation. This results in the duplication of services. For example, DSD and the DCD render similar programmes to beneficiaries. Hence, this duplication can be avoided. Six of the key informants cited a situation wherein their key results areas, the indicators require both social work and community development programmes to conduct household profiling or report on the number of families that have benefited from programmes offered by both departments. Moreover, having two different programmes in the same department and

performing the same duties is a waste of invaluable resources. Instead, it was recommended that they work in tandem, which would accrue a multiplier effect towards organisational performance.

According to the NGO's funding and monitoring social worker, who has 10 years' experience, stated that as a result of the pervasive disintegration of services in the department, various non-profit organisations submit the same portfolio of evidence to the same department twice, monthly and they are specifically monitored at various times and dates by both social work and community development programmes.

> "Like for now, we have a program for social relief of distress and community development also has a similar program. Consequently, they are doing household profiling, which we are also doing. At times, they distribute food parcels concurrently with us. It seems we are competing. "If we integrate, I think it is going to be very much more proper (Generic Social Worker, 8 years' experience)."

> "Currently, what we are doing is social work services. Community development officers do more or similar work in different ways. For example, we go to ECD centres for monitoring and they also do their own monitoring. For example, the following day, community development services also go to the same ECD for monitoring. Consequently, the department of finance will also go and do their own things. However, if we can be integrated and use one mode of transport, I think we will be adhering to PFMA policy so that we do not make unnecessary expenditures for the department. That is, there is currently a duplication of services.(Generic social worker, 7 years' experience) "

This exposes the scarcity of resources, because demand exceeds the supply. According to a generic social worker with a decade experience, this also creates confusion for the service users because they acquire conflicting statements from various programmes while working for the same organisation. Moreover, a 7-year-experienced generic social worker revealed that both performance and quality suffered a knock-on effect because they occasionally failed to perform their duties timeously and primary service delivery was affected.

4.2.2. Impact of SHRM on coordination and implementation of PMDS and communication of goals

The second objective of the study endeavoured to determine the impact of SHRM on coordination and alignment to enhance implementation of the PMDS policy and the communication of goals. Three themes are presented below.

4.2.2.1. Lack of capacity by supervisors

Lack of supervisor capacity was also identified as an impediment because the supervisors were unable to discharge their responsibilities in conformance with the PMDS, because they do not understand what the policy sought to achieve.

> "At times, I don't think the supervisors and the overseers have a clear understanding of what the policy seeks to achieve in broader terms (Social worker, probation services, 7 years' experience)."

> "I think my immediate supervisor is not well conversant with PMDS policy (Generic social worker, 3 years' experience)."

4.2.2.2. Poor planning and management of resources

A generic social worker with 8 years' experience; a probation services social worker with 7 years' experience and NGO' funding and monitoring social worker with a decade experience, attributed their unsatisfactory performance to resources which were not moving at the same pace with the developmental changes such as technological advancements. However, according to both the 10-year veteran statutory service person and the 7-year veteran generic social worker, the shortage of resources is a self-generated challenge. They attributed the shortage of transport to poor planning.

According to an 8-year experienced generic social worker, there is still an obsession with paper documentation in the department. The department should go 'green' and perform most if not all of their duties electronically to ease the management of data.

The generic social worker with 8 years' experience; probation services social workers with 7 years' experience, and an NGO funding and monitoring social worker with a decade experience, acknowledged that resources will remain limited. They underscored that the availability of resources in the department creates a paradox between available resources and services which need to be rendered. This is primarily the circumstance because one employee is expected to share an office. The demand for office accommodation is greater than the supply. To exacerbate matters, employees are expected to work in mobile offices which, at times, do not meet health and safety standards because these do not have cross ventilation, air conditioners. Moreover, the fire extinguishers are all expired. According to the three respondents, the conditions outlined above negatively impacts on their intervention. It compromises 'client' confidentiality because mobile offices are not soundproof. Above everything, poor planning and management of resources are the primary contributors to what they perceive to be challenges associated with resources. They revealed that if the limited resources are managed properly, the situation would be a positive one.

4.2.2.3. Incompetent HRM personnel

According to all the key informants, the appointment of unqualified personnel to supervise performance is a contributory element of the poor implementation of policy, because they fail to comprehend their mandate in accordance with PMDS. Consequently, the entire policy is rendered incapable to fulfil its original goals. According to both the 7-year experienced 'Social worker-probation services' and the 12-year experienced 'Social worker at statutory services', the system is not taken seriously because the staff responsible for the management of the system neither meet the requirements for the post, nor do they have the capacity for the role. They only gather and capture data.

When employees seek clarity about PMDS, the staff members are unable to provide them with responses because they claim that their role is to collect reviews and capture the names of people who submitted these alongside the ratings.

> "I believe this is because the HRD department is not well capacitated, as they are the ones that receive this performance agreement and assess the training needs of individual employees and try to respond to those needs. For instance, in our department we don't have a person who is appointed based on merit to be in the office of HRD or responsible for managing performance (Generic social worker, 4 years' experience)."

4.2.3. Impact of quantitative performance measurements on the quality of services

The third objective sought to establish the impact of developing an employee performance scale to measure the quality of services offered to the social service beneficiaries. Two themes emerged.

4.2.3.1. Compromised service standards

All key informants reported that quality of service is compromised because employees strive to reach higher targets and service delivery, particularly in social domains wherein outcome and impact is more important than quantity. Based on their experience, high and unrealistic targets encourage employees to falsify data during reporting and engage in signature campaigns or even falsify having conducted a campaign to meet the unreasonable targets. According to the decade old experienced NGO funding and monitoring respondent, and the generic social worker with 7 years' experience, to reach the allocated targets, they place awareness campaign attendance registers with the security guards at the gates or have attendance registers in the offices to capture each client's information who enters the premises. Hence, they are able to report persons on the fictitious registers as beneficiaries of an awareness campaign which had not been conducted. As a result, an incorrect impression is created that people on the ground are receiving services in a form of awareness campaigns, while the former is contrary.

> "I think generally the intention was to provide quality services. Unfortunately, because of the system, it rewards quantity. In other words, the system in place does not have any reward for

quality, but rewards quantity. Therefore, quality is being compromised unintentionally by quantity (Social Worker-Statutory service coordination, 12 years' experience)."

"In my opinion, the employer is not concerned with the quality of the employee. He is concerned with quantity. Yes, this is so because we have shifted from social work principles to service delivery principles and we are actually dealing with how many people we have met and how many people have received our services (NGO's funding and monitoring social worker, 10 years' experience)."

4.2.3.2. High targets - not evidence and research-based

The challenge of targets which is not neither research nor evidence-based or informed by needs was identified by key informants, 2, 3, 4 and 6. They reported that they do not know what informs their targets because they are not involved. According to a generic social worker with 10 years' experience, it can only be speculated that those targets are neither evidence-based nor based on anything tangible, because societal challenges on the ground are not addressed but rather what is perceived to be the challenge. Furthermore, they also revealed that they do not talk about the actual baseline on the ground. There are multiple disparities between the actual baseline and the allocated targets, which, they believe, paints a wrong impression of their performance.

"The targets are not evidence-based. They are just emotional targets coming from province, so the province allocates to the districts and districts divide them amongst supervisors and the supervisors divide the targets amongst the employees (Concludes an NGO's funding and monitoring social worker, with 10 years' experience)."

5. DISCUSSION

The findings are discussed concurrently in this section. The qualitative findings are utilised to support the quantitative findings. The quantitative findings are based on a standardised questionnaire completed by 52 social workers in the Waterberg District who provide foster care services. The qualitative findings are based on a thematic analysis of 10 key informant interviews conducted in Limpopo Province's DSD Waterberg District for social work related activities and management.

5.1 Impact of aligning performance for social workers to render foster care services

Drawing from the quantitative findings, component one strongly accentuated the role of human resources to enhance foster care service delivery. High levels of service delivery in foster care is a composite of better cultivation of performance-based culture in DSD. The contribution of human resource management through integration of such resources into various strategies and greater coordination of performance management are key antecedents. This dimension also revealed that human resources can do this by ensuring that the employees needs are taken care of by cultivating an

atmosphere of learning and growth. A human resource management approach - Total Quality Management (TQM) can help to develop such a learning and growing environment. TQM management tools such as leadership and training, rewards systems, and job designs, according to Wärnich, Carrell, & Elbert (2018), offers a comprehensive approach to performance that supports a work environment in which employees can work to the best of their ability. Furthermore, Shrouf, Al-Qudah, Khawaldeh, Obeidat & Rawashdeh (2020) argue that globally, organisations align their HRM strategies and best practices purposefully to deliver increased organisational efficiency and competitive advantage. According to (Mckinsey, 2020), human resource can be strategic partner of the organisation by ensuring that suitable talent is appointed to deliver the core mandate. This can be achieved by driving workforce planning, identify future core capabilities and reprioritise the talent shift through reskilling and upskilling significant portions thereof (Mckinsey, 2020). This concurs with one of the purposes of the South African Skills Development Act (1998), which aims to enhance the delivery of social services.

The key informants concurred with the findings from the PCA analysis. One overarching theme, the duplication of services was revealed to be detrimental to the organisation's goal to provide effective foster care service delivery. This, according to literature, creates two significant impediments towards success: establish multiple organisations within a single organisation, which compromises of efficiency and effectiveness; and departments compete for resources rather than develop ways to cooperate (National Performance Management Advisory Commission (NPMAC), 2010; Alessandra, 2019).

5.2 Impact of SRHRM on coordination and implementation of PMDS and communication of goals

Component two of the PCA relates to the impact of the most experienced employees on the delivery of foster care in DSD. Highly experienced employees understand the public sector performance management delivery system. Working in a given industry for several years and acquiring exposure helps an employee comprehend the company's culture, which leads to competency. Employee competence entails exhibiting the necessary ability to operate with precision in a service sector organisation and the ability to transfer those skills to another setting. As a result, long-term efficiency will be achieved by ensuring that output increments as a ratio of used resources remain consistent (Katuse & Gaur, 2020). Hence, this implies that policies for employee retention should be underscored. The greater experience is associated with ascribing towards the 'DSD's commitment to align all system activities towards the realisation of strategic goals and objectives. The key informants also understand that performance management and the development system impacts on work performance. These results validate the findings by Showkat, Shajan and Pathak (2019) that HRM and performance management are inseparable and plays an integral role towards the development of effective human resource management and development strategies. According to Armstrong & Taylor (2014), competent HRM in these instances is required to identify performance issues, explore its implications for the organisations and employees and establish a new way to address the challenges. According to Wright

and Ulrich (2017), HRM personnel will, therefore, be responsible to create an enabling environment to manage performance and they are also obliged to align workforce skills and behaviour with the strategic needs of the organisation.

Consequently, component three relates to the impact of the performance management delivery system (PMDS) to provide foster care in DSD. The extent to which performance is aligned at all levels within the organisation is correlated with that at which the performance management system is implemented. This enhances unity within the DSD. To achieve this, the DSD must cultivate an atmosphere of learning and growth. Furthermore, these employees also believe that data should be utilised to verify validity and reliability during the implementation of the performance management system. The dimension also results from employees whose output programmes have been evaluated for outcome and impact and agree that achievement of set targets from the implementation of performance management system resembles their performance. The strategic performance measurement system (SPMS) enables the organisation to plan, assess, and track its performance. Its actions, resources, and activities should follow its business plans to produce the desired results and generate value (Shrouf *et al.,* 2020).

The lack of capacity among supervisors was identified as impeding supervisors from discharging their responsibilities in the spirit of the PMDS policy, precisely because they do not understand what the policy seeks to achieve in broad terms. According to Mbonambi (2016) Brown *et al.* (2018), trained managers have a clearer understanding of the introduction of PMDS; what the system seeks to achieve, and how it is structured and implemented. Therefore, it is critically important that those involved in the performance management processes are adequately trained because they are central to the success and failure of the system (Mbonambi, 2016). As a result, entire processes are compromised and performance reviews become a one-day event at the end of the term. This is generally a contestation between supervisor and supervisee for ratings. According to the first respondent, those who can present and stand their ground are rewarded, not necessarily because they are good performers, but based on their assertiveness. Therefore, perception of justice and fairness is critically important for positive employee reaction and outcomes (Brown *et al.,* 2018). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) aver that managers can inflate the performance ratings to avoid conflict with certain individuals. Consequently, performance management becomes subjective, inconsistent and arbitrary, and undeserving employees are rewarded, while the deserving is ignored (Mbonambi, 2016); (Cameron, 2015).

Moreover, the performance management programme is likely to fail to achieve its intended objectives due to untrained line managers, because the implementation of policies to enhance engagement depends heavily on their persuasion (Armstrong & Taylor (2014); Kapur (2020). According to Appau, Marfo-yiadom & Kusi (2021), managers play a key role to encourage interaction, ensure that employee issues are addressed and discussed, allow room to influence how they execute their job as well as provide guidance, encouragement, and appreciation for success and support for future purposes.

In another contention, the key informants perceived poor planning and resource management an impediment in the implementation of the PMDS. According to the control theory, for the organisation to achieve its desired targets, it must prioritise and align the employees needs and the organisational standards and demands, because this would circumstance would allow the control theory to be suitable to regulate the employee's behaviour and organisational standards, which ultimately lead to achieving the desired performance (Ryba, 2021). Furthermore, employees may choose to align (or not) their perceived organisational standards if those are compatible with their own goals and standards (Ryba, 2021).

5.3 Impact of quantitative performance measurements on the quality of services

Component four of the PCA reflects the significance of setting performance targets to enhance foster care service delivery. Setting targets impacts positively on the quality of service rendered to the clients in as much as it on validity and reliability of data reported on a monthly basis. It is important that the process is executed with considerable levels of ingenuity. To execute the above, DSD must ensure that employees understand the purpose of being knowledgeable of the department's strategic direction. Just like component 3, this dimension results in employees whose output programmes have been evaluated for outcome and impact and agree that their achievement of the set targets from the implementation of performance management system resembles their accomplishments. The concept of improvement is concerned with the relationship between input and output. According to Owino, Oluoch & Kimemia (2019), performance feedback data determines objectives for the following working phase. Furthermore, for a performance management approach to be considered successful, feedback must be timely and constructive, and consistent with the specified goals. Employee productivity will undoubtedly increase if employees are provided with timely and positive feedback on their progress toward their objectives. Detrimental to the achievement of a quality service as reported from the key informants include, compromised standards. According to Ghosh, Long & Murphy (2017), underscoring the setting of goals which are too specific undermines the goal-setting efficacy, because the objective may result in goals which are too rigid to accommodate change; not challenging and lacks personal meaning for the employees. Planning in the organisation should involve all parties, including employees at low levels, and set goals which they desire to achieve in the future as a way to enhance future individual and organisational performance (Locke & Latham, 2006). Locke & Latham (2006) assert that employee participation in this regard not only serves as a requirement to enhance 'employees' commitment and acceptance of the goals but it is also necessary meet the objectives effectively and cultivate a better understanding thereof. Secondly, high targets-non-evidence or research-based. Kim & Holzer (2016) suggest that employees should not only be given the opportunity to contribute towards setting performance standards, but they should also be cognisant of how their daily activities at work interconnect with achieving organisational goals. The empirical evidence revealed high personal goals

which are consistent with a team's goals to enhance its success compared to personal goals which are inconsistent therewith (Locke & Latham, 2006).

6. CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that although the DSD strove to manage performance, multiple challenges remain which need to be addressed before the PMDS policy can be implemented to achieve its intended purpose. The PCA findings underscore the significant role of strategic human resources management, work experience, PMDS, and setting performance targets as key to enhance foster care service delivery in the Waterberg District, DSD. The findings are supported by Kapur (2020) and Appau *et al.* (2020). In complementing the quantitative findings, the qualitative outcomes attributed the failure to manage and address challenges associated with foster care backlog by the DSD as a consequence of misalignment between strategic intent, workforce and internal integration between various programmes at the operational level, in particular between social work and community development programmes. This misalignment between strategic intent and workforce, therefore, results in multiple vacant key strategic positions down to the operational level. It also leads to a high level of unpaid acting positions, lack of replacement of personnel who may have left the department for greener pastures, poor retention strategies for experienced employees and the lack of career growth. These factors result in untold pressure on available employees. The findings concur with those of Shrouf *et al* (2020 and Kuipers *et al* (2016). To a greater extent, it creates multiple organisations. Consequently, at the operational level, programmes operate parallel to each and services are duplicated. The findings also identified the following challenges, namely poor implementation of good strategies, failure to support coordination and proper implementation of sound policies, for example, PMDS, as well as placement of unqualified and incompetent personnel in strategic positions in HRM. Showkat *et al* (2019) affirms that incompetence creates misalignment between provisions of necessary support by human resources, tools of the trade, as well as poor working conditions and lack of training to upskill the workforce which would contribute towards the DSDs goals and objectives.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the quantitative PCA, aligning performance has a positive impact on the social workers performance when rendering foster care services, as well as achieve the goals and effective provision of quality services. Mckinsey (2020) postulates that the HRM department should prioritise aligning its strategic needs with the workforce from the top down to the operational level to serve as a relief for employees with high caseloads and responsibilities. Moreover, it should enhance accountability, efficient and effective services by developing reinforcing HR practices to complement the departments resources with the needs.

The qualitative analysis revealed that service at the operational level between community development practitioners and social workers has disintegrated, and results in tension, duplication of services, conflict, unhealthy competition and self-centeredness amongst employees over the utilisation of limited resources. In conforming with Owino *et al.* (2019), the department must conduct a job analysis for both social and community work programmes to circumvent the pitfalls of sub-optimisation. This is supported by the quantitative findings which revealed that the strategic role of HRM impacts positively on smooth coordination and implementation of the PMDS policy. Furthermore, HRM personnel should play a determined role and ensure that departmental strategies are cascaded from senior managers down to each employee at all levels within the department. This would enable them to understand the significance of their weekly and monthly work to achieve pre-determined goals and objectives.

To enhance effective implementation of PMDS, peer review mechanisms should be developed. The policy and decision-makers should also consider the inclusion of performance indicators to assess teamwork endeavors. This will enhance teamwork and address employees' self-centredness over the utilisation of resources, because exclusion of indicators which assesses teamwork endeavours discourage employees to work as such. Similar recommendations are drawn from (Shrouf *et al.,* 2020).

The article might help the DSD enhance coordination and execution of the PMDS. It also contributes to the current literature on human resource management, specifically PMDS policy execution. By refining the system, it could harmonise with other components and features of the organisation. Finally, the article enhances both employee and organisational performance in public sector institutions.

COI: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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