

Exploring labour relations competencies for general managers in a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng Province

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PREFACE

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Theodore Roosevelt, 23 April 1910

A special thanks and note of appreciation to:

- My Saviour, for reminding me to not be afraid or discouraged, that Your grace is enough, that I am loved beyond measure and that I am never alone.
- To my wonderful parents. Without your love, guidance and support, I would not be the person I am today. Thank you for your unending love, your vote of confidence in me and for always, always being there for me. Dad and Mami, no amount of words would ever be enough to show my appreciation and love for you.
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ABSTRACT

This research project set out to determine what labour relations tasks are performed by the general managers of a hospitality organisation comprising of various hotels across multiple provinces, what competencies are needed to be able to perform these tasks effectively and how these competencies compare to those identified in the research conducted by Botha *et al.* in 2018.

The abovementioned were achieved by asking the research participants four questions. Firstly, what type of labour relations tasks did the participants in this particular organisation perform as part of their jobs as general managers? Secondly, what labour relations competencies did they think are needed to perform these tasks effectively? Thirdly, could they identify any gaps between their own labour relations competencies and those they identified as necessary? Lastly, what suggestions could they make with regards to addressing any possible gaps? The research participants included hotel general managers from the Gauteng province and the number of participants were determined by data saturation.

The study revealed that it is conceivable to state that the labour relations competencies needed by specialists in the South African public sector are comparable and closely related to those that hotel general managers might need to conduct various labour relations tasks in their capacities as general managers.

Key words: Labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency model, labour relations competencies.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingsprojek het beoog om vas te stel watter arbeidsverhoudingetake deur die algemene bestuurders van 'n gasvryheidsorganisasie uitgevoer word, watter vaardighede benodig word om hierdie take doeltreffend uit te voer en hoe voorgemelde vaardighede vergelyk met dié vaardighede geïdentifiseer uit Botha et al. se navorsing van 2018.

Bogenoemde doelwitte was bereik deur vir die deelnemers vier vrae te vra. Die deelnemers het bestaan uit algemene hotelbestuurders vanuit die Gauteng-provinsie. Die vier vrae het ingesluit: Eerstens, watter tipe arbeidsverhoudingetake het hulle uitgevoer as deel van hul posbeskrywing as algemene bestuurders? Tweedens, watter arbeidsverhoudingevaardighede het hulle gedink word benodig om hierdie take doeltreffend uit te voer? Derdens, kon hulle enige gapings tussen hul eie arbeidsverhoudingevaardighede en dié wat geïdentifiseer is as nodig, identifiseer? Laastens, watter voorstelle kon hulle gee om enige moontlike gapings aan te spreek?

Die studie het bevind dat dit denkbaar sal wees dat die arbeidsverhoudingevaardighede benodig deur spesialiste in die Suid-Afrikaanse staatsdiens vergelyk kan word en nou verwant is aan dié wat algemene hotelbestuurders mag nodig hê om verskeie arbeidsverhoudingetake doeltreffend te verrig.

Sleuteltermes: Arbeidsverhoudinge, algemene bestuurders, vaardighede, vaardighedsmodel en arbeidsverhoudingevaarsigheidsmodel.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Background and research problem

Many South African organisations do not have designated human resources departments or related specialists because their organisational structures do not make provision for them (Tremblay et al., 2008). In these cases, labour relations tasks and responsibilities fall to the general managers within the organisation. The question is raised: What happens if these managers are not versed in labour relations competencies? What is the subsequent influence on the effective completion or management of these labour relations tasks and/or responsibilities?

A lack of labour relations competencies can not only have a negative impact on the organisation but also on the individual managers, as the organisation might suffer in terms of ineffective labour relations practices such as strained employment relations or the incorrect implementation of labour legislation, policies or procedures. Moreover, general managers may experience more work-related stress and pressure to succeed in performing relevant tasks because of the additional labour relations tasks they need to assume. According to Krell (2009), labour relations experts and practitioners assess that general managers' knowledge of the concept of labour relations is mostly theoretical in nature and thus lack the practical aspect thereof. Motivation of a personal nature might be the most significant reason for managers to strengthen their labour relations skills, knowledge and abilities, rather than for the benefit of the organisation (Krell, 2009).

Sound labour relations practices in the organisation are vital to the managerial function (Bendix, 2015); just as vital as it is to labour relations practitioners in the organisation. As such, managers should also have the necessary competencies to practice labour relations effectively. That said, general managers may not necessarily be responsible for all the labour relations tasks that a labour relations practitioner would usually be responsible for. Therefore,

the labour relations tasks and competencies that general managers may need to complete may in some instances differ from those of labour relations practitioners.

While there is a large body of research on human resources (HR) competencies (Buckley & Monks, 2004) and general competencies for managers, which includes hotel general managers (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011), there is not much research available on labour relations competencies, especially in a South African context (Botha et al., 2018). While labour relations is of global importance for the sound management and operations of companies globally, it is important to note that labour relations and the labour legislative frameworks differ across the world (Venter & Levy, 2014). As such, the existing research in other countries regarding labour relations competencies might not be relevant in a South African context. However, Botero et al. (2004) explain that countries around the world have established their own complex legislations and governing bodies in order to safeguard the interests of employees. They go on to discuss the three components of law that are associated with these institutions (p. 1339) which can also be considered relevant in a South African context.

The first component is employment laws, which govern the individual employment contract. The second component, namely collective or industrial relations laws, regulate the bargaining, adoption and enforcement of collective agreements, the organisation of trade unions and the industrial action by workers and employers. Finally, the third component, namely social security laws, govern the social response to needs and conditions that have a significant impact on the quality of life, such as old age, disability, death, sickness and unemployment.

In a South African context, the abovementioned can be categorised into the labour-related legislation mentioned below, among others:

- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997,
- Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995,

- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998,
- Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003,
- Skills Development Act of 1998; and
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993

Also to be included in the discussion above is the presence of trade unions and employer organisations within what is known as the tripartite relationship of labour relations in South Africa. This tripartite relationship is discussed further in Chapter 1, but in short, it involves the employee, the employer and the state.

Katz et al. (2004) discuss the implementation of the tripartism approach to labour relations in different countries. In some countries the approach is irrelevant, such is the case in the United States of America (USA), and different legislation and/or governing bodies for labour relations have had to be implemented. This could be explained by the difference in the USA's structures (each state has its own legislation and/or governing bodies). In other countries, such as Japan, Australia or Italy, the approach is being implemented to a lesser extent. In contrast, countries such as Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands have implemented tripartism with great success.

It is clear from the discussion above that research on labour relations competencies for general managers in South Africa, and specifically managers within the hospitality industry the context of this study, needs to be addressed and conducted to assist individual general managers in developing those competencies necessary to complete labour relations tasks effectively, which in turn will benefit the organisation. This study focuses specifically on general managers in the hospitality industry and, as such, the following points of discussion are relevant when focusing on the labour relations aspect with regards to general managers in the hospitality industry such as hotels.

1.1.1 General managers in the hospitality industry

The role of general managers in the hospitality industry is discussed in great length by O'Fallon and Rutherford (2011). They summarise that hotel general managers have many roles and responsibilities in the hospitality industry. Some of these roles may include managing customer relations and complaints, financial management, marketing, logistics, event planning, maintenance and HR-related tasks. HR-related tasks typically include recruitment, scheduling, payroll, training and *labour relations* activities such as disciplinary procedures.

1.1.2 Labour relations

According to Botha (2016), labour relations is the study and practice of the relationships between the stakeholders in the labour relationship. In this context, labour relations includes the roles and interactions of the parties, the processes, procedures, rules and regulations that govern the relationships, and finally, the legislation and institutions relevant to said relationships. Pertaining to labour relations in general, Venter and Levy (2014) explain that labour relations comprises three components, namely the tripartite relationship, the environmental context, and the institutionalisation of labour relations. This theory is also supported by Erasmus et al. (2019).

The tripartite relationship consists of three parties, namely the employee (including trade unions), the employer (including employer organisations), and the state (Finnemore, 2013). The tripartite relationship is further divided into a primary relationship, namely that between the employee (trade unions) and the employer (employers' organisations), and a secondary relationship, which involves the state (Figure 1).

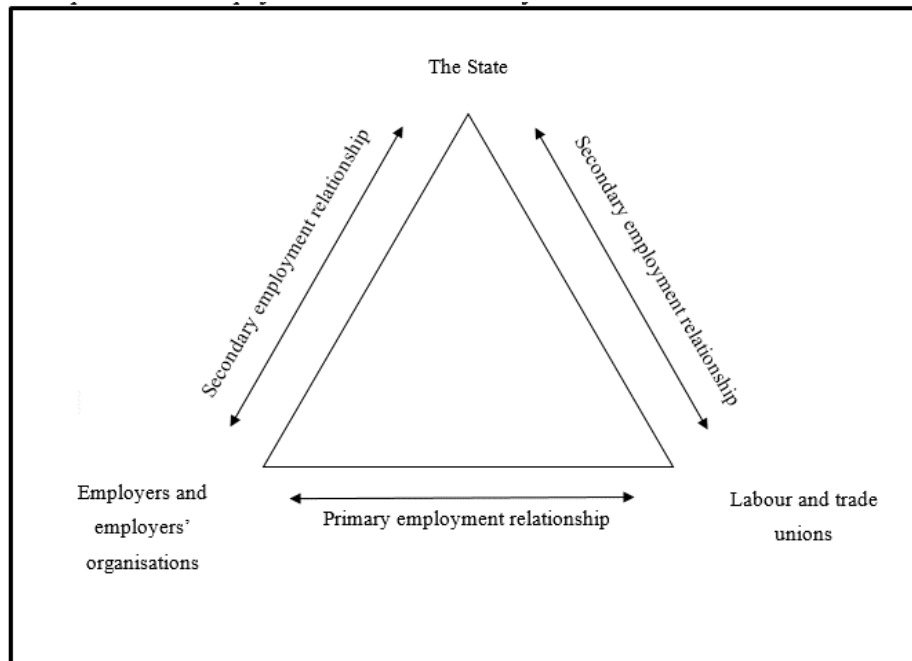


Figure 1: The tripartite relationship of labour relations in South Africa* (As adapted from Slabbert et al., 1990; Venter & Levy, 2014, p. 10)

Venter and Levy (2014) state that the organisation can be viewed as a smaller part of society at large where the employees of the organisation are a mirror image of the socio-political and economic conditions of the societies with which they identify.

Lastly, Venter and Levy (2014) state that labour relations is governed by a complicated “system of laws, policies and procedure that regulate and facilitate the labour relationship” (p. 6).

Venter and Levy (2014) provide a comprehensive definition for labour relations by combining the abovementioned factors:

The area of study and practice of the roles of and the interactions between the parties to the labour relationship, the various rules and regulations that govern that relationship, and the environment in which the relationship plays out. (p.6)

Typical tasks and responsibilities pertaining to labour relations in the workplace may include (Botha et al., 2018):

- adherence and implementation of various labour relations legislation such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993;
- various labour relations tasks such as collective bargaining and strikes;
- dispute resolution and related activities, including CCMA and Labour Court proceedings; and
- disciplinary procedures within the organisation.

Botha et al. (2018) also explain that labour relations competencies are influenced by HR competencies and demonstrated as such by the competency models of the South African Board for People Practices (2016) and Ulrich et al. (2012). For hotel general managers to take on labour relations tasks and responsibilities and complete them effectively and/or successfully, they will need competencies to assist them in such endeavours. Guan et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of HR managers proactively refining and updating their competence to maximise their value to the organisation; however, can the same be said for general managers in the hospitality industry?

The research conducted by Grant (2011) and Botha et al (2018) indicate that labour relations as a function consist of various tasks including performance counselling, the implementation of various disciplinary processes, the implementation of relevant labour legislation, the implementation of grievance procedures, dispute resolution activities, employment equity initiatives and general administrative tasks related to the aforementioned. Ekpong's research indicated the importance of the implementation of performance counselling and related initiatives in the workplace in order to not only improve the employee's performance, but also the organisation's productivity. The implementation of performance

counselling is also in line with items 8, 9, 10 and 11 of Schedule 8 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995.

Along with performance counselling, the implementation of disciplinary processes, relevant labour legislation, dispute resolution activities and employment initiatives, are all tasks regulated by various South African Acts such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA) and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA). These Acts set out to standardise and regulate the labour relations activities within the South African context, such as dispute resolution that is enabled by the mechanism comprising of the Commission of Conciliation, Arbitration and Mediation (CCMA), the Labour Court and the Labour Appeals Court. Together with this, implementation of employment equity initiatives in the workplace is guided by the EEA in order to promote opportunities and fairness and reduction of discrimination. Abovementioned tasks are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

1.1.3 Competencies

Dessler (2011, p. 7) defines competence as “an individual’s knowledge, skills, abilities or personality characteristics that directly influence his or her job performance”, which Becker et al. (2001) also describe. Dessler (2011) furthermore mentions that competencies can impact the effectiveness and sustainability of management as well as the implementation of the organisation’s various strategies.

1.1.4 Competency models

Competency models are used to “identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in order to perform a particular job” (Lussier & Hendon, 2013, p. 240). Lussier and Hendon (2013) view competency models as effective tools that can assist in identifying knowledge, skills, and/or abilities that are lacking to perform a job successfully and in using the information gained from models to assist in planning for training programmes. In other words, these models

can assist in assessing the employee's training needs (Dessler, 2011). Moreover, the competency model gives an overview of the competencies one would need in order to complete a job effectively, using the following as sources of information regarding an employee's performance or training needs: performance appraisals, observations made by supervisors, interviews with employees, attitude surveys and tests of job knowledge and skills (Dessler, 2011).

1.1.5 Labour relations competencies

In a study by Grant (2011) to identify and categorise competencies required by labour relations professionals, the participants gave feedback regarding their perceptions of their knowledge, skills and abilities in labour relations. The competencies identified were grouped under five headings:

- Relevant legislation;
- Labour relations management;
- Management of collective agreement;
- Collective bargaining; and
- Enforcing collective agreement.

The framework developed by Grant (2011) incorporated the identified knowledge, skills and abilities under practical labour relations functions. Furthermore, in a more recent study by Botha et al. (2018) conducted among labour relations practitioners in the South African public services on the competencies needed by said practitioners, they identified competencies that were clustered into the following nine competency themes:

- Interpersonal relations;
- Communication;
- Emotion management;
- Jurisprudence/labour codes;

- Business acumen;
- Transformation innovation;
- Collective bargaining management;
- Labour relations specialist expertise; and
- Strategic management and leadership.

Botha et al. (2018) discovered that these competency themes can be divided into two types of competencies, namely foundational generic competency themes and essential generic competency themes specific to labour relations.

Botha et al. (2018) found that limited information is available regarding labour relations competencies of labour relations practitioners and, by extension, information regarding the labour relations competencies of hotel general managers. Krell (2009) identified several key labour relations competencies that HR professionals need, which can be organised into four broad categories, namely knowledge, skills, expertise, personal traits, and values. When compared to the research conducted by Botha et al. (2018), these categories could be classified as foundational generic competencies and are not necessarily specific to labour relations. This further illustrates the need for research regarding labour relations-specific competencies. In conclusion, many South African organisations do not have designated or specialised HR and/or labour relations specialists, for various reasons. In such instances, organisations make use of general managers to complete certain labour relations tasks. These general managers therefore need certain labour relations competencies in order to perform these tasks effectively. Researchers such as Botha et al. (2018) discuss the limited research that has been done, specifically regarding labour relations competencies for labour relations practitioners. The lack of research not only regarding labour relations competencies in general but also those within a South African context serves as motivation for this study. The study

proposes to explore competencies needed by hotel general managers to perform labour relations related tasks and/or responsibilities.

1.2 Research objectives

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the proposed study is to determine whether the general managers of a hotel group in the hospitality industry have the competencies needed to perform labour relations tasks.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the proposed study included the following:

- To determine how labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency models and labour relations competencies are conceptualised according to literature.
- To determine what the labour relations competencies for labour relations specialists are.
- To determine what specific labour relations tasks are performed by general managers and how they relate to the specific labour relations competencies identified for labour relations specialists.
- To identify the types of areas of training needed by the general managers in the hospitality industry.

1.3 Research design

1.3.1 Research method

The researcher made use of a qualitative research design. A constructivist paradigm was used as the basis for the research setting. According to Creswell (2013), the constructivism

paradigm as an “interpretive framework” (p. 22), in which the individual wants to understand his or her world and in doing so gives meaning to his or her experiences. The researcher further utilised a phenomenological research strategy. This approach focussed on the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75).

1.3.2 Sampling

For the purpose of this specific study, the researcher made use of purposive sampling methods, as a specific organisation and its employees were chosen as participants for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Inclusion criteria for participants included that the participants be appointed as general managers with labour relations tasks as part of their roles and responsibilities in the positions they hold at the identified organisation. The researcher estimated a sample size of 15 participants but was governed by data saturation.

1.3.3 Data collection

A literature review (Chapter 2) was used to collect data from the existing body of research and included the following keywords: labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency model and labour relations competencies. Various resources that were used includes, but is not limited to, various subject-specific journals, articles that are scientific in nature and peer-reviewed, and databases such as EBSCOHost and LexisNexis. Also included in this list, were textbooks available at the campus library of the identified tertiary institution. This enabled the researcher to determine how labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency models and labour relations competencies are conceptualised according to literature and determine what the labour relations competencies for labour relations specialists are

The next component of the data collection included an observational component, where the researcher made use of semi-structured in-depth interviews for data collection

purposes (Chapter 4). Boeije (2010) explains that using this method, the researcher uses set questions that allow for some flexibility while enabling the participants to give the researcher further explanation regarding their responses, and thus giving an in-depth view of their experiences regarding the case being explored. This enable the researcher to transcribe the interviews, after which the data was put into Excel format and presented in the report in tables. This enabled the researcher to determine what specific labour relations tasks are performed by general managers and how they relate to the specific labour relations competencies identified for labour relations specialists., and to identify the types of areas of training needed by the general managers in the hospitality industry.

1.3.4 Data analysis

The researcher made use of thematic analysis to analyse the data that she collected during the interviews. Mathipa and Gumbo (2015) explain thematic analysis as analysing data by means of identifying themes and sub-themes within the participants' responses to the interview questions, i.e. research questions. For the current study, the researcher analysed the data by making use of Microsoft Excel and sorting themes and sub-themes into tables, in order to present the data in an ordered fashion. When analysing the data, the researcher utilised the principles of trustworthiness, which includes the following:

1.3.4.1 Credibility

Daniel (2019) as well as Shenton (2004) explain that credibility refers to whether the results of a study is consistent with reality. The question "Does the study measure what is intended?" (p. 64) needs to be answered. To ensure that the proposed study is credible, the researcher did everything in her ability to give an accurate account of the participants' experiences and an honest account of the results or findings of the study. Shelton (2004) suggests manners in which credibility can be ensured when doing a qualitative research study,

including conducting frequent debriefing sessions to test ideas and to assist in recognising own biases.

1.3.4.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be applied to a wider population or in other situations (Shenton, 2004; Daniel, 2019). To ensure the transferability of the proposed study, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the phenomenon being examined. This would enable readers of the final study to compare the phenomenon used with their own situations.

1.3.4.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the proposed study's methods can be repeated in other studies (Shenton, 2004). To ensure this, the researcher described the study in detail, including key points as recommended by Shenton (2004): the research design and how it was implemented, data collection methods used and a detailed analysis of research findings, as well as a discussion on the effectiveness of said methods.

1.3.4.4 Conformability

Bryman and Bell (2011) refer to confirmability as objectivity. The researcher remained neutral and objective when collecting data from participants. The researcher only captured their unique experiences and/or perceptions and did not influence the information participants provided.

1.4 Chapter overviews

Chapter 1 presented background to the identified research problem. In short, many South African organisations do not have designated or specialised HR or labour relations specialists on staff, necessitating general managers to perform various labour relations tasks. These general managers in turn need certain labour relations competencies to perform these tasks

effectively. The lack of research regarding labour relations competencies, especially in a South African context, served as motivation for this study.

Chapter 2 explores various labour relations competencies identified by international researchers. An in-depth look is taken into labour relations tasks and responsibilities, followed by a comparison of labour relations competencies as identified in research done by Grant (2011), Naudè (2013) and Botha (2018).

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology utilised in the study. Discussion points in this chapter include the research questions and objectives of the study, as well as the research design that was implemented.

Chapter 4 presents an empirical analysis of the research findings. This chapter includes discussions on the participants' demographics, the labour relations tasks performed by the participants and the labour relations competencies the participants have identified as necessary in order to perform labour relations tasks effectively. Also included in this chapter; a comparison between the labour relations competencies identified by Botha et al (2018) and those identified by the participants of the current study.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of aforementioned chapters and discusses limitations experienced in the current study, as well as recommendations for future research projects.

CHAPTER 2 LABOUR RELATIONS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

When discussing the competencies needed to be effective in a certain position, the tasks that need to be performed must be determined first (Mansfield, 1996). When these tasks have been identified, the competencies needed to perform said tasks effectively can be identified. This chapter includes discussions regarding research conducted on the most common labour relations tasks being performed and the competencies associated therewith, after which a comparison of different labour relations competency frameworks is presented.

2.1 Labour relations tasks and responsibilities

Different employees in different positions and different organisations or industries will be responsible for different sets of labour relations tasks. Botha et al. (2018) and Grant (2011) discuss the following tasks and responsibilities (Table 2.1) related to labour relations in the workplace:

Table 1: Labour relations tasks and responsibilities

Grant (2011)	Botha et al. (2018)
Conflict resolution and management	Communicating with employee
Investigation/fact-finding	Handling grievances
Collective bargaining preparation	Retrenchments
Grievance settlement	Dealing with discipline
Union Management meetings	Handling disputes
Informal pre-grievance counselling	Collective bargaining
Coaching concerning labour relations best practices	
Collective bargaining at the table	
Grievance management/processing	
Arbitration with regards to employee rights related issues	

A definitive overlap of tasks and responsibilities in three areas could be identified in the research conducted by Grant (2011) and Botha et al. (2018), namely conflict or dispute resolution and management, collective bargaining, and grievances.

2.2 Conflict/dispute resolution and management

Awan and Saeed (2015) view conflict in the workplace as inevitable and that not managing said conflict effectively will impact negatively on job performance, potentially conveying the message that inappropriate behaviour in the workplace is acceptable. Bendix (2015) agrees with this statement, explaining that the manner in which conflict is dealt with could either increase tensions or reduce them.

2.3 Collective bargaining

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2015) defines collective bargaining as negotiations between the parties of the tripartite relationship, which includes the employer (and employer's organisation), the employee (and trade unions) and the state (Finnemore, 2013; Venter & Levy, 2014). The ILO (2015) further explains that, as defined in Article 2 of the Collective Bargaining Convention of 1981 (No. 154), said negotiations would be applicable to the following:

- Determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or
- Regulating relations between employers and employees; and/or
- Regulating relations between employer organisations and trade unions.

The ILO (2015) expands on this definition by stating that negotiation can be formal or informal with the outlook of reaching an agreement between parties.

2.4 Grievances

Wärnich et al. (2018) define a grievance as “a formal complaint by an employee or employees concerning a problem in the work environment or relating to the employment relationship” (p. 546) and emphasise that such a grievance is not equivalent to a complaint that does not follow formal procedures.

Now that the key labour relations tasks and responsibilities have been identified, the discussion moves on to the relevant labour relations competencies needed to conduct the aforementioned tasks and responsibilities.

2.5 Labour relations competencies

A review of literature on labour relations competencies, as with labour relations tasks and responsibilities above, reveals several competencies. Three findings that feature strongly include those of Grant (2011), Naudè (2013) and Botha et al. (2018). As seen in Table 2.2, which presents a summary of the competencies and their groupings, some labour relations competencies are present in two of the columns, but rarely in all three. Labour legislation or codes can be identified as the most common labour relations competency, as it is present among all three researchers' identified labour relations competencies.

However, it is important to note that the competencies such as those identified by Grant (2011) and Botha et al. (2018) are competency themes, which can be “teased out more to accurately reflect the required skills, knowledge, and abilities of a labour relations professional” (p. 7). This means that upon further detailed exploration of the competency themes, more corresponding competencies could be identified. One such an example is dispute resolution, which Grant (2011) classifies under the competency theme “day-to-day management of the collective agreement” (p.8), but which Naudè (2013) sorts as a separate competency and Botha et al. (2018) classifies under the “collective bargaining management” competency theme.

Table 2: Labour relations competencies comparison

Grant (2011)	Naudè (2013)	Botha et al. (2018)
Relevant legislation/jurisprudence	Knowledge and abilities of/in	Foundational competency themes generic
Labour management relations	Labour legislation	Interpersonal relations
Day-to-day management of the collective agreement	Negotiation skills	Communication
Collective bargaining	Dispute resolution	Emotion management
Enforcing the collective agreement	Communication skills	Jurisprudence/labour codes
	Ability to work in a team	Essential generic competency themes
	Change/transformation management	Business acumen
	Identification of risks	Transformation innovation

New strike management rules	Collective bargaining management
Budgets, costs and financial implications of decision-making	Labour relations specialist expertise
Skills development	Strategic management and leadership
Lesser-rated knowledge and abilities	
Report-writing	
Disciplinary process and case preparation	
Information systems	
People knowledge	
Record-keeping	
Labour competencies	
Ability to do investigations	

Naudè (2013) divided the identified competencies required of labour relations practitioners into two groups: Firstly, knowledge and abilities, and secondly, lesser-rated knowledge and abilities.

Botha et al. (2018) later developed a generic competency framework for labour relations practitioners in the South African public services sector (Figure 2). They explain that the competency framework illustrates a “clear distinction” between foundational generic competency themes and other essential generic competency themes (p. 20). The distinctions between each researcher’s grouped competencies are marked by a grey block in Table 2.2.

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Botha et al. (2018) refer to foundational generic competency themes as competencies that are not specific to labour relations as a business function, whereas essential generic competency themes refer to competencies that are specific to the effective conducting of labour relations tasks and responsibilities.

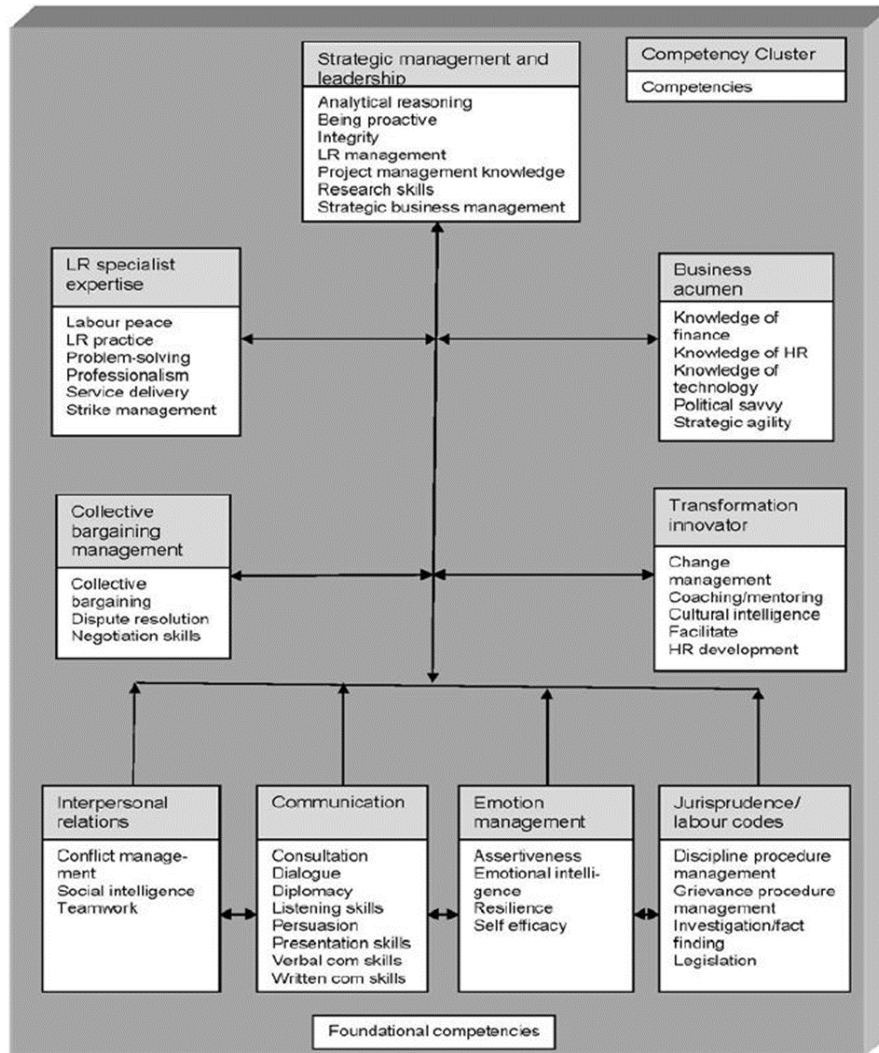


Figure 2: A generic competency framework for labour relations practitioners in the South African public service (Botha et al. 2018, p. 21)

Botha et al. (2018) describe their findings as follows:

In analysing the coding, the researchers distinguished categories from which they developed subcategories (competencies). They grouped these categories into nine competency clusters, which made up competency themes. The overwhelming evidence from the findings, which was supported by theory, suggests a clear distinction between foundational generic competency themes and associated competencies, which could be regarded as indispensable prerequisites for effective performance in other competency areas as well as other more essential generic competencies.

2.6 Foundational generic competencies

As stated previously, these competencies are regarded as competencies that, although not specific to labour relations as a business function, are still required to perform certain tasks effectively. These competencies include interpersonal relations, communication, emotion management, and jurisprudence or labour codes. Botha et al. (2018) discuss the meaning of each of these competencies as they are utilised in their study (p. 15):

2.6.1.1 Interpersonal relations

Botha et al. (2018) refers to interpersonal relations as “a strong, deep or close association or affiliation between two or more people” (p.15) and state that interpersonal relations would have an impact on the growth and preservation of trust and foster a positive atmosphere in the organisation. Hughes explains that social intelligence plays a key role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relations, especially within a work environment (2009), and in turn Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) presented evidence that coaching has a positive impact on the social intelligence of leaders that in turn may foster strong interpersonal relationships in a work environment.

2.6.1.2 Communication

Botha et al. (2018) discuss communication as a process of reaching mutual understanding and explain that this process does not only entail exchanging information but also “create[ing] and shar[ing] meaning” (p. 16). Research regarding communication in the workplace that indicate the most important factors of communication are written, verbal and listening skills (Coffelt et al., 2019; Su et al., 2012).

2.6.1.3 Emotion management

For feelings to be expressed appropriately and effectively, a form of emotional regulation needs to be present. According to Botha et al. (2018), emotion management enabled individuals to work towards a common goal efficiently. Research indicates that leaders with strong emotional intelligence (EQ) can greatly influence team members as well as larger organisations (Sellie-Dosunmu, 2016). Rauf et al. (2020) found that leadership and communication skills have a positive relationship with EQ and should as such be enhanced and developed among leaders in organisations.

2.6.1.4 Jurisprudence/labour codes

Botha et al. (2018) found that the majority of their participants ranked competencies related to the knowledge of labour legislation, procedures, and other competencies related to this the highest. They further state that their findings corroborate those of other researchers such as Grant (2011) and Naudè (2013), among others. A lack of sound knowledge regarding relevant South African labour legislation and inaccurate implementation thereof could have a negative impact on the organisation (Venter & Levy, 2014). Furthermore, a balance between the interests of all parties involved in a specific environment should be maintained in order to aid in the organisation's success (Erasmus et al., 2019).

2.7 Essential generic competencies

The essential generic competency clusters that are specific to the effective completion of labour relations tasks and responsibilities include business acumen, transformation innovation, collective bargaining management, labour relations specialist expertise and strategic management and leadership. Botha et al. (2018) explain each competency cluster as follows:

2.7.1.1 Business acumen

Participants in the study conducted by Botha et al. (2018) indicated that in order for them to have favourable outcomes in the work environment, prompt and appropriate responses are required (p. 17). The participants highlighted the importance of the cost implications when making decisions, presenting proposals or taking part in collective agreements. Some researchers note that external factors such as technological advances can influence the successful completion of labour relations tasks and should be managed or addressed accordingly (Minton, 2016).

2.7.1.2 Transformation innovation

In order to deal with changes in the business environment, it was important for participants to apply structured processes and procedures. Botha et al. state that labour relations practitioners often implement interventions to assist in changing the mindset of line managers when it comes to labour relations responsibilities (*ibid.*, p. 18). Bose and Gupta (2021) discuss the importance of managers having the ability to implement various change management initiatives in the workplace and the role that effective communication skills will be beneficial in such instances.

2.7.1.3 Collective bargaining management

Collective bargaining management is described as the process of carrying out all activities related to collective bargaining. The process may include setting goals, planning and organising, among others (Botha et al., 2018, p. 18). Important tasks related to collective bargaining will include dispute resolution activities (Israelstam, 2019) and negotiations where interpersonal relationships and communication skills are essential (Pienaar & Spoelstra, 2008).

2.7.1.4 Labour relations specialist expertise

Labour relations specialist expertise is defined as the ability of a labour relations specialist to fulfil his or her role by providing clients with expert advice and providing and implementing policies, procedures and practices (Botha et al., 2018, p. 19). This competency is also linked to communication, interpersonal relations and collective bargaining management

2.7.1.5 Strategic management and leadership

Lastly, Botha et al. explain that in order to enhance the attainment of an organisations' labour relations objectives, a set of decisions needs to be made and actions taken that lead to the formulation and implementation of strategies that are designed to do so. In order to do so effectively, integrity (Fleming & Delves, 2017) and leadership and management skills (Tavitiyaman, 2014; Hight et al., 2019) will be of importance.

The researchers noted that their study identified competencies needed by labour relations practitioners in the public services context and that it should be "extended to include the private sector" (2018, p. 22).

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter discussed labour relations tasks and responsibilities identified by researchers such as Grant (2011) and Botha et al. (2018) as well as how these tasks relate to competencies and relevant competency models specifically for labour relations specialists. Even so, Botha et al. (2018) recommend that further research be conducted. This recommendation forms the basis of the current research project. The purpose of this research project is therefore to build on the research done by researchers such as Grant (2011) and Botha et al. (2018) on labour relations tasks and

responsibilities, but with a focus on general managers to, more specifically, determine what labour relations tasks and responsibilities the general managers of a hospitality organisation possess. Secondly, this study sets out to determine the competencies these professionals need to perform these tasks and responsibilities effectively and, finally, how these competencies relate or compare to those identified by Botha et al. (2018) specifically. Due to the lack of research in labour relations competencies, especially in a South African context, the research done by Botha et al. (2018) was most appropriate for the current study.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology used for the study. Included in this discussion: the research questions and objectives, as well as the research design followed by the researcher.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes discussions on the objectives of the research project and the chosen research design. Key features included in these discussions are the chosen research approach, setting and method, how the data was analysed, and strategies used to ensure quality data and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research question

The primary research question as derived from the research problem (see Chapter 1) is as follows: Do general managers of a hotel group in the hospitality industry have the competencies needed to perform labour relations tasks?

3.2 Secondary research questions

To answer the primary research question stated above, the following secondary research questions were proposed:

- How are labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency models and labour relations competencies conceptualised according to literature?
- What are the labour relations competencies of labour relations specialists?
- What specific labour relations tasks are performed by general managers and how do these relate to the specific labour relations competencies identified for labour relations specialists?
- What areas of training is necessary for general managers in the hospitality industry to practice necessary labour relations-related tasks?

3.3 Research objectives

The objectives of the research study can be categorised into general and specific objectives. The general objective was divided into more specific objectives, to guide the researcher in answering the research questions. These objectives thus enabled the researcher to assess whether all relevant research questions had been answered by the proposed research methodology.

3.4 General objective

The general objective of the proposed study is to determine whether the general managers of a hotel group in the hospitality industry have the competencies needed to perform labour relations tasks.

3.5 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the proposed study included the following:

- To determine how labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency models and labour relations competencies are conceptualised according to literature.
- To determine what the labour relations competencies for labour relations specialists are.
- To determine what specific labour relations tasks are performed by general managers and how they relate to the specific labour relations competencies identified for labour relations specialists.
- To identify the types of areas of training needed by the general managers in the hospitality industry.

3.6 Research design

3.7 Research approach

The researcher made use of a qualitative research design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that a qualitative research design is used when researchers want to explain “how individuals interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 6). Given that the researcher wanted to explore how the participants of the study experience certain aspects of their jobs, a qualitative research design seemed to be the most appropriate.

A constructivist paradigm was used as the basis for the research setting. Creswell (2013) describes the constructivist paradigm as an “interpretive framework” (p. 22) in which the individual wants to understand his or her world and in doing so give meaning to his or her experiences.

3.8 Research strategy

The researcher utilised a phenomenological research strategy. This approach focusses on the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon”

(Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). In short, this study focussed on what the participants' experience, and how they experience it. Emphasis was placed on the shared experience of the participants, being general managers at a hotel group, and how they experience certain aspects thereof.

3.9 Research method

The research method that was conducted is discussed in detail in the following headings:

3.9.1.1 Literature review

The keywords that were used and from the literature that were relevant to this study included: labour relations, general managers, competencies, competency model and labour relations competencies. The researcher used various resources to define and/or explain said keywords. These resources included, but was not be limited to, various subject-specific journals, peer-reviewed and scientific articles and databases such as EBSCOHost and LexisNexis. Also included in this list are textbooks available at the campus library of the identified tertiary institution.

3.9.1.2 Research setting

The participants of the study included general managers of one hotel group in South Africa. The organisation identified for the purpose of the study is a large organisation with locations across the country. However, for the purpose of this study, participants from locations in the Gauteng province were selected from this particular organisation.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Boeije, 2010) were conducted with each participant. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, the interviews were conducted via video conferencing applications such as Zoom. This measure was taken to ensure adherence to the South African Government regulations, prohibiting travel between provinces, as well as to ensure the health and safety of the participants and the researcher.

3.9.1.3 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The research process of the proposed study was initiated by submitting the research proposal both to the designated research and ethics committees of the Economic and Management Sciences Faculty of the designated tertiary institution for examination and approval. Afterwards, the approved

research proposal was submitted to a selected management official of the identified hotel group in order to obtain the necessary permission to conduct the study on their organisation.

The researcher contacted a key person within the identified organisation, who fulfilled the role of representative and contact person for the duration of the study. This person is in a senior management position within the organisation and granted the researcher permission to conduct the study in the identified organisation and was able to assist the researcher in contacting and/or approaching the various participants.

After contacting the participants and obtaining their participation in the study, the data collection step of the research process commenced. In this phase, the researcher herself became the research instrument by conducting interviews with the participants.

After the interviews had been completed, electronic voice recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim. This ensured that a detailed account of the participants' responses had been obtained. After the interview recordings had been transcribed, the researcher fulfilled the role of data analyst. In this phase, the researcher had an overview of the data collected. Each questions' responses were then used to identify themes and sub-themes. After the collected data had been analysed, the researcher reported her findings regarding the identified problem, shifting the researcher into the role of report writer.

It was of utmost importance that the researcher maintained her objectivity for the entire duration of the research study.

3.9.1.4 Sampling

For the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of purposive sampling methods, as a specific organisation and its employees were chosen as participants for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reason for this sampling method was that the chosen participants were best suited to assist the researcher in explaining the problem that was identified and in need of exploring. Inclusion criteria for participants included that the participants be appointed as general managers with labour relations tasks as part of their roles and responsibilities in the positions they held at the identified organisation.

There were no further criteria for participants to be able to participate in the study, such as age, gender or ethnicity. However, as part of the interview questions, participants were requested to answer questions regarding their years' experience in their current positions and educational backgrounds, as this information may have been of value in understanding their responses to the interview questions.

The researcher estimated a sample size of 15 participants; however, data collection was governed by data saturation, resulting in data collection being halted after nine participants had been interviewed. Data saturation is the point in data collection when a researcher no longer collects information that is new or different (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and at which point the researcher stops collecting data.

3.9.1.5 Data collection methods

Together with Chapter 1, Chapter 2 of this study consists of a literature review on the labour relations competency framework, while Chapter 4 presents the data that was gathered from the semi-structured in-depth interviews (Boeije, 2010) which is substantiated with other researchers' findings that corroborate the findings in this research. Boeije (2010) explains that using semi-structured interviews as data collection method allows the researcher to set questions that allow for some flexibility. Boeije further explains that the researcher thus uses the responses from participants to probe further with regards to the issue or problem being explored. This method also enables the participants to elaborate on their responses, thus giving an in-depth view of their experiences regarding the case being explored.

The researcher made use of an interview protocol to lead interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that interview protocols are documents that outline the pre-determined questions the researcher will be asking while allowing the researcher to make notes about the participants' responses and ask any other questions that may arise from said responses. The duration of the interviews averaged 30 minutes, depending on the responses of the individual participants.

The following questions were constructed using the research objectives and were included in the semi-structured interviews:

- How long have you been in your current position as general manager?
- Please describe your educational background.
- What labour relations tasks do you perform as general manager?
- What labour relations competencies do you think general managers need to perform the aforementioned tasks effectively?
- What gaps can you identify between the labour relations competencies you have as general manager and those needed to perform labour relations tasks?
- How do you think the aforementioned gaps can be addressed?

As discussed, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, all the interviews were conducted via video conferencing applications such as Zoom. This was to ensure adherence to the South African government regulations with regards to travelling between provinces. Furthermore, this measure ensured the health and safety of both the participants and the researcher.

3.9.1.6 Recording of data

Before the interviews commenced, the researcher obtained each participant's informed consent to the interview. This means that the researcher informed the participant of the reason for the study, the interview process and what the data would be used for. This allowed the participant opportunity to decide whether he/she was willing to participate in the study (Dane, 1990). Included in this step was obtaining the participant's permission for the researcher to digitally record the interview for the purpose of transcribing the interviews at a later stage. These transcripts enabled the researcher to analyse the collected data effectively.

The researcher transcribed the interviews, after which the data was put into Excel format and presented in the report in tables. The researcher ensured that the recordings, as well as transcripts of said recordings, were kept confidential and stored in a safe place. This includes any notes that the researcher made during the interviews.

3.9.1.7 Data analysis

The researcher made use of thematic analysis to analyse the data that she collected during the interviews. Mathipa and Gumbo (2015) explain thematic analysis as analysing data by means of identifying themes and sub-themes within the participants' responses to the interview questions, i.e. research questions. The steps of thematic analysis are explained by Braun and Clarke (2006):

(i) **Becoming familiarised with the data**

The researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading and rereading the collected data after all interviews had been transcribed so that the researcher was able to search for patterns and/or meaning in the participants' responses. The researcher's ideas started to take shape from the initial read-through. It was important for the researcher not to skip through or be selective in this stage, as it served as the foundation for the rest of the analysis process.

(ii) **Generating initial codes**

The researcher identified initial codes from the dataset in this step. Interesting features were highlighted by working systematically through all the data.

(iii) **Searching for themes**

In this step, the researcher sorted the different codes into broader themes. The researcher needed to consider how the codes may be combined to form main themes.

(iv) **Reviewing themes**

During this step, the researcher refined the themes identified in the previous step. This was done by, firstly, reviewing the themes in accordance with the coded data extracts and, secondly, by determining whether the themes accurately reflect the meanings identified in the data set as a whole.

(v) **Defining and naming themes**

The researcher identified the core of each theme, i.e. what was of interest and why it was of interest, resulting in a detailed analysis of each theme along with a name for each theme.

(vi) **Producing the report**

In the final step, the final analysis was conducted and the report was written. Data extracts were included to demonstrate identified themes and findings.

3.9.1.8 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Shenton (2004) provides a detailed discussion with regards to four criteria that Guba (1981) proposes should be considered when evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. The researcher used the following four criteria points as guidelines to ensure that a quality study was delivered: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.9.1.8.1 Credibility

Daniel (2019) and Shenton (2004) explain that credibility refers to whether the results of a study is consistent with reality. The question “Does the study measure what is intended?” (p. 64) needs to be answered. To ensure that the proposed study was credible, the researcher gave an accurate account of the participants’ experiences and an honest account of the results or findings of the study. Shelton (2004) suggests some measures for ensuring credibility when doing a qualitative research study, which include conducting frequent debriefing sessions to test ideas and to assist in recognising own biases.

3.9.1.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be applied to a wider population or in other situations (Shenton, 2004; Daniel, 2019). To ensure the transferability of the proposed study, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the phenomenon being examined. This will enable readers of the final study to compare the phenomenon used with their own situations.

3.9.1.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the proposed study’s methods can be repeated in other studies (Shenton, 2004). To ensure this, the researcher described the study in detail, including the following key points as recommended by Shenton (2004): the research design and how it was implemented, data collection methods used and a detailed analysis of the research findings, as well as a discussion on the effectiveness of said methods.

3.9.1.8.4 Confirmability

Bryman and Bell (2011) refer to confirmability as objectivity. The researcher remained neutral and objective when collecting data from participants by only capturing their unique experiences and/or perceptions not influencing in any way the information participants provided.

3.9.1.9 Reporting

The reporting of the researcher's findings was done in a table format. The table included the themes which the researcher had identified during data analysis. The researcher corroborated her findings by making use of direct quotes of responses to interview questions.

3.9.1.10 Ethical considerations

According to Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) "ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm" (p. 93). Castell-Gydesen and Lugo (2020) explain that "ethics is the system of moral values each individual upholds" (p. 10) and how this unique system may influence our behaviour in certain situations or environments. For the purpose of this study, various ethical considerations were taken into account in order to avoid doing harm during the course of the research project.

Creswell (2013) mentions various ethical aspects one should keep in mind when conducting research. He categorises them according to different phases in the research process: Before conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, during the analysis of the collected data, during the reporting of the analysed data and, finally, when publishing findings (p. 58):

Before conducting the study the researcher obtained the relevant tertiary institution's approval to proceed with the study. This step included approval from the relevant Research Committee and Ethics Committee from the tertiary institution's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Furthermore, the researcher asked the organisation for permission to conduct the study and use its employees as participants in the study. For this purpose, the researcher utilised a "Permissions to conduct research" form. This document provided the participant with an outline of the study, purpose of the study and other pertinent information needed to make a decision regarding participation in the study.

3.9.1.10.1 When beginning the study

The researcher disclosed the purpose of the study to all participants and did pressure any into participating in the study. This was done by providing the participants with leaflets explaining the purpose and process of the research. The participants did not sign the leaflets, as to prevent any possibility of identifying said participants. At the start of each interview, the participant was informed

that should he/she wish to continue with said interview, their informed consent to participate will be implied.

3.9.1.10.2 Whilst collecting data

The researcher was sensitive to relationships within the organisation and respected the organisation and its employees, avoiding deceit and disruption. It was pertinent that confidentiality be maintained throughout the study, in so doing protecting the rights, identities and data of participants and the organisation (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018).

3.9.1.10.3 Analysing collected data

The researcher protected the privacy of all participants and will continue to do so. All results, whether positive or negative, will be divulged in this dissertation.

3.9.1.10.4 Reporting analysed data

The researcher did not falsify any data, findings or conclusions and did not plagiarise.

3.9.1.10.5 Publishing findings

The researcher will share the research and findings with others in the form of a dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Master of Commerce in Labour Relations Management at the identified tertiary institution. During the research process, confidentiality regarding the participants' and the identified organisation's identity remain the highest priority.

3.10 Conclusion

The abovementioned matters were discussed to demonstrate the importance of each during the research process. These matters include the objectives of the study, the research methods and approaches utilised, as well as critical concepts such as the researcher's role during the research process and ethical considerations that needed to be taken into account, among others. All these matters were important to include as they ensured that the researcher could produce relevant and quality research and/or findings. In the next chapter, a detailed empirical analysis of the findings is presented.

CHAPTER 4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Chapter 4 consists of a discussion of the researcher's findings during the research process and the participants' demographics. The findings of other research that corroborate this study's findings are interwoven to substantiate and concretise their reliability. The findings of the relevant data analysis are divided according to the relevant research questions and objectives as discussed in previous chapters.

4.1 Participant demographics

4.2 Gender

Both male and female individuals participated in the study:

Table 3: Participants' gender

Male	Female
5	4

4.3 Race

Individuals from black, white, Asian and coloured ethnicities participated in the study. A detailed account regarding the quantity of each ethnicity is not given, as this may lead to the possible identifying of participants.

4.4 Experience as general manager

The participants' years in the position of general manager are set out in the table below:

Table 4: Participants' years of experience in a general manager position

Less than five years	Between five and 10 years	Between 11 and 15 years	More than 15 years
2	3	3	1

4.5 Educational background

All participants indicated that they had national diplomas in either hospitality management and/or food services. Only a few indicated that they had post-graduate diplomas, bachelor of technology degrees or other certificates of completed courses.

Table 5: Educational backgrounds of participants

National diploma (hospitality management and/or food services)	Post-graduate diploma in hospitality management	Certified hotel administrator course	Bachelor of technology	Master of business administration (MBA)	Other certificates (including financial courses)
9	2	3	2	1	5

4.6 Labour relations tasks performed by general managers

The researcher noted that when asked what type of labour relations tasks the general managers perform, some mentioned human resource (HR) activities. This may mean that some managers do not differentiate between human resource management and labour relations. Also, some tasks mentioned could be categorised as either HR or labour relations tasks.

4.7 HR tasks

Some of the HR tasks mentioned during the interviews included general HR administration such as payroll administration, budgeting and keeping of attendance records. *“Doing time books, work schedules...”*. Also included in the list was the full spectrum of recruitment, such as interviewing and induction. *“...from advertising the job, conducting the interviews, shortlisting...”*. Some participants indicated that they would also perform training and development tasks as part of their role as general managers. *“If there is any training [to be given] ...”*.

4.8 Labour relations tasks

Although a few HR specific tasks were mentioned, the participants identified a variety of labour relations-specific tasks. These labour relations tasks were briefly mentioned in both Chapter 1

and Chapter 2, as the labour relations tasks identified by Grant (2011) and Botha et al. (2018) overlap in some instances with the tasks that the participants of the current study had identified.

4.8.1.1 Performance counselling

The participants indicated that they would conduct performance counselling if or when an employee was not performing their expected tasks or reaching their expected outcomes. These counselling sessions would take place to train and assist employees in achieving said expected outcomes. The performance counselling process would usually take place over an extended period of time to give the employees every opportunity possible to improve their performance before further action would be taken.

One such response: “...where we stipulate what the company expects of the employee, and what the employee’s current standard [work output/behaviour] is. How can we [the organisation] help you [the employee] to become more efficient in your role? That is where we start off”.

On the topic of performance, Ekpang (2015) defines effective work performance as “the production of valid results in a work organisation” (p. 39). She further discusses that poor performance can be identified by the following:

- A failure to perform the duties as assigned to the position one is appointed in (or to not perform them to required standards);
- Not complying with workplace policies, rules and/or procedures;
- Unacceptable workplace behaviour;
- Disruptive or negative behaviour that affects co-workers.

Ekpang’s (2015) research concluded that counselling should be implemented in the workplace in order to improve productivity. She defines counselling as the act of helping a client to alter their perception of things and change his or her point of view in order to develop the ability to function effectively. Ekpang further explains that counselling should be implemented by managers to intervene in instances where employees’ work performance is affected by personal problems (*ibid.*). This measure would assist non-performing individuals to determine the causes of work-related problems that may

result in poor work performance; therefore, managers need to be able to implement performance counselling effectively.

Performance counselling must be seen in line with items 8, 9, 10 and 11 of Schedule 8 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. These items discuss the code of good practice relating to incapacity due to poor work performance, ill health or injury. The guidelines discuss the principles to consider in cases of dismissal due to incapacity, whether it be due to poor work performance, or due to ill health or injury.

In cases of dismissal due to poor work performance, the employer would first need to determine whether the employee had knowledge of the standard of performance that was required of him or her, whether the employee had a fair opportunity to meet said required performance standards, and whether dismissal would be appropriate for not meeting said standards.

In cases of dismissal due to ill health or injury, the employer would need to determine the extent to which the employee is able to perform required tasks or work, the extent to which his or her work environment can be changed in order to accommodate the employee's disability, or whether an alternative and suitable position is available for the employee.

The abovementioned criteria would generally be determined or discussed during performance counselling sessions, which the participants did mention. Performance counselling is often combined with general performance appraisal sessions as part of the organisation's performance management process. According to the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP), performance management is a "planned process" used to direct, develop, support, align and improve the individual employee as well as the team's performance in the organisation's objectives (2020).

In order for performance management processes to be effective, the relevant institutional and legal frameworks, such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, should be considered, as they provide guidelines for setting out performance expectations as often expressed in the employment contract (Erasmus et al., 2019). Erasmus et al. (*ibid.*) also explain that, should it be necessary for managers to manage poor performance, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 provides managers with guidance on how to do so effectively.

4.8.1.2 Implementation of disciplinary processes

The activities relating to the implementation of disciplinary processes include the entire disciplinary process, from initiation and investigation to disciplinary interviews and hearings. One participant stated: *“Which are the basics. From verbal through to dismissal”*. In some cases, the general managers would fill the role of initiator while in others they would chair a disciplinary hearing.

Most of the participants indicated that should it be expected that a disciplinary case may result in termination of service, a third party labour relations specialist or consultant would be used to chair the disciplinary proceedings to ensure that the process is procedurally and substantively fair: *“And if we need to for dismissals, we normally get a labour broker company in, and they would normally chair the hearing for us”*.

Some of the participants indicated that, in the event where they would experience any difficulties, they were able to contact the organisations’ central or corporate HR department for assistance: *“But otherwise, any difficulty we come in contact with, we will then put through to our central office HR department and ask for assistance”*.

4.8.1.3 Implementation of relevant labour legislation

The participants were tasked with implementing relevant labour legislation at each of their hotels. This would include, primarily, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the implementation of these Acts into the organisation’s policies and procedures.

One participant indicated that *“Obviously on the legal side of things, such as legislation, I am up to speed...”*. Some of the participants indicated that the organisation would inform them if there were any relevant changes or updates with regards to legislation, which they could then implement in their environments. It is essential for general managers to keep up to date on current labour legislation, as not doing so could have great consequences with regards to the implementation of policies and procedures, should the aforementioned be outdated or no longer relevant. Some participants suggested that they would sometimes make use of internet resources and organisational resources to stay up to date when the need arose.

4.8.1.4 Implementation of grievance procedures

Part of the participants' tasks was to implement the necessary grievance procedures as set out by the organisation and regulated by the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. In order for employees to feel comfortable initiating or taking part in the process, the general managers need to create a safe, trusting and inclusive environment: "*Whether it is from submitting grievance forms for them, or assisting them in the grievance process*". Many of the participants indicated that, when it came to these types of activities (grievances), the majority of the time, they would only act as mediators between employees, or between employees and clients, for which they needed strong interpersonal skills, good communication skills and emotional intelligence. Discussions regarding these skills and/or competencies follow later in this chapter. It is necessary to point out that this was but one of many instances during the current research study that two or more of the competency clusters as set out by Botha et al. (2018) overlapped or were needed in order to accomplish tasks associated with other competency clusters.

4.8.1.5 Dispute resolution

Dispute resolution in this instance would include the participants needing to manage situations such as strikes, violence, intimidation and other conflict situations at their respective hotels. One participant stated: "*in terms of there being any issues on-site by staff, we have guidelines for strikes, etc.*" and "*if we have to get involved with any form of intimidation or threats or damage to property*".

Wiese (2016) explains that disputes can be resolved in many ways, and although disputes are traditionally resolved in a court of law, one should not disregard the merits of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). He elaborates by stating that the nature of disputes as well as the relevant parties in disputes, may vary and, as such, appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms will need to be identified and implemented for each individual case (*ibid.*). In a South African context, alternative dispute resolution may take on various forms, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, ombudsmen and administrative dispute resolution (*ibid.*).

4.8.1.6 Implementation of employment equity

The participants are also involved in the employment equity for their respective hotels, requiring them to submit employment equity targets and plans for each: *“Of course I am involved with the employment equity for my hotel. We do get requested to submit our EE targets for the hotel...”*.

Employment equity targets, as mentioned by this particular participant, refer to the employment equity targets each organisation is required to set in accordance with the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA). The purpose of the EEA is to promote “equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment” (p. 10) by reducing unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to address the employment experiences of disadvantaged groups in order to ensure that they are equally represented in all levels of occupation in the South African workforce (p. 10).

Designated employers are required to submit employment equity reports annually, and should these requirements not be met, employers may face hefty fines or penalties (Israelstam, 2019). Designated employers are those organisations that have more than 50 employees or those with fewer than 50 but whose annual sales turnover exceeds the threshold indicated for that specific sector or industry (Israelstam, 2019). The participants of the study at hand fell among the management group of such a designated employer. As the general managers were responsible for assisting in the compiling and checking of accuracy of their respective hotels’ employment equity reports, it was necessary for them to be able to complete the following tasks effectively:

- Ensure that the employment equity plan is implemented effectively;
- Make all relevant documents regarding the organisation/hotel employment equity plan available to employees; and
- Eliminate roadblocks to the employment of individuals from designated groups.

Although general managers at each of the individual hotels were responsible for the day-to-day implementation of employment equity policies, procedures and legislation, the final responsibility would be shared with the corporate HR and management teams of the larger organisation.

4.8.1.7 General administration of the labour relations function

The general managers also served as the gatekeepers when it came to the general administration and recordkeeping of aforementioned tasks, with one participant stating: *“Most of the work is more admin related”*. The participants were tasked with keeping record of all labour relations activities and the implementation of the abovementioned policies and procedures. This would possibly include but would not be limited to documenting actions, taking notes and minutes of meetings and/or disciplinary procedures such as hearings and ultimately, the safekeeping and organisation of said documentation.

4.9 Additional tasks

Aside from the HR and labour relations tasks, participants made some mention of additional tasks that could be classified as being both HR and labour relations in nature:

- Fulfilling a motivational role (*“...motivational role that we play”*);
- Implementing general organisational policies and procedures (*“...to make sure that they [employees] are familiar with all the rules and regulations of the company”*); and
- Implementing health and safety procedures as set out by the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (*“... understand health and safety, fire process in the event of emergency”*).

4.10 Required labour relations competencies

When asked what labour relations competencies the participants thought were needed to perform the abovementioned tasks effectively, they mentioned a wide variety of competencies. The researcher listed the competencies and sorted them into the competency clusters as suggested by Botha et al. (2018) (see Figure 2). The researcher then compared the competencies named by the participants with those identified for labour relations specialists by Botha et al. in 2018.

Table 6: Strategic management and leadership (Cluster 1)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Analytical reasoning	Analytical reasoning

Being proactive	Objectivity
Integrity	Fairness
Labour relations management	Leadership skills
Project management knowledge	Management skills
Research skills	Consistency
Strategic business management	Transparency
	Ethical behaviour
	Discretion

When comparing the competency cluster of strategic management and leadership with the competencies identified in the current study (Table 1), the only overlap seems to be the analytical reasoning competency. Some participants indicated that the skill to balance the organisation's requirements and their own emotional involvement in certain situations was important: *“And that is where the difficulty comes in, the balance between what the company requires, there are rules, versus the emotional thing”*. Although none of the participants mentioned integrity as a necessary competency, they did, however, mention competencies such as fairness (*“So very much a fair sense of justice that everybody needs to be treated in the same way”*), objectivity, consistency in behaviour and decision-making (*“...But the case falls apart because you were never consistent in how you deal with things.”*), transparency in actions, ethical behaviour and discretion, all of which could be argued as being linked to integrity.

Fleming and Delves (2017) explain that integrity is perceived in one's emotional intelligence in the form of self-awareness and that emotional intelligence is the measuring instrument of decision making and maintaining honesty (p. 91).

Leadership and management skills are skills mentioned by nearly all the participants as competencies needed to complete labour relations tasks effectively. In a recent study conducted by Hight et al. (2019), participants were asked to describe the attributes and behaviours of bad managers. The participants indicated that unprofessionalism, unethical behaviour, autocratic management styles, poor operational and/or technical skills, poor leadership skills and poor decision-making and/or delegation skills were factors that contributed to them classifying managers as “bad”. Hight et al. identified four factors that may be the causes of said “bad” managers, including; the organisation's

culture and structure, personal characteristics of the individual managers, unqualified managers and the comfort zones of said managers (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, Tavitiyaman et al. (2014) built on their earlier research with research that focussed specifically on managerial competencies for hotel general managers. The researchers identified eight factors, namely leadership, interpersonal skills, strategic orientation, planning and implementation, team building and ethics, communication skills, flexibility and concern for the community. Dolanski and Reynolds (2019) conducted similar research but identified six leadership competency factors, namely soft skill competencies, leadership competencies, interpersonal competencies, organisational competencies, relational competencies and self-management competencies. As with the current research, some of the factors identified by Dolanski and Reynolds (2019) may overlap with those identified by Tavitiyaman et al. (2014) once further details are discussed and examined.

Watermeyer (2011) discusses transformational leadership in particular and how it is dependent on various labour relations constructs, including consistency, transparency, ethical behaviour fairness, among others. Furthermore, fairness, leadership skills, management skills as well as consistency could be directly linked to labour relations management. Fairness sets the foundation for labour relations, although it is mostly linked to salary- or wage-related issues and when considering dismissals (Mabogoane, 2006).

New competencies addressing the “new workplace” (p. 363) should be addressed in line with the amount of change the workplace undergoes, the pace and nature of the business or industry, the generational split in the workforce and technological developments being implemented (Dolanski & Reynolds, 2019).

Table 7: Business acumen (Cluster 2)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Knowledge of finance	Knowledge of accounting
Knowledge of HR	Knowledge of HR
Knowledge of technology	Knowledge of technology

Political savvy	Knowledge of different business divisions and/or positions in organisation
Strategic agility	

The second cluster, business acumen, indicated a correspondence (Table 2) with the competencies of knowledge of finance, knowledge of HR and knowledge of technology. The participants indicated that a general knowledge of finance (“*Also a sound knowledge of accounting...*”) and HR processes, guidelines and procedures (such as recruitment) are required in order to understand certain situations and make educated decisions in said situations. Basic knowledge of technology is needed, as many labour relations tasks are administrative in nature, according to participants: “*...and familiar with systems like MS Word, MS Excel...*”. Additionally, one participant indicated that it would be important to be knowledgeable in different departments or positions in the organisation, as it would better equip an individual to understand different environments and expectations of different positions within the organisation: “*You have to have sound knowledge of your procedures and systems you expect your employees to work on*”.

Minton (2016) discusses a business acumen competency model aimed towards Industrial and Organisational Practitioners. Although the article’s discussion is aimed at specialists, the foundation of his viewpoints and the importance of business acumen as a competency are motivated by the influence that outside factors such as technological advances, accounting practices etc., may have on the successful completion of labour relations tasks. Furthermore, Minton explains that background or foundational experience and knowledge is often needed to complete certain specialised tasks, and in this instance, labour relations tasks (*ibid.*). It would be interesting to compare Milton’s business acumen competency model for industrial-organisational psychology practitioners with the competency framework developed by Botha et al. (2018), as both are geared toward specialists in their own environments. That said, upon inspection, Milton’s (2016) competency model does have some competencies that may correlate with those identified by Botha et al. (2018).

Table 8: Transformation innovator (Cluster 3)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Change management	Change management
Coaching/mentoring	Coaching/mentoring
Cultural intelligence	Cultural intelligence
Facilitate HR development	

The third cluster of competencies, namely transformation innovator, has three competencies that correlate with those identified by the participants (Table 8). Firstly, participants indicated that it is important to be able to manage change in the work environment, as the hospitality industry is fluid and it would be important to adapt to new requirements and challenges.

Change, according to Bose and Gupta (2021), is important for organisations in order to remain competitive in their specific industries and to meet their clients' needs. This further ensures the profitability of the organisation. As such, the general managers of hotels are expected to have the ability to implement change management initiatives, thus resulting in the need for them to have change management competencies as part of their competency repertoire. Bose and Gupta further explain that a sure-fire way to ensure effective change management is through effective communication (*ibid.*). This relates to the communication competency cluster of Botha et al. (2018), which is explained later in this chapter.

Secondly, the participants indicated that coaching or mentoring their junior associates forms a rather large part of their roles as general managers, and thus the skills to mentor or coach are important to master: "*If it is disciplinaries, they will sit in with me*".

During her research, Lemisiou (2018) found that in-house coaching as an intervention can stimulate the development of emotional and social intelligence of employees. In association, Podolchack et al. (2019) discuss coaching as a popular method to influence employees' activities and/or performance in the workplace. They continue by explaining that coaching can assist in identifying openings in employees' skills improving their outputs by supporting them in a variety of work-related tasks. Podolchack et al. go on to provide examples of conditions in environments that may either be effective (managers experienced in coaching) or ineffective (managers incompetent in coaching) in the

implementation of coaching in the workplace (*ibid.*). The researchers also expand on the importance of managers or coaches to improve their managerial and leadership skills, which can again be linked to the competency framework set out by Botha et al. (2018), more specifically the strategic management and leadership competency cluster.

Finally, although only a few of the participants indicated cultural intelligence as a vital competency, it remains an essential competency. The participants who mentioned cultural intelligence as a needed competency expanded by stating that, by working with a diverse workforce (diversity in age, race, religion, gender), they learned the finer elements of cultural intelligence: “*Because the blanket approach does not necessarily work, because you have such a diverse workforce*”.

Diversity management and cultural intelligence could be linked in the sense that enabling diversity management in the workplace may lead to the development of the cultural intelligence of the individual employee, or in this case, the hotel general manager. Joubert (2017) discusses three important factors that should be kept in mind when it comes to managing diversity in the workplace: why managing diversity is important, how the employee would benefit from it, and how the organisation would benefit from it.

Cultural intelligence is especially important in conducting international work-related activities (Jurásek et al., 2021). Hotel general managers often find themselves in situations where they are faced with international clients or employees with diverse backgrounds and cultures. Cultural intelligence would thus not only be beneficial for the individual but also for organisations and their general managers in managing diversity in the workplace as well as developing their cultural intelligence (*ibid.*).

Grobler and Wörnich (2016) explain that providing a universal definition for human resource development (HRD) is difficult, as HRD is viewed differently by different individuals and/or stakeholders. They do however explain that the core of HRD consists of the improvement of individual effectiveness and performance in the workplace, as well as the improvement of the organisation’s effectiveness and overall performance. They conclude that developing the knowledge, skills and competencies of employees will result in the aforementioned improvement of effectiveness and performance. Although few to none of the participants in the current study indicated the necessity of

competencies related to HRD facilitation activities in their environments, it could still be argued to be an essential requirement as a result of the nature of their roles as general managers. Grobler and Wörnich suggest that organisations should compare their HRD strategies with those of organisations that excel in the implementation of theirs and use these strategies to measure the organisation’s performance against a benchmark of sorts (*ibid.*). These strategies could be adjusted to suit the general manager responsible for implementing and/or managing a hotel’s HRD strategies in a South African environment.

Table 9: Jurisprudence/labour codes (Cluster 4)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Discipline procedure management	Discipline procedure management
Grievance procedure management	Grievance procedure management
Investigation/fact-finding	Investigation/fact-finding
Legislation	Legislation

The jurisprudence/labour codes cluster indicated a total correspondence with the competencies identified by the participants (Table 9).

The participants discussed the importance of being knowledgeable of disciplinary and grievance procedure management: “...and obviously it is my job to ensure that those rules and policies are adhered to by all staff”. As discussed previously, many of the participants indicated that they required good communications skills, emotional intelligence and strong interpersonal relationships in order to complete the relevant tasks associated with grievance procedure management. It is necessary to point out that this is only one of many instances during the current research study that two or more of the competency clusters as set out by Botha et al. (2018) overlapped or were needed in order to accomplish tasks associated with other competency clusters.

Most participants also included performance management as a vital competency, as it formed a large part of their roles as general managers and necessitate them to be able to perform performance management activities effectively: “...performance as well, is managed as required”. As discussed

previously, performance management has a direct impact on the performance of the organisation as a whole and, thus, effective performance management and sufficient skills to implement it are necessary.

Additionally, several participants indicated that they felt it necessary to be able to find and take all relevant facts into consideration when dealing with difficult situations in the work environment: “...you have to take all facts into consideration, before making decisions”. In this instance, effective investigation skills are needed by the participants in order to collect all relevant information to conduct or perform successful labour relations tasks, such as disciplinary investigations. It stands to reason that such skills can be honed over time and with practice.

Finally, having a working knowledge of all relevant legislation was identified as an equally important competency for the participants, as they indicated that it is difficult to implement certain processes or procedures if they do not understand the origin thereof that is legislation: “...knowledge of the Basic Conditions of Employment to be able to do payroll..”. Venter and Levy (2014) discuss the importance of having sound knowledge regarding all the relevant South African labour legislation and how implementing it incorrectly could have an impact on the organisation. Moreover, Erasmus et al. (2019) explain that labour relations in the workplace should be implemented and managed in such a way that a balance should be maintained between the different interests and goals of the environment in order to positively aid in the organisation’s success and the overall well-being of all parties involved. In this case, the hotel general managers should have the necessary knowledge regarding labour legislation of South Africa so that, by implementing and managing it correctly, they will contribute to the success of the organisation.

Table 10: Emotion management (Cluster 5)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Assertiveness	Assertiveness
Emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence
Resilience	Resilience
Self-efficacy	Self-awareness

Table 10 indicates a correspondence between the following competencies: assertiveness, emotional intelligence and resilience. Some participants indicated that it is important to be able to “regulate” themselves and others in describing the relevance of assertiveness: “...*knowing how to regulate the room*” and “...*idea how to regulate yourself in order to regulate them*”. Furthermore, the participants discussed the importance of knowing their limitations regarding emotional involvement in certain situations (emotional intelligence). Some participants stated that they would sometimes question themselves and their actions in difficult situations, such as terminating an employee’s service, and explained the importance of being resilient: “...*because you start weighing things up now*”. Additionally, the participants discussed self-awareness rather than self-efficacy as a necessary competency. They feel it is important to be able to identify their own limitations, as well as your own personal boundaries in a work environment: “...*when you are making a decision, is it because you are overseeing things because the person is a good person, or put your manager hat on and make a decision because what is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong?*”.

According to Sellie-Dosunmu (2016), researchers of the 1990s have proposed various definitions for emotional intelligence (EQ). Two of the most favoured definitions included those of Peter Salovey and Jack Meyer (1997) and Daniel Goleman (1995). Salovey and Meyer (1997) defined EQ as an individual’s “ability to perceive, understand and use their emotions” (p. 1), whereas Goleman defined EQ as the skills in the various competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (1995). Sellie-Dosunmu also indicated that when leaders, or in this case hotel general managers, have a strong (EQ), they do not only influence their own team members or employees but also the larger organisation (2016). She further states that the leader (manager) can affect the team members’ behaviour by acting as a role model (*ibid.*).

Mayer et al. (2017) conducted research on the EQ of female leaders in South African higher education. They found that the most mentioned EQ components, as reported by their participants (women), included self-regard, interpersonal relationships, problem-solving, empathy, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, impulse control and social responsibility. It is interesting to note that their identified EQ components overlap with those mentioned by the current study’s participants in the following components: interpersonal relationships, emotional self-awareness and assertiveness.

Rauf et al. (2020) found leadership and communication skills to have a positive relationship with EQ. They remark that the better the leadership and communication skills of an individual, the higher the level of EQ of said individual. These findings corroborated research conducted by Jodhav and Gupta (2014) as well as Gulsan and Serap (2013).

Table 11: Communication (Cluster 6)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Consultation	Verbal communication skills
Dialogue	Written communication skills
Diplomacy	Listening skills
Listening skills	
Persuasion	
Presentation skills	
Verbal communication skills	
Written communication skills	

The corresponding competencies for the communication competency cluster (Table 11) include verbal communication, written communication and listening skills. Most participants reflected on the importance of verbal and written communication competencies, stating that these skills are especially important, since they work with a diverse workforce and they would need to adapt their ways of communication for different individuals and situations: “...*how do we communicate, how do we get the message that we are trying to say across to the other person?*”. Furthermore, since coaching and performance management together with grievance and disciplinary tasks form such a large part of their responsibilities, listening skills have been proven as crucial for the participants to be able to successfully complete said tasks: “*I think you need to be a good listener*”.

Research conducted by Coffelt et al. (2019) indicated that employers understand written communication as a type of communication where documents are used as a method of communication. These types of documents may include written policies, procedures or in today’s technologically forward society, email communications, notices and memos, among others. Furthermore, employers understand oral or verbal communication as interacting or presenting information verbally. This might

include meetings, information sessions or conversations between individuals. The participants in the study identified the following criteria that should be kept in mind for written and verbal communication to be considered successful (Coffelt et al., 2019):

Focus should be placed on the correct use of grammar and spelling, as well as other technical aspects of written communication. This is essential to ensure that the receiver of said information understands the intended message as it is meant to be understood. The participants also indicated that for verbal communication to be effective, the sender of information should be comfortable communicating with others, conduct themselves in a professional manner when communicating in a work environment and adhere to general conversational norms acceptable in the workplace.

Suh et al. (2012) found that their participants rated listening skills as a higher priority than any other communication skill. The participants of the current study however, rated all three mentioned communication skills as equally important when completing labour relations activities in their environments.

Although the participants mentioned or discussed mainly written and verbal communication skills as needed competencies to complete labour relations tasks effectively, other researchers have found that other communication skills, such as visual and communication skills, ranked high on the priority list for their participants. One such study is that of Coffelt et al. (2019), who studied the perspectives of employers regarding workplace communication skills.

Table 12: Interpersonal relations (Cluster 7)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Conflict management	Social intelligence
Social intelligence	
Teamwork	

Although the participants alluded to the conflict management and teamwork competencies when asked about the labour relations tasks they perform, they did not discuss these competencies when asked about which competencies are needed to perform the mentioned tasks effectively. Social intelligence was the competency in the interpersonal relations competency cluster that was mentioned

at the time (Table 12). The participants included general people skills (“...*understand that you are dealing with individuals.*”, “*knowing how to deal with their staff*”), being open to others’ points of view and knowing their employees on a personal level in the social intelligence competency.

Some key skills and/or characteristics that may indicate a level of social intelligence, as identified by Hughes et al. (2009), include an individual’s ability to adapt, show empathy, work in collaboration with others, develop skills, manage conflict and be an inspirational leader.

Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) found evidence that coaching has a positive impact on the social and emotional intelligence competencies of leaders. They refer to many researchers that have utilised the Bar-On emotional intelligence model as an indicator of transformational leadership.

Table 13: Collective bargaining management (Cluster 8)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Collective bargaining	
Dispute resolution	
Negotiation skills	

None of the participants discussed competencies related to the collective bargaining management cluster (Table 13). This could be a result of collective bargaining management being a task that is performed by the organisation’s corporate office HR department and participants did not feel that this specific competency is necessary for them to perform their specific labour relations tasks effectively, as it is not relevant to them or their positions as general managers.

Although the participants did not mention any competencies in relation to collective bargaining management, the necessity thereof when completing labour relations tasks might be relevant in other organisational structures or industries where general managers might be expected to complete tasks relating to collective bargaining management. As such, it is important to discuss some of these competencies in order to understand them.

One such competency, arguably the most important in collective bargaining management, is dispute resolution. Israelstam (2019) discusses the South African dispute resolution process, explaining that the primary reason for its existence is to enable South African employees to contest the actions of

their employers. He explains that the South African dispute resolution system includes the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), various industry bargaining councils and the labour courts of South Africa (including the Labour Appeal court).

Pienaar and Spoelstra (2008) provide an extensive definition of negotiation:

Negotiation is a process of interaction between parties directed at reaching some form of agreement that will hold and which is based upon common interests, with the purpose of resolving conflict despite widely dividing differences. This is achieved through the establishment of common ground and the creation of alternatives. (p 3.)

The researchers emphasise the importance of communication, common ground and alternatives during the negotiation process (*ibid.*). When approaching negotiations, the parties involved should consider the objectives or desired outcomes of said negotiation process as well as the type of relationship that exists between the parties involved (2008).

Table 14: Labour relations specialist expertise (Cluster 9)

Botha et al. (2018)	Current study
Labour peace	Labour relations practice
Labour relations practice	
Problem-solving	
Professionalism	
Service delivery	
Strike management	

Labour relations practice competencies were identified as the only competency in the labour relations specialist expertise competency cluster (Table 14). Many participants indicated that fulfilling a consultative role with regards to all things labour-related at hotel level necessitated them to be able to act as labour relations specialists. Thus, a deeper knowledge of labour relations legislation, organisational policies and procedures are of utmost importance: “...*there has to be some kind of theory background*”. It stands to reason that the competencies Botha et al. (2008) identified during their research for the labour relations specialist expertise competency can be linked to other competencies discussed previously. Examples of this phenomenon include professionalism (communication),

problem-solving (interpersonal relations), and labour peace (collective bargaining management), to name a few.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, discussions regarding labour relations competencies identified by Botha et al. (2018) and the comparison with those identified and discussed by the participants during the current research indicated that, although not all competencies were mentioned, there is a definite overlap between the competencies listed in theory and the practices of hotel general managers. As such, it is conceivable to state that the labour relations competencies needed by specialists in the South African public sector are comparable and closely related to those that hotel general managers might need in order to conduct various labour relations tasks in their capacities as general managers.

The next chapter presents a summary on findings that were prominent, as well as the limitations experienced during the research process and recommendations for future researchers to keep in mind when conducting similar research.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter will endeavour to summarise the process that the researcher followed during the research project, to discuss the findings of said research project, to provide the reader with some insight into the limitations encountered throughout the research process and to offer recommendations for future research projects or endeavours.

5.1.1 Process followed

This research project set out to determine what labour relations tasks are performed by the general managers of a hospitality organisation, what competencies they need to be able to perform these tasks effectively and how these competencies compare to those identified in the research conducted by Botha et al. in 2018.

The abovementioned was achieved by asking the research participants four questions. Firstly, what type of labour relations tasks they performed as part of their jobs as general managers; secondly, what labour relations competencies they thought were needed to perform these tasks effectively; thirdly, whether they could identify any gaps between their own labour relations competencies and those they had identified as necessary; and lastly, what suggestions they could make with regards to addressing any possible gaps. The research participants included hotel general managers from the Gauteng province. Each manager was responsible for the management of an individual hotel that forms part of a hotel group in the larger Southern Africa region.

5.1.2 Findings

After analysing all the collected data, a comparison was drawn between the labour relations competencies the participants had identified and the subsequent labour relations competency clusters as set out by Botha et al. (2018) that were regarded as necessary to perform specific labour relations tasks effectively. Although some competencies were not mentioned by the participants, a very clear comparison can be made with the generic competency framework for labour relations practitioners in the South African public service, as illustrated in Figure 2, with most competencies mentioned by the participants corresponding with those set out by Botha et al. (2018).

Furthermore, the researcher explored whether the participants themselves could identify any possible gaps between the competencies they have indicated as necessary to be able to perform their labour relations tasks effectively and the labour relations competencies they already have as general managers. Although most of the participants stated that they could not in fact identify any gaps, a few could.

Those participants who could not identify any gaps expanded on their statements by saying that they receive sufficient labour relations specific training from the organisation, as well as the necessary tools, information and guidelines to be able to perform their labour relations tasks effectively. Furthermore, a few participants discussed the involvement of the HR department located at the organisation's corporate office, stating that they always had a "lifeline" to the HR department should they need additional assistance. A handful of participants also mentioned the importance of keeping themselves up to date on all current legislation, policies and procedures that are relevant to them in their positions as general managers.

On the other hand, a few employees revealed that they could identify some areas for development. One participant pointed out that the effects an emotional component of labour relations tasks may have on an individual should be monitored and that it is important for them to be able to debrief with someone that would understand his or her feelings or circumstances. Another participant stated that general managers in larger environments would need to rely on their various department heads to assist in the completion of certain labour relations tasks, as in some instances interference might mean taking away their authority. Additionally, a participant indicated that knowing their staff as well as their strengths and weaknesses influences the way in which their staff's performance might be managed. In some instances, participants stated that they had little opportunity to "hone" their labour relations competencies, as they did not have many labour relations cases with specific regards to misconduct or grievances. Lastly, one participant discussed the difficulty of sometimes having to balance the choice of when to be a manager, when to nurture an employee and when to lead the team.

In the final part of data collection and analysis, the participants made suggestions on how the gaps they had listed could possibly be addressed:

The participants have made interesting suggestions on ways to “bridge the gaps” mentioned earlier. One such suggestion was to remove the labour relations tasks from the hotel level, and either centralise the function at the organisations’ corporate office or outsource it to a labour relations specialist firm. Another suggestion was to only centralise certain tasks, as some policies or procedures may be interpreted differently by different general managers. Implementing this suggestion may lead to standardising the actions taken in such situations, as only one department would take responsibility.

There were also suggestions for more in-depth training included training with regards to the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997. In keeping with this theme, one participant indicated that they would benefit from additional training with regards to handling CCMA cases, including how to prepare for CCMA cases. Another stated that they would prefer routine training on labour relations topics, for example, periodical refresher courses to keep up to date on the newest labour relations policies and procedures.

One theme of note that emanated from a few participants is the importance of giving succession pool candidates the opportunities for training and development in labour relations, stating that it would give them confidence when starting their careers and grow the further along they went.

Lastly, most participants pointed out that experience in and exposure to labour relations tasks and/or situations is the most important way of bridging any possible gaps. A few went further by explaining how observing other general managers’ situations (for example disciplinary hearings) can be beneficial in learning necessary skills or behaviour that might assist them in their own environments.

5.1.3 Limitations and recommendations

During the course of the study, the researcher identified some limitations to the research that was conducted. Firstly, the research was conducted on a specific organisation within a very large industry. This narrowed the scope of the reach of labour relations and excluded many other options and possibilities for research.

Secondly, it came to the researcher’s attention that some participants did not differentiate between HR tasks and responsibilities and those that are specifically focussed on labour relations. This

could be because general managers are generalists, if one should generalise. They do not specialise in one function, for example, either HR or labour relations – they are jacks of all trades, as the saying goes.

Finally, and arguably the largest limitation during the research process was the presence of COVID-19 which instigated a global pandemic. The hospitality industry, like most other industries, was severely affected by national lockdown. This made conducting interviews a trying task, as social distancing became the norm. This necessitated the participant interviews to be conducted via video conferencing applications such as Zoom. While this approach was safer for all stakeholders, one cannot help but wonder if valuable information or responses were lost due to such methods of interviewing.

The researcher noted that although the research may be an extension of some sort of the research conducted by researchers such as Botha et al. (2018), there is still much to explore regarding the topic of labour relations competencies. In such a large industry one could identify another organisation with another type of organisational structure to conduct a similar study and compare findings with those from the current study. Furthermore, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted in other industries, such as the healthcare or finance/banking industries. In relation to this, different participants could be approached to participate other than the labour relations specialists in Botha et al. (2018) and the current study's hotel general managers. As Botha et al. (2018) also suggested, it might be beneficial to conduct the research in an HR-specific setting with HR practitioners and/or managers to evaluate how it compares to the current or previous studies.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



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Economic and Management Sciences Research
Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

31 August 2020

Prof P Smit and Prof H Linde
Per e-mail
Dear Prof Smit and Prof Linde,

EMS-REC FEEDBACK: 28082020
Student: Botha, N (24163252)(NWU-00728-20-A4)
Applicant: Prof P Smit / Prof H Linde – MCom in Labour Relations Management

Your ethics application on, *Exploring Labour Relations competencies for General Managers in a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng Province*, which served on the EMS-REC meeting of 28 August 2020, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number **NWU-00728-20-A4** is given for one year of ethics clearance. Please note that the reviewers recommend that the informed consent form should be language edited.

Due to the Covid-19 lock down ethics clearance for applications that involve data collection or any form of contact with participants are subject to the restrictions imposed by the South African government.

Kind regards,

Mark Rathbone
Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-West University, ou=Business Management,
email=markrath@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2020.08.02 13:12:34 +0200

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)

ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF GOODWILL PERMISSION



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Letter of Goodwill Permission

Dear Sir/Madam
Director of Human Resources

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Exploring Labour Relations competencies for General Managers a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng province.

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with the hotel general managers at your organisation. The general objectives of this study are: to determine what specific Labour Relations tasks are performed by general managers and how they relate to the specific Labour Relations competencies identified for Labour Relations specialists. If permission is granted the interviews will take place via video conferencing applications, such as Skype. This arrangement is due to the COVID-19 pandemic experienced in South Africa. This measure is to ensure to South African Government legislation and regulations, and to ensure the health and safety of participants. Participation from employees are entirely voluntary and they are allowed to refuse should they choose not to participate.

The interview questions will include the following:

Interview questions for general managers:

- How long have you been in your current position as general manager?
- Please describe your educational background.
- What Labour Relations tasks do you perform as general manager?
- What Labour Relations competencies do you think are needed by general managers to perform aforementioned tasks effectively?
- What gaps can you identify between the Labour Relations competencies you have as general manager, and those needed to perform Labour Relations tasks?
- How do you think aforementioned gaps can be addressed?

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

Should you have any questions, or need assistance, you are welcome to contact the researcher or her supervisor:

Nadia Botha

nadiab.nwu@gmail.com or 083 411 8683

299 1396

Prof Paul Smit

paul.smit@nwu.ac.za or (018)

Please complete the following section should permission to conduct the proposed research at your organisation be granted.

I, _____ (full name and surname of organisation representative), hereby give permission to the researcher to conduct the proposed research study in _____ (organisation name).

Signature

Date

ANNEXURE C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT DOCUMENT



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Dear Participant,

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Exploring Labour Relations competencies for General Managers in a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng province.

Thank you for your interest in this research project. You are invited to participate in this research project I am conducting in fulfilment of the requirements of a Master of Commerce degree in Labour Relation Management at the North-West University. If you agree to participate in this study, your individual responses to interview questions, as well as any identifying information, will remain confidential and no individual information discussed during any interview will be disclosed to fellow employees, managers or any individual within your employing organisation or any other organisation. Participation is entirely voluntary, and no drawbacks will arise should you choose not to participate

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the general managers of a hotel group have the competencies needed to perform Labour Relations tasks.

What will your responsibilities be?

By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to have an interview with the researcher. The interview will take place via video conferencing applications, such as Skype or Zoom. This arrangement is due to the COVID-19 pandemic experienced in South Africa. This measure is to ensure adherence to South African Government legislation and regulations, and to ensure the health and safety of participants. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may refuse should you choose not to participate. The estimated duration for the interview is between thirty (30) to sixty (60) minutes. The researcher will ensure that the setting for the interview is calm and relaxed, to ensure that you are at ease.

What information will be asked in the interviews?

Certain biographical information will be requested during your interview with the researcher. This will enable the researcher to describe the sample population used in the study to future readers of the research report or future publications. It is important to note that this information will not be used to compare groups, but the information may be of value in understanding your responses to the proposed interview questions.

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Language

During the interview the following questions will be asked:

- How long have you been in your current position as general manager?
- Please describe your educational background.
- What Labour Relations tasks do you perform as general manager?
- What Labour Relations competencies do you think are needed by general managers to perform aforementioned tasks effectively?
- What gaps can you identify between the Labour Relations competencies you have as general manager, and those needed to perform Labour Relations tasks?
- How do you think aforementioned gaps can be addressed?

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

It is possible that by participating in the proposed study, you may recognise or identify areas in which you may want to develop or advance within your role as general manager.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

Since the questions asked during the interview are not of a sensitive nature, possible risks involved in your participation are minimal. Should it happen that a certain question makes you uncomfortable or evoke an emotional response, the researcher will take the necessary steps to aid you in dealing with said emotions. A list of professionals that will be able to assist you, will be made available should the need arise.

Who will have access to the data?

Data collected during the interview, as well as your name and other information shared, will only be accessible to the researcher. Individual results or responses will not be communicated to any other party, this ensures that no individual participant can be identified through the research results. The researcher will provide the hospitality organisation where the study is conducted with the option of receiving feedback on group level, therefore no individual results will be shared. The results of this research will be submitted to the North-West University in the form of a dissertation. No identifying information, such as the names of participants or organisations will be disclosed.

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Should you choose not to participate, no consequences will be incurred. Should you choose to withdraw, you are able to do so at any stage in the study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No compensation will be offered for your participation in this study, as it is entirely voluntary. Seeing as the interviews will take place via video conferencing applications, in a quiet and private setting, no additional costs will be involved.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

Should you have any questions, or need assistance, you are welcome to contact the researcher or her supervisor:

Nadia Botha
nadiab.nwu@gmail.com or 083 411 8683

Prof Paul Smit
paul.smit@nwu.ac.za or (018) 299 1396

Declaration by participant

By participating in the research study entitled: **Exploring Labour Relations competencies for General Managers in a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng province**, you declare the following:

- You have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language which you understand.
- You have had an opportunity to ask questions and all your questions have been adequately answered.
- You understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that you have not been pressed to do so.
- You may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- You may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in your best interests, or if you do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Exploring Labour Relations competencies for General Managers in a hospitality organisation in the Gauteng province

The following questions will be asked to the participants of the proposed study:

- How long have you been in your current position as general manager?
- Please describe your educational background.
- What Labour Relations tasks do you perform as general manager?
- What Labour Relations competencies do you think are needed by general managers to perform aforementioned tasks effectively?
- What gaps can you identify between the Labour Relations competencies you have as general manager, and those needed to perform Labour Relations tasks?
- How do you think aforementioned gaps can be addressed?

As semi-structured interviews are to be conducted, the questions listed above will serve to guide the interviews in order for the researcher to answer the identified research questions. However, the researcher will also ask probing questions where clarity on, further explanation of, or a better understanding of a participant's response is needed.