

**Exploring the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance at a higher education institution in South Africa**

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## DECLARATION

I, CA Knight, declare that the mini dissertation titled: "Exploring the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa." submitted to the North-West University Business School, under the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) has not been previously submitted for any other degree or at any other university. I further declare that this is solely my work and that acknowledgement has been given to any relevant person.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CA Knight". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "C".

## **DEDICATION**

You're healing, and that terrifies them. They've never met a man who can break several times and put himself back together using nothing but self-love.

I am always finding myself. I am never a finished article. On some days I am healed, and on others, I am still healing. On some days I'm a pen, and on other days I'm a journal. I am always evolving.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance at a higher education institution in South Africa. The research investigated the relationship between the skills possessed by line managers and their subordinates' performance, and whether there was a significant correlation between these two variables. The research utilized a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews and observations to collect data from both line managers and their subordinates. The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the role of generic skills in line managers and their impact on subordinates' performance in a higher education setting.

Employee performance is crucial for organizations seeking to maintain competitiveness and achieve long-term success. While various factors contributed to employee performance, one area that gained significant attention in recent years was the influence of generic skills, also known as soft skills or transferable skills, on employee productivity. Generic skills encompass various non-technical competencies such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and time management. This study aimed to synthesize existing research on how generic skills influenced employee productivity, providing insights into how these skills impacted organizational outcomes.

### **Key terms**

Generic skills; subordinates' performance; line managers

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# **CHAPTER 1      OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

## **1.1    Introduction**

This chapter summarises the study and includes an introduction to the problem statement, conceptualisation of the study, background information, the study's setting within the management domain, causal factors, and problem descriptions under examination. The chapter also reviews the study's design, methodology, scope, importance, and delimitations. This chapter addressed the questions and objectives of the study, along with an explanation of the research emphasis. The main ideas that were utilised in the research were explained and described. Keywords were defined in context, and the section concluded with a chapter summary.

## **1.2    Background to the study**

"The great resignation," as economists termed it, occurred in April 2021, just after the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States of America and globally, prompting many employees to quit their jobs. This phenomenon left organisations grappling with the challenges of retaining executive leadership and attracting new talent (Langdon & Bosacki, 2022:17). The demand for generic skills has become crucial in the post-pandemic work environment (Richmond, 2021:10). To be influential in their roles, leaders must develop these essential skills (Grimmer, 2021:14). The development of generic skills in leaders begins with an acknowledgement of how others and self-awareness perceive them (Christensen, 2020). The significance of generic skills became more pronounced when employees transitioned to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Richmond, 2021:10), a trend evident in numerous organisations.

The phenomenon of the great resignation also had an impact on South Africa, with many employees choosing to leave their jobs due to various reasons, including the shift to remote work during the pandemic. This has resulted in organizations in South Africa facing similar challenges of retaining executive leadership and attracting new talent (Mkhize & Dlamini, 2021). In addition, the demand for generic skills has become even more crucial in the South African post-pandemic work environment, with leaders needing to develop these skills to be effective in their roles (Botha, 2021). As a result, there has been a growing emphasis on developing generic skills in leaders in South Africa, starting with self-awareness and understanding how others perceive them (Van Deventer, 2020).

While it is true that the demand for generic skills has been increasing even before the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also true that the pandemic has accelerated this trend. The pandemic has brought

to light the need for leaders to be adaptable, flexible, and able to navigate uncertainty and change. These are all essential generic skills that have become even more crucial in the post-pandemic work environment (Richmond, 2021).

Furthermore, the pandemic has also accelerated the shift towards remote work and digital transformation, which has led to a greater emphasis on digital literacy and communication skills, both of which are important generic skills (Botha, 2021). Therefore, while the demand for generic skills may not have been entirely caused by the pandemic, it has certainly highlighted their significance and accelerated their importance in the modern workplace.

A positive organisational culture inspires more motivated employees and fosters interaction among team members (Sun, 2022:1). This, in turn, leads to a psychological enhancement of the organisation, promoting effective employee productivity (Sun, 2022:1). Employee productivity can be synonymous with organisational performance, employee performance, corporate performance, or new product development performance (Farooq & Sultana, 2022:310). Furthermore, an organisation's performance is influenced by various factors, including financial and non-financial results (Farooq & Sultana, 2022:310).

In recent years, a psychological shift has occurred from a compliance-driven and aggressive approach to a more empathic and genuinely concerned attitude towards workers. However, instances of non-compliance have persisted across various professions, positions, and industries. Using generic skills has become imperative for effectively managing non-compliance in the workplace (Grimmer, 2021:14-15). These skills are crucial in counselling and leading employees through crises (Gladstone & Brown, 2022:226).

Generic skills are people, interpersonal, essential, or noncognitive skills in interacting with others. Demonstrating examples in which generic skills are applied is often the most effective way to describe them, as they can be challenging to quantify and prove. In contrast, hard skills are teachable abilities that can be measured and quantified (Doyle, 2021).

According to (Gladstone & Brown, 2022:226), the opportunity to develop generic skills among professionals has been overlooked despite their academic knowledge and expertise. Goleman (2005) defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognise, understand, and manage one's own emotions and recognise, understand, and influence the feelings of others. Emotional intelligence is a valuable skill that enhances organisational communication, management, problem-solving, and relationships.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

In a competitive and dynamic working environment, employees require generic and hard skills to thrive. Despite the perceived significance of other generic skills, an individual's employability and performance are often considered less significant. This suggests a potential correlation between workers' performance and generic skills (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017:2). Many public and private organisations, led by management and decision-makers, emphasise the need for their staff members to meet specific academic and technical proficiency standards across various knowledge areas. However, the complete understanding of the impact of generic skills on employee performance remains a subject that managers and executives in diverse industries need to explore. More than relying on technical and managerial abilities at the expense of human or generic skills deemed crucial for successful company management may jeopardise the company's goals. Some managers may require clarification about the role and importance of generic skills (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017:2).

The modern workplace is becoming increasingly competitive and dynamic, with employees needing a combination of generic and hard skills to succeed. While technical and academic proficiency is often emphasized, the importance of generic skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork cannot be overlooked. However, there is a lack of understanding about the correlation between generic skills and employee performance, leaving managers and decision-makers in various industries unsure about the importance of investing in generic skills training. This problem highlights the need to explore the impact of generic skills training on employee performance and the role of generic skills in successful company management.

### **1.4 Research aim and objectives**

#### **1.4.1 Research aim**

The study will involve conducting interviews with employees from a higher education institute in South Africa. The research aim is important as it seeks to uncover whether line managers' generic skills have an impact on their subordinates' performance. This knowledge can be beneficial for organizations as it could inform the development and training of line managers to enhance their skills and ultimately, improve employee performance. Additionally, understanding the link between line managers' skills and subordinates' performance can foster a more positive work environment, leading to increased job satisfaction and retention among employees. Overall, this research has the potential to provide valuable insights into the role of line managers in organizational success.

This study aims to explore the influence of line manager's generic skills on employee performance.

#### **1.4.2 Research objectives**

The primary objective of this study was to explore the influence of managers' generic skills on employee performance. The study aimed to examine employees' knowledge of generic skills, scrutinise the relationship between line managers and employees, and investigate whether generic skills in line managers are essential for enhancing employee performance.

To achieve these primary objectives, the study set the following secondary objectives:

- To examine the generic skills line managers, apply while supervising subordinates in a selected higher institution of learning.
- To establish the extent to which the generic skills adopted by managers affect employee performance.
- To examine the challenges faced by line managers while using generic skills to supervise subordinates.
- To explore other factors that affect employee performance in the selected institution of higher learning.

#### **1.5 Motivation for the study**

The study aims to contribute meaningfully to ongoing academic publications focused on generic skills and their impact on employee performance. The recommendations derived from the study are intended to contribute valuable insights into how managerial generic skills can influence employee performance within the institution.

The higher education sector plays a critical role in shaping the future workforce and driving economic growth. Therefore, it is essential to understand how generic skills in line managers influence employee performance within a higher education institution in South Africa. This research is motivated by the need to identify ways to enhance the performance of employees in HEIs and to help managers develop skills that will enable them to lead effectively.

This research project has obtained ethical clearance from the University Ethics Committee (Ethical Clearance Number: NWU-00682-23-A4). The research will be conducted following the ethical principles outlined in the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC), including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. The Ethical Approval letter of Study is shown in Annexure C.

This research will be conducted using a qualitative approach, which will enable a deeper understanding of the research problem and the experiences of the participants. The target population for this study will be line managers in a higher education institution in South Africa. The participants will be selected using purposive sampling, and data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide will be developed based on the research questions and objectives and will be tested before being used for data collection.

One of the main reasons for conducting this research qualitatively is to gain a deep understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of both line managers and subordinates regarding the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance. This method allows for a more in-depth exploration of the variables of interest and the context in which they occur.

The target population for this study is line managers and their subordinates at a higher education institution in South Africa. The participants will be selected through purposive sampling, based on their academic or support position from all faculties and support departments within the institution. The sample size will consist of approximately 104 participants, with 52 line managers and 52 subordinates.

The interviews will be conducted face-to-face and will be audio-recorded with the participant's permission. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns and themes in the data.

In addition to the interviews, the study will also involve observations of line managers and their subordinates in the workplace, which will provide insight into their interactions and behaviours. The observations will be recorded in field notes and will be used to supplement the interview data.

Overall, this qualitative approach will enable a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic and will provide valuable insights for higher education institutions seeking to improve employee performance through the development of generic skills.

The motivation for this study is due to the growing emphasis on generic skills in the workplace, particularly in the post-pandemic environment. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of generic skills, such as adaptability, flexibility, and digital literacy, as well as the need for leaders to develop these skills for effective performance. Additionally, the great resignation phenomenon further emphasised the challenges faced by organisations in retaining executive leadership and attracting new talent.

Employee performance has been affected by various factors, including the pandemic, remote work, and the need for generic skills. Recognising the importance of understanding how generic

skills could improve employee performance and organisational performance, particularly in South Africa.

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on generic skills and their impact on employee and organisational performance. The study aimed to explore the development of generic skills in leaders in higher education in South Africa, starting with self-awareness and understanding how others perceived them. Additionally, the study aimed to identify the causal factors and problem descriptions under examination, as well as the design and methodology used in the research. This study would provide valuable insights into the development of generic skills in leaders, with potential implications for organisational performance.

### **1.6 Scope and delimitation of the study**

The study will be confined to the institution in which it was conducted, the North-West University, limiting the applicability of the findings solely to that specific tertiary academic institution. The scope of the data collected in the study will be restricted, preventing the extension of the findings to other organisations.

### **1.7 Rigor of the research**

The rigour of this qualitative research will be ensured through various measures, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility, data will be collected from multiple sources, and triangulation will be used to validate the findings. Transferability will be ensured by providing a detailed description of the research context and the research process. Dependability will be ensured through the use of an audit trail to document the research process and decision-making. Confirmability will be ensured by maintaining a reflexive journal and involving a co-coder to review the data analysis.

### **1.8 Definition of key concepts**

In a qualitative study, defining a concept is crucial for describing how key constructs should be interpreted within the context of that study. While the constructs used in this study may be commonly employed in the literature on business administration, providing context and operationalising them specific to this research aids in helping the reader comprehend the study's context and scope. The main concepts and definitions that apply to this topic are as follows:

#### Generic Skills

Generic skills are behavioural abilities emphasising relationships and intangible qualities, including emotional intelligence (Selvadurai *et al.*, 2012:295). Referred to as transferable or employability skills, generic skills denote a collection of versatile competencies individuals possess that can be applied across diverse contexts and disciplines. This skill set includes critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, time management, and creativity (Chan & Fong, 2018:927).

### Subordinates' performance

Lussier and Achua (2015) define subordinates' performance as the extent to which subordinates can accomplish the goals and objectives expected of them in their particular role within an organisation. This can include meeting or exceeding targets, completing tasks promptly, demonstrating proficiency in job-related skills, and contributing positively to team and organisational goals. In short, subordinates' performance measures how effectively an individual is fulfilling the expectations of their role within an organisation.

### Management

Management is the process of planning, organising, directing, and controlling resources to achieve specific goals (Robbins *et al.*, 2017:5).

### Leadership

According to Chemers (2014), leadership is a dynamic process involving an individual's ability to influence and motivate others towards achieving a common goal or objective. It is a social influence process that requires the leader to enlist the support and cooperation of others. Effective leadership involves the ability to inspire and empower others and the capacity to communicate effectively, make sound decisions, and manage resources efficiently. In short, leadership is all about inspiring and guiding others towards a shared vision and common purpose.

## **1.9 Chapter Layout**

The structure of the study will encompass the following chapters:

### Chapter One: Overview of the Study

This chapter will offer a comprehensive introduction to the study, covering aspects such as background information, the problem statement, research questions, and objectives.

### Chapter Two: Literature Review on the Influence of generic Skills on Employee performance

Focused on empirical and theoretical literature, this chapter will delve into the influence of generic skills on employee performance. Various generic skills influencing employee performance will also be discussed.

#### Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology employed in conducting the study. It will detail the data collection approach, including a description of the target population and sample.

#### Chapter Four: Presentation of Data and Analysis of Results

The results of the study will be presented in this chapter. Additionally, the chapter will include demographic information of the participants and an analysis of the research questionnaire.

#### Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will present conclusions from the study's findings and recommendations based on the research outcomes.

### **1.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduces the background, context, and causation variables to be investigated, along with the conceptualisation of the problem. It also provided an overview of the background, context, and causal aspects under study. Furthermore, the chapter offered a summary of the proposed research, outlining the research strategy and the organisation of subsequent chapters. The study's aims, research questions, and focus were detailed in this section. The subsequent literature review will provide a more in-depth exploration of the primary topics introduced in Chapter Two.

## **CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF LINE MANAGERS' GENERIC SKILLS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, the study's backdrop, problem description, study objectives, research questions, motivation, and study scope were meticulously prepared and elucidated. The current chapter focuses on the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance. This discussion is informed by a comprehensive literature examination, aligning with the problem description previously outlined.

In higher education, the demand for generic skills among employees is increasing rapidly. The sector faces numerous challenges, including evolving student expectations, technological advancements, and societal needs. In this backdrop, employees need to possess a range of generic skills to adapt to changing circumstances, solve problems, and enhance their performance.

This chapter focuses on the influence of generic skills among line managers on employee performance in the higher education sector. The chapter provides a theoretical overview and a comprehensive literature review to identify the most crucial generic skills for line managers in the sector.

### **2.2 Literature review**

Generic skills are often referred to as soft skills, people skills, core skills, human skills, 21st-century skills, transitional skills, employability traits, and interpersonal skills (Yassin *et al.*, 2008:572). The three generic skills identified by Nabi and Bagley (Yassin *et al.*, 2008) are problem-solving, communication, and personal skills. Based on their study findings, Bennett, Dunne, and Carre (2000) claimed that generic abilities may be presented in four primary areas of management skills: information management, task management, self-management, and management of others. The eight generic skills—collaboration/teamwork, communication skills, initiative, leadership ability, people development/coaching, personal effectiveness/personal mastery, planning and organising, and presenting abilities—that every person needs are stated by Crosbie (2005) (Yassin *et al.*, 2008:572).

Although some studies have found that communication skills are the most important generic skills for line managers, other studies have identified different skills as more essential for employee performance. For instance, a study by Krambia-Kapardis and Zopiatis (2019) found that problem-

solving skills were the most significant determinant of employee performance. The study revealed that employees who possessed strong problem-solving skills were better able to identify and tackle workplace challenges, leading to improved performance. Moreover, a study by Li et al. (2021) found that leadership abilities were the most crucial generic skills for Chinese managers. The study revealed that managers who demonstrated strong leadership abilities were more likely to motivate and inspire their subordinates, leading to improved performance.

These conflicting findings highlight the need for further investigation into the most important generic skills for line managers and their impact on employee performance. More comparative analyses are necessary to identify any gaps or contradictions in the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Further research could also explore whether the importance of generic skills varies across different industries, organizational cultures, and national contexts, as well as the extent to which generic skills can be developed and improved through training and development programs.

### **2.2.1 The Role of Communication Skills**

A study conducted by Carless and De Paola (2000) found that communication skills were the most important generic skills for line managers. The study revealed that managers who were effective communicators were more likely to have subordinates who were motivated and satisfied with their work, which led to improved performance. Furthermore, a study by Wu and Lee (2018) found that line managers who possess strong communication skills are better able to create a positive work environment, which is conducive to improved subordinates' performance. The study also highlighted the importance of communication skills in building trust and relationships between managers and subordinates.

Communication skills are regarded as an element of success in all systems, and the identification, development, and improvement of communication skills are components of successful and productive organisations (Pouragha *et al.*, 2020). The exchanging of ideas and information in different situations, whether written or spoken, dealing with clients or other employees, is the basis of communication (Hamid & Younus, 2021:4).

These skills have been the focus of numerous studies in various sectors and areas for decades. Clampitt and Downs (1993:8) demonstrated that departments with better communication skills have a lower turnover, fewer grievances, and higher productivity. Besides productivity, effectively communicating with other employees and supervisors boosts morale and increases job satisfaction (Cooks-Campbell, 2022). Group communication builds relationships and motivates employees towards a shared direction (Hamid & Younus, 2021:7).

Managers should focus on the quality of their communication (Pouragha *et al.*, 2020), fostering this generic skill to improve job performance and allow employees to counter obstacles effectively (Hamid & Younus, 2021:7).

The types of communication in the workplace can vary (Cooks-Campbell, 2022):

- Spoken or written.
- Through leadership; upward or downward.
- Updates, presentations, and meetings.
- Informal interactions.

Communication skills can be improved by establishing the goal of the communication in terms of who needs to hear this information and how the message is conveyed (Jolaoso, 2023). If employees and employees are clear and open-minded while encouraging one-on-one communication channels, two-way communication will foster active listeners and provide appropriate feedback (Jolaoso, 2023).

Productivity will be increased when employees better understand their roles and responsibilities, as their duties will be completed more effectively. When more tasks are completed, and collective goals are achieved, it reduces employee stress and contributes to organisational success (Cooks-Campbell, 2022).

A study by Wang *et al.* (2021) found that communication skills were the most important generic skills for line managers in the higher education sector. Effective communication skills allow managers to establish clear expectations, provide constructive feedback, and create a positive work environment for their subordinates. Moreover, a study by Griffiths and Smith (2020) found that effective communication between academic staff and professional services staff was crucial to enhancing student outcomes in the sector.

### **2.2.2 Leadership**

Leadership is another critical generic skill for line managers in the higher education sector. A study by Day *et al.* (2020) found that transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating subordinates to achieve higher levels of performance, was positively associated with academic staff job satisfaction and commitment. Moreover, a study by Chen *et al.* (2018) found that academic leaders who demonstrated strong leadership abilities were more likely to foster a positive academic culture and enhance student outcomes.

### **2.2.3 Teamwork and Collaboration**

Teamwork and collaboration can be regarded as people using their individual and shared expertise and experience to solve a shared purpose in the workplace. These are seen as the main attributes of operational performance (Oteshova *et al.*, 2021:1).

The positive effects of a collaborative work environment are highlighted by (Fang *et al.*, 2021:92):

- Teamwork increases the need for collaboration and encourages group learning.
- A supportive network is created when teamwork is encouraged and upward problem-solving and decision-making increase.
- Attitudes in the workplace are improved when monotonous processes are done in teams, which increases productivity.
- Employee well-being is increased when employees feel part of a team, ultimately fostering trust between members.
- Multi-tasking and creativity are nurtured.

Collaboration in the workplace also improves contact between employees and their supervisors, increases cross-training, and enhances employee capacity, which ultimately improves productivity (Oteshova *et al.*, 2021:2). Teamwork and collaboration have become an essential workplace configuration (Khawam *et al.*, 2017:268), improving communication in exposing errors and concerns (Oteshova *et al.*, 2021:3).

Productivity is increased with teamwork, as it improves the technical and interpersonal skills of employees (Khawam *et al.*, 2017:268) and enhances performance and the overall success of an organisation (Oteshova *et al.*, 2021:2). Collaborative tasks often require creativity and innovation. They can be shaped by the employees' competitiveness, boosting productivity and achieving organisational goals (Fang *et al.*, 2021:107).

Teamwork and collaboration are essential for success in the higher education sector. A study by Van den Bossche *et al.* (2019) found that collaborative problem-solving increased student motivation and academic achievement. Moreover, a study by Hirst and Knight (2019) found that teamwork and collaboration between academic staff and professional services staff were critical for enhancing student satisfaction and retention rates.

### **2.2.4 Problem-solving and Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is an essential generic skill that allows employees to make informed decisions using information gathered from a broader perspective (Fraraccio, 2023). By understanding and

addressing situations with information and facts (Herrity, 2023), critical thinking empowers employees to process the gathered information and develop effective solutions.

Reckmann (2023) quotes Jen Lawrence when defining critical thinking: “the ability to solve problems effectively by systematically gathering information about an issue, generating further ideas involving a variety of perspectives, evaluating the information using logic, and ensuring everyone involved is on board.”

The skills associated with critical thinking and problem-solving include (Herrity, 2023):

- Observation: By observing, employees can identify and predict present and possible future problems.
- Analyse: Analysing unbiased research will enable employees to enhance evaluation.
- Inference: By concluding, employees can conclude.
- Communication: Employees who can explain and discuss the issues they or the company face communicate efficiently.

Problem-solving will follow these steps as the situation’s solution is executed.

Employers must be determined to nurture their employees' critical thinking. In a team. The following steps can be taken to achieve this (Fraraccio, 2023):

1. Name, explain, and discuss the situation.
2. List all possible solutions.
3. Evaluate all possible solutions and narrow the list to the top three.
4. Take the top three solutions, further evaluate them (with their benefits and obstacles) and choose one.
5. Create a multi-step plan to implement the solution, with a timeline and in-depth steps.
6. Implement, track, and complete.

Critical thinking skills are important to build success for employees as new ideas are introduced, and hidden opportunities are revealed. This generic skill also improves decision-making, keeps objectives on track, and boosts employee well-being, as independent working conditions are empowering (Fraraccio, 2023). Reckmann (2023) states that critical thinking guarantees objectivity and reduces errors. This “outside-of-the-box thinking” often requires less supervision and will minimise inconsistencies in the workplace.

As critical thinking and problem-solving can be learned, employees can define these skills by actively listening, analysing problems from multiple perspectives, and questioning their biases (Fraraccio, 2023), ultimately leading to increased productivity.

### **2.2.5 Adaptability and Resilience**

Adaptability involves reformulating goals and strategies to align with reality, and resilience is the capability to bounce back from workplace disruption (Seibert *et al.*, 2016:245). Unexpected and unforeseen circumstances, such as positive or negative shocks, will arise in organisations. Organisational transitions require adaptability and resilience, whether the circumstance is a promotion, retrenchment, or a mentor leaving the company.

Work resilience is fostered by ensuring the health and well-being of employees while maintaining productivity (MacEachen *et al.*, 2008:1027). Thus, ensuring the well-being of employees will increase their ability to be resilient and more productive. The following aspects have been suggested to improve employee well-being (MacEachen *et al.*, 2008:1027):

- Comfortable offices and work attire, as well as welcoming office designs.
- Group activities and stress support.
- Deadline assistance.
- Flexibility with working hours, work-from-home opportunities, and an environment that encourages balance between work and private life.

Strategies to enhance employee adaptability and resilience, on a personal level and in a professional setting, are suggested by Seibert *et al.* (2016:247-253). In terms of behaviour, these recommendations included building an effective relationship with a mentor or supervisor, taking advantage of training opportunities, and actively seeking challenges within a job. Psychologically, the employee and employer should manage distracting emotions, nurture a growth mindset, and balance goals.

When employees are taken care of, adapting to new and stressful situations builds resilience and makes them more productive.

### **2.2.6 Time Management and Organization**

Effectively using time management is a generic skill that enables users to control and use time properly (Amiri *et al.*, 2014:246). Whether this skill is used effectively depends on both the employee and their management team, as this valuable resource and its importance will determine the success of the workplace (Ngozi, 2019:116).

Enhancing time management skills can be done with ten principles, outlined by Amiri *et al.* (2014:246)Amiri et al. (2014:246):

- Planning: Planning the daily workday will enable employees to focus more on what needs to be done.
- Objectives identification: Identifying the most important objectives that need to be completed will allow employees to determine which tasks are the most important.
- Daily scheduling of tasks: Scheduling tasks or projects in a workday timeframe will encourage employees to divide their time appropriately according to the most essential tasks.
- Task preferences: Employees have different abilities and strong suits, and tasks should be assigned to people with the expertise and experience to complete them in the designated timeframe.
- Energy levels of employees: Employees have fluctuating energy levels that could be an obstacle or a driver to complete tasks. Their emotional and physical abilities should be considered.
- Deadline determination: Communicating and structuring tasks according to deadlines will assist in time management.
- Flexibility: Time management should be flexible, as more important tasks with stricter deadlines could arise.
- Individual management: Employees should be able to manage their own time independently.
- Evaluation: Evaluating the effectiveness is important.
- Control: Control is needed to implement and revise time management strategies.

Time management entails employees accurately doing what is the most pressing; increasing its effectiveness will increase productivity (Ngozi, 2019:117).

### **2.2.7 Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is intelligence about self-awareness, the management of emotions and reactions, balancing motivations, and the ability to influence others (Ahad *et al.*, 2021:16). Employees with high emotional intelligence can be more productive with less manpower than those who lack emotional intelligence (Suleman *et al.*, 2020:2). Supervisors who foster their emotional intelligence can make quality strategic decisions (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021:1) which will lead an organisation to success.

As technology has been advancing, the gap between productivity perception and accuracy has been narrowing (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021:2), and organisations should focus on job satisfaction as it directly impacts an employee's emotional intelligence. Attitudes of employees foster their commitment, and a high commitment to the organisation will ensure a higher emotional intelligence (Ahad *et al.*, 2021:16). Leaders in organisations with higher emotional intelligence will gain loyalty from their subordinates more easily (Suleman *et al.*, 2020:3), and is regarded as an essential tool for leadership (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021:1).

Emotional intelligence is a valuable variable in the workplace that directly affects productivity (Suleman *et al.*, 2020:12) as it plays a vital role in motivating an employee to commit to their job (Ahad *et al.*, 2021:15). When employees have a good attitude towards their job, their emotional intelligence will increase and create a more productive worker.

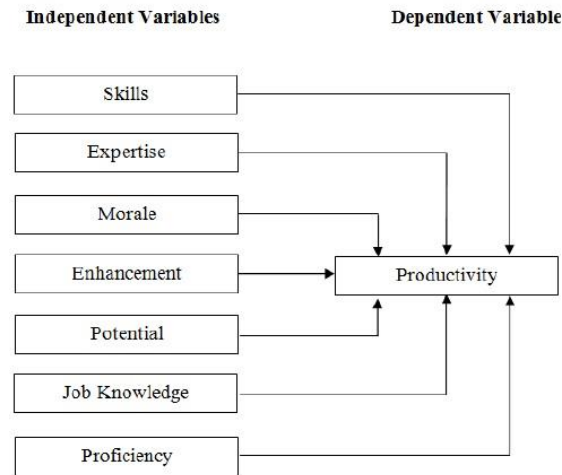
### **2.2.8 Training and Development**

Employees play a pivotal role in an organisation's success, and investing in employees will upskill them and expose them to new opportunities (Kumar *et al.*, 2023:6256). Developing the human capital that an organisation has will increase productivity, whether it is in a technical or conceptual aspect (Okon & Gemson, 2022:93), and training and developing employees has become a driving force for success (Khan & Abdullah, 2019:37).

Employees who stay current on the changes in the industry and industry trends and who refine their skills will increase productivity (Kumar *et al.*, 2023:6256). As organisations invest in these programs, their competitive edge will also increase (Kumar *et al.*, 2023:6259).

Improves performance has been linked directly to the training and development of employees, both on an individual level and in groups. Job satisfaction also increases as job knowledge and competency grow; employees can refine their work habits, and these factors increase productivity (Khan & Abdullah, 2019:38).

The figure below illustrates that independent variables affect the dependent variable of productivity.



**Figure 2.1: Independent variables that affect the dependent variable of productivity.**

**Source: Khan & Abdulla, 2019:40; The importance of training and development**

Training and development are linked to improved performance and productivity and will showcase employee skill opportunities.

### **2.3 Applicability to the context of the study**

The findings from the literature review suggest that communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, and leadership are critical generic skills for line managers in the higher education sector. These skills are essential for enhancing student outcomes, staff job satisfaction, and retention rates. In the context of our study, which focuses on the influence of line managers' generic skills on employee performance in the higher education sector, these findings are highly applicable. The study aims to identify the most important generic skills for line managers in the sector and their impact on employee performance.

The study will provide practical insights into the generic skills that line managers should possess to enhance employee performance in the higher education sector. The findings could inform the development of training and development programs for line managers to improve their generic skills and enhance employee performance.

### **2.4 Chapter Summary**

The literature reviewed here underscores the significant influence of generic skills on employee productivity. Communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, time management, emotional intelligence, and training programs enhance workplace productivity. Organisations that prioritise the development of these skills among their employees are more likely to benefit from improved performance, innovation, and competitiveness. Future research in this area should

continue to explore the nuanced relationships between specific generic skills and various dimensions of employee productivity while also considering the evolving nature of work and its impact on skill requirements.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the main subject was an extensive literature study on the influence of line managers' generic skills on employee productivity at a higher education institution in South Africa. The research methodology was introduced in this chapter, particularly emphasizing the use of research paradigms, designs, approaches, data collection methodologies, sample methods, research tools, and data-gathering processes. This chapter introduced the data collection and analysis methodologies and the logical study structure. The next part describes the research paradigm.

### 3.2 Research design

This study made use of various sources when conducting the literature review. The literature review formed an integral part of the research and assisted in gaining insight into prior related research and developed trends (Kumar, 2019:58; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:74).

To achieve the primary and secondary objectives of the study, critical reading skills, as described by Bryman *et al.* (2021:93), were employed to research and read through publications on the topic. Additionally, publications relating to generic skills were reviewed to understand how interpersonal skills are displayed or exercised and how such displays influence employee performance.

Quantitative and qualitative paradigms formed the basis of the research (Kumar, 2019:33). A quantitative approach was described as a systematic, positivist, or scientific approach to the theory, while the qualitative approach was also known as the naturalistic, ecological, or ethnographic approach (Kumar, 2019:33).

Assumptions regarding the nature of reality, referred to as ontology, are crucial in research. The natural sciences' assumptions are incorporated into objectivism, which maintains that the social fact studied is separate from ourselves and others (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:133). For this study, the philosophy of post-positivism will be employed. Positivism, a philosophical perspective commonly associated with natural scientists, utilizes observed social reality to generate generalizations that resemble laws (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:144).

An inductive approach was followed in this study. This approach involves the creation of a theory that is then tested using several assertions. It is the principal methodology in the natural sciences.

Laws serve as the foundation for the explanation, enabling the anticipation of events, forecasting their occurrence, and afterwards enabling their control(Saunders *et al.*, 2019:153).

An inductive approach was followed to conduct the study using a qualitative approach. The design of this study was specific and well-structured and had been tested for its trustworthiness (Kumar, 2019:170). The theory of the study focused on the possible advantages of implementing generic skills development, aiming to conclude whether interpersonal skills influence the productivity of subordinates. The data collected were analysed using Atlas. ti software, which was utilized to test the hypothesis.

### **3.3 Study context**

The study concerning operational outputs will be conducted within the General Management cluster. The entity under investigation is a single higher education institute in South Africa. The geographical demarcation of the study will encompass the Gauteng and North-West Province regions of South Africa.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

#### **3.4.1 Population**

The participants of this study included academic and support employees of a single higher education institute in South Africa, who consequently comprised the study population.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling**

The suggested sample size amounted to 104 participants.

##### **3.4.2.1 Sampling technique**

The line managers and academic and support staff of the higher education institution were specifically chosen as part of the non-probability sampling procedure. A pilot interview was conducted to ensure that the data collection tool was sufficient and that any necessary adjustments were made before the commencement of the data collection process.

##### **3.4.2.2 Sampling size**

The sampling size consisted of four interviews conducted with each faculty within the higher education institute and four interviews within each support department. The sample size amounts to 104 participants.

### **3.4.2.3 Inclusion criteria**

To participate in the study, individuals needed to meet the following criteria:

- Employment status: Participants must be employed by the Higher Education Institute.
- Position: Participants must either be a subordinate reporting to a line manager or a line manager responsible for managing a subordinate.
- Length of employment: Participants must have been employed by the Higher Education Institute for more than the past 12 months.
- Willingness to disclose performance: Participants must be willing to disclose their performance.

These criteria were established to ensure that participants had relevant experience and relationships within the institution, which were essential for the study's objectives.

### **3.4.2.4 Exclusion criteria**

Exclusion criteria were established to ensure the study's focus and the reliability of the data collected. The following individuals were excluded from participation:

- Employees who do not report to a line manager or who do not have a subordinate.
- Employees who have been employed for less than a period of 12 months.

These exclusion criteria helped ensure that participants had the necessary experience and relationships within the organization to provide valuable insights relevant to the study's objectives.

## **3.5 Recruitment of participants**

An email was sent to all staff members of the higher education institute, inviting them to participate in the study.

## **3.6 Process of Obtaining Informed Consent**

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were provided with research and informed consent forms containing the necessary information to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not.

## **3.7 Data collection**

### **3.7.1 Data collection tool**

The study followed a cross-sectional design and utilized the qualitative method for data gathering. A comprehensive literature analysis served as the initial step in the procedure, enabling the researcher to develop relevant research questions. Primary data was collected using an organized interviewing guide.

### **3.7.2 Development of data collection tool**

The study was conducted using a structured interview guide. Interviews were conducted with participants to ensure they understood the research's purpose and to guarantee confidentiality. The measuring instrument for this study was semi-structured interviews with both line managers and their subordinates. Including both parties allowed for triangulation of results between the two groups. The survey detailed the study's objectives and content. The results were evaluated, and a correlation between generic skills and employee productivity was determined.

### **3.7.3 Data collection procedure**

The researcher conducted a self-developed process, which included the following steps:

- Made a list of all the participants in the sample frame by utilizing the handy sampling approach, allowing the researcher to identify the participants.
- Scheduled appointments with participants, beginning with those in his direct line of sight.
- After an appointment was confirmed, the participant's informed permission was gained by presenting the letter requesting participation and completing the consent papers.
- Consent was also obtained for the use of a digital recording device. Using a digital recording device, the researcher could preserve the interview's quality without feeling compelled to capture it simultaneously.

The interviewer introduced themselves and the study's goal before moving on to the questions.

### **3.7.4 Interview guide**

The interview guide is focused on exploring the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa. The themes covered in the interview guide are:

For Line Managers:

- Employment position and line management responsibilities
- Level of generic skills and how they have developed over time
- Rating of subordinates' performance and the extent of the contribution of generic skills to this performance
- Relationship with direct superior and the contribution of their level of generic skills to performance
- Influence of generic skills of managers on the performance of subordinates

For Subordinates:

- Employment position and responsibilities
- Description of the direct line manager's level of generic skills
- Development of manager's level of generic skills over time
- Rating of personal performance and that of fellow workers, and the extent of contribution of manager's generic skills to this performance
- Contribution of the personal level of generic skills to subordinates' performance, if applicable
- Influence of generic skills of managers on the performance of subordinates

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

The credibility, conformability, transferability, and dependability of the data in this study will ensure its trustworthiness. Several measures were taken to enhance the credibility of the study, including establishing a trusting relationship with participants, using an impartial coder to reach a consensus during data analysis, and carefully editing the data to ensure accuracy. Additionally, efforts were made to prevent the researcher's preconceived expectations from influencing the data, further enhancing the study's credibility. These measures contribute to the overall trustworthiness of the study's findings (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Credibility refers to the believability and authenticity of the data, which is ensured by establishing a trusting relationship with the participants and using appropriate methods to collect and analyse the data. In our study, we ensured credibility by conducting rigorous data collection and data analysis, using multiple sources of data, and involving an impartial coder to reach a consensus during the data analysis process.

Conformability refers to the neutrality of the researcher in the study, which is ensured by making sure that the researcher's personal biases and preconceived notions do not influence the data collection, data analysis, or interpretation of the results. In our study, we ensured conformability by employing an objective and systematic approach to data collection, data analysis, and interpretation.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied to other settings or groups of people. In our study, we ensured transferability by being transparent about the methods used in the study, providing detailed descriptions of the participants and context of the study, and using appropriate sampling techniques to ensure that the sample was representative of the population.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the data, which is ensured by using appropriate methods to ensure that the data is reliable and consistent over time. In our study, we ensured dependability by using standardized data collection tools and procedures, ensuring that the data was collected and analysed consistently, and involving multiple researchers in the data analysis process to ensure that the results were consistent and reliable.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are paramount in any research involving human subjects to ensure responsible and ethically accountable conduct. Whether the research is conducted in person or remotely, ethical considerations remain crucial. As noted by Saunders *et al.* (2019:232-233), ethical considerations are highest when human subjects are involved.

The Research Ethics Committee (REC) typically mandates that researchers receive official approval from the committee before conducting their proposed research. Once the research ethics committee approves the study, ethical clearance is issued, and permission is obtained from the ethics gatekeeper of the specific Higher Education Institution (HEI) where the study is carried out. This ensures that the research is conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines and safeguards the rights and well-being of participants.

### **3.10 Permission and informed consent**

The North-West University Research and Innovation Department was contacted to obtain permission to conduct research within the institution. Participation in the study was voluntary, and written consent was required from participants. Participants had the option to withdraw from the

study at any time without facing any penalty. Information received from participants was treated with strict confidentiality to ensure their privacy and anonymity.

It is important to note that the analysis required participants to be honest when completing the planned survey to ensure the integrity of the data collected. Furthermore, the study was not aimed at targeting any specific race, gender, or vulnerable group, and efforts were made to ensure inclusivity and fairness in participant selection and data analysis. The research study followed the requirements, policies, and ethical standards of the institutions of higher learning in the chosen industry. Participants provided their informed consent in writing. It was emphasized to participants that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were free to leave at any moment with no repercussions. Participants were informed of the study's purpose before the interview. A consent form was required to be completed for participation, and participants were asked to sign it to confirm that they might withdraw at any moment if necessary. The informed consent letter to interview participants was described below. The form was completed electronically using Google Forms, and participants were given a unique participant ID to complete the informed consent form. The informed consent is shown in Annexure B.

### **3.11 Anonymity**

The onus of maintaining confidentiality was with the researcher, who typically did so by ensuring participants remained anonymous. According to Van Zyl (2014), anonymity involved concealing a participant's identity so that whoever viewed the findings could not tell which participant stated which viewpoint (Van Zyl, 2014). The researcher was responsible for keeping participants anonymous in this study by removing questions that might have revealed their names. Additionally, researchers also used security tools such as digital passwords for the collected data.

### **3.12 Confidentiality**

The researcher treated all participant information with the utmost confidentiality. Participants and their institutions were guaranteed anonymity by withholding participant names from the dissertation or any ensuing publications based on the same data. Moreover, consent from the interviewees was sought to audiotape and record sessions using the platform of their choice. The participants' rights, interests, and well-being were upheld throughout the entire research procedure.

### **3.13 Data analysis**

Classifying and interpreting linguistic (or visual) content to draw conclusions about the implicit and explicit dimensions and meaning-making processes of the material and what is represented in it

is known as qualitative data analysis, according to Flick (2014:5). Emerging questions and processes data acquired in the participant's environment, inductive data analysis leading from specifics to broad themes, and the researcher's interpretations of the data are all part of the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2009:4). As a result, deriving meaning from the information gathered during the interviews becomes data analysis. The interpretation might lead to a developing problem from the study or be pertinent to addressing the research objectives.

(Creswell, 2012:261) identified six interrelated steps to analyse and interpret qualitative data. These steps include gathering and organising data for analysis, exploring and coding the data, coding to develop themes and descriptions, reporting and representing the findings, interpreting the results, and verifying the findings' accuracy. We will use the following six processes of qualitative data analysis, as suggested by (Creswell, 2012:261):

### **Step 1: Get the Data Ready and Arranged for Analysis**

Codes will be used throughout the transcription of the interviews captured on the digital recorders to protect the participants' identities. No participant's identity will be connected to any transcription of data. The names of the participants will go from participant 01 to participant 06. inquiry per inquiry, the participant's communication with the researcher will also be coded. According to (Creswell, 2012:261), organising the data, typing field notes and interview transcriptions, and deciding whether to analyse the data manually or electronically are the first steps in data management for a qualitative study. The researcher electronically examined the data.

### **Step2: Examine and Codify the Information**

After being transcribed, each question in the data was manually examined. All participant responses to a particular topic were first categorised into classes, themes characterising the classes, and specific themes characterising the classes. Only the pertinent themes were utilised as conversation topics during the study after the themes were divided into major and minor categories for each issue. This procedure aligns with arguments made by Creswell (2009:261), who states that qualitative researchers first review the material to get a broad feel before conducting a preliminary analysis. Coding the data is a major analytical step for qualitative data. Coding is the process of distilling descriptions and themes of individuals, locations, or events from a text or picture database. It entails going through the text database line by line, figuring out what the participant is saying, and then giving the text segment a code label.

### **Step 3: Using Coding to Create Themes and Descriptions**

The researcher classified the participants with their perspectives for each question to expand the conversation around each main issue and create discussion and narrative around the same themes. Then, codes are employed to develop themes that offer a more comprehensive abstraction than codes and descriptions of individuals and locations (Creswell, 2012:261).

#### **Step 4: Summarize and Present Qualitative Results**

Visual displays, such as figures, diagrams, comparison tables, and demographic tables, are used by qualitative researchers to convey their findings (Creswell, 2012:262). The researcher presented the results in narrative talks that took many different forms, including questions, a timeline, and commentary on any changes the participants went through.

#### **Step 5: Analyse the Results**

The researcher analysed the results considering the study questions, aims, and debates in 30 publications after the results had been represented and published. Creswell (2012:262) states that this interpretation entails putting out one's opinions, drawing parallels between the results and the literature, and outlining constraints and directions for more study.

### **3.14 Chapter Summary**

To demonstrate the validity and dependability of the research, Chapter 3 employed scientific methodologies. Scientific practice guided the methodological choices made, ensuring justifiable variances. Research philosophy, study design, research methodology, data collection strategies, research equipment, and data analysis choices were among the methodological decisions considered in this discussion. The research in this chapter utilized a qualitative methodology. Additionally, the chapter discussed procedures and methods for gathering and analysing data. Chapter 4 below presents and discusses the results, findings, and discussion.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Research methodologies were covered in the preceding chapter, with particular attention paid to the use of research paradigms, designs, approaches, and methods of data collecting, as well as sampling strategies, research tools, and data collection procedures. This chapter's presentation on research methodology highlights the study paradigm, design, data-collecting approaches and methods, sampling strategies, research equipment, and the data-collection process. The findings of the data analysis are shown in this chapter. The demographic profile of the individual is presented first, followed by results pertinent to accomplishing the study's goals. Information on gender, age group, employment experience, and educational background was requested of the participants. The following section presents and discusses the demographic results.

### **4.2 Rationale**

The choice of methodology was based on the research questions and objectives. A qualitative research design was opted for, which allowed the exploration of the participant's perspective and experience in-depth. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the participant's lived experiences and gain insights into their perceptions and attitudes towards the phenomenon studied.

The phenomenological approach was aligned with the research questions, which aimed to understand the participant's experiences and perspectives on a particular phenomenon. This approach enabled the exploration of the phenomenon from the participant's point of view and gained a detailed understanding of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method, which allowed the gathering of rich and detailed data from the participants. The interviews were conducted in a conversational style to encourage participants to share their experiences and perspectives freely.

Overall, the methodology used in this study was chosen to align with the research questions and objectives. The qualitative research design and phenomenological approach allowed the exploration of the research questions in-depth and gained insights into the participant's experiences and perspectives.

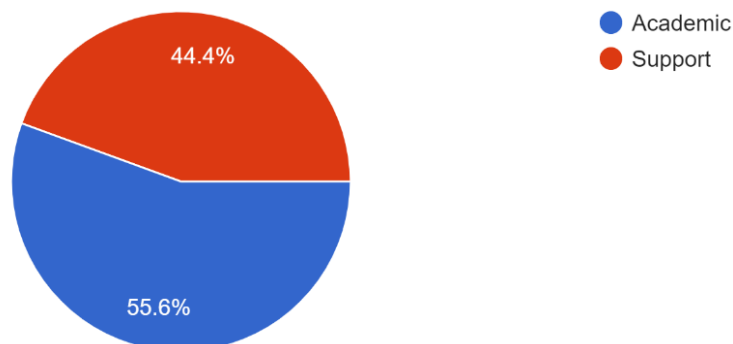
### 4.3 Demographics

Although 104 participants were the suggested sample size, data saturation was achieved with just nine. In qualitative research, data saturation is when fresh data no longer adds new information or insights into the studied phenomena or study topic. This is the point at which gathering more data has no more bearing on creating fresh themes or advancing our knowledge of the topic. Data saturation was reached with only nine individuals despite this study's proposed sample size of 104 participants.

Before conducting the interviews with the participants, they were required to complete an electronic informed consent form using Google Forms. The form requested the participants to indicate whether they are employed in an academic or support position, their gender, age group, tenure, and highest academic qualifications.

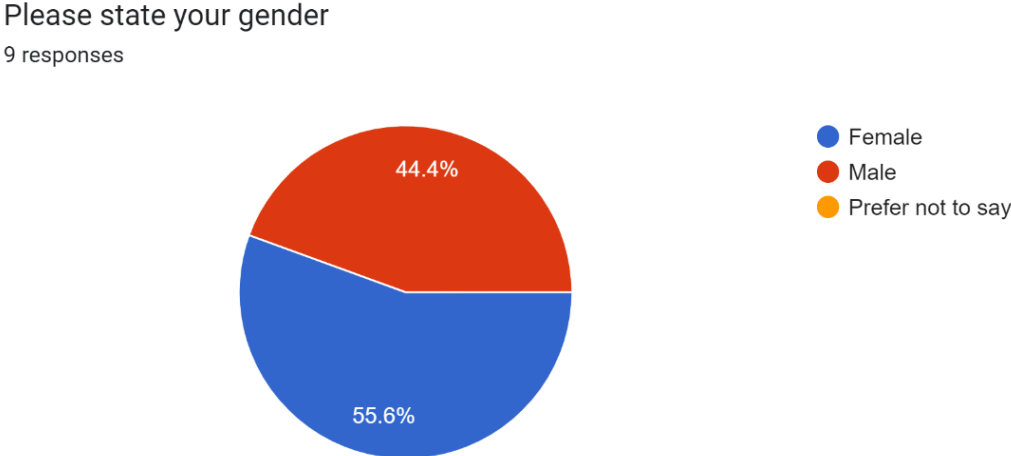
The analysis of employment positions of participants in academic and support positions shows that a diverse range of roles is represented. Academic positions typically involve professors, researchers, and instructors, while support positions include administrative and technical roles such as office staff, IT support, and laboratory assistants. Regarding the distribution of employment positions, academic positions are generally higher in demand and require higher education and expertise. However, support positions are equally important as they provide the necessary infrastructure support and administrative assistance to ensure the smooth operation of academic institutions. Furthermore, the analysis also highlights the need to balance academic and support positions to maintain an institution's overall efficiency and effectiveness. It is important to note that both academic and support positions are essential in creating a healthy and successful academic environment. Figure 4.2 below represents the employed position of the participants.

Please indicate whether you are employed in an academic or support position  
9 responses



**Figure 4.1: Employment position of participants**

Figure 4.3 represents the gender profile of the participants. An analysis of the gender profile of the participants reveals that most of them were female. However, there was also a significant representation of male participants, with roughly equal numbers of male and female participants overall. This suggests that efforts were made to promote gender diversity in selecting participants and that the study successfully attracted both male and female participants. Further analysis could be conducted to explore any potential gender differences in the results or participation rates.



**Figure 4.2: Gender profile of participants**

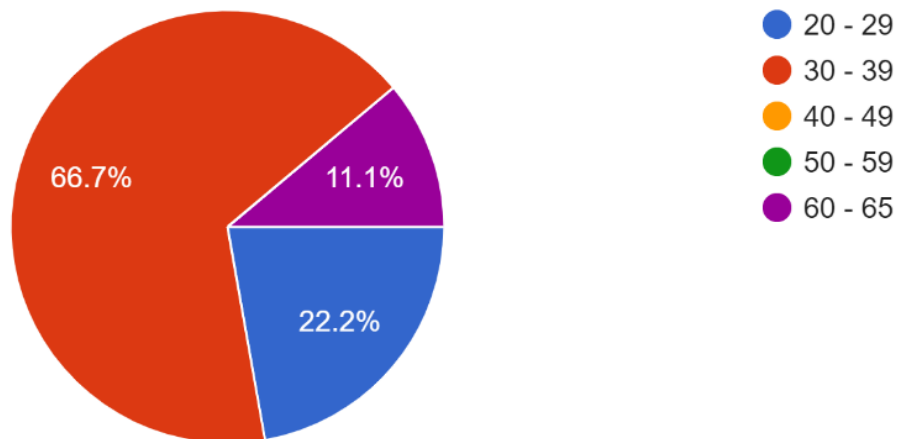
The age demographics of the participants, as depicted in Figure 4.3, provide valuable insights into the composition of the group being studied. The figure displays the distribution of ages among the participants, which can reveal patterns or trends relevant to the research question.

For example, if the study examines a program's effectiveness for older adults, the graph may reveal that many participants fall within the target age range. On the other hand, if the study investigates a health issue that affects young adults, the graph may show a higher proportion of participants in their 20s and 30s.

Analysing the age demographics can also help to identify potential biases or limitations of the study. For instance, if the study has a disproportionately low number of participants from a certain age group, it may be necessary to adjust the results to account for this bias.

## Please indicate your age group

9 responses

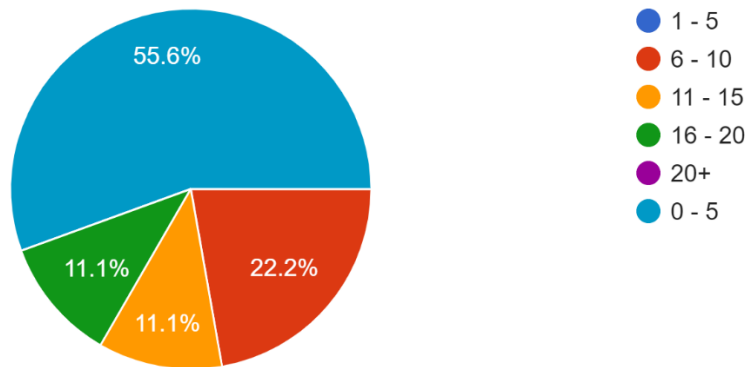


**Figure 4.3: Age profile of participants**

Figure 4.4 represents the tenure of the participants. The tenure of participants is an important factor to consider when analysing data related to a particular group or organisation. It refers to the time that individuals have been associated with the group or organisation and can be used to conclude various aspects of their involvement. For instance, if the average tenure of participants is relatively short, it may indicate a high turnover rate or a lack of commitment to the group's goals. On the other hand, if the average tenure is long, it may suggest a strong sense of loyalty and dedication among the members. Furthermore, analysing the tenure distribution can provide insights into the group's demographics and characteristics. For example, if most participants have been involved for a short time, it may suggest that the group is attracting many new members. Conversely, if the majority has been involved for a long time, it may indicate a more stagnant or exclusive group. Overall, analysing the tenure of participants can provide valuable insights into the dynamics and characteristics of a particular group or organisation.

How many years have you been employed by the institution?

9 responses



**Figure 4.4: Tenure of participants**

Based on Figure 4.5, it appears that most participants have achieved a high level of academic qualification. The figure provides a breakdown of the highest academic qualifications attained by the participants, which appear to be predominantly postgraduate degrees, with over half of the participants reporting either a master's or a Doctorate. This suggests that the participants are highly educated and likely possess expertise in their fields. It is also possible that the study or survey being conducted was aimed at individuals with higher levels of education and expertise, which could explain the high percentage of postgraduate degree holders. Overall, the data presented in Figure 4.5 highlights the importance of higher education in the professional landscape and underscores the need for continued investment in education and training programs.

Please indicate your highest academic qualification

9 responses

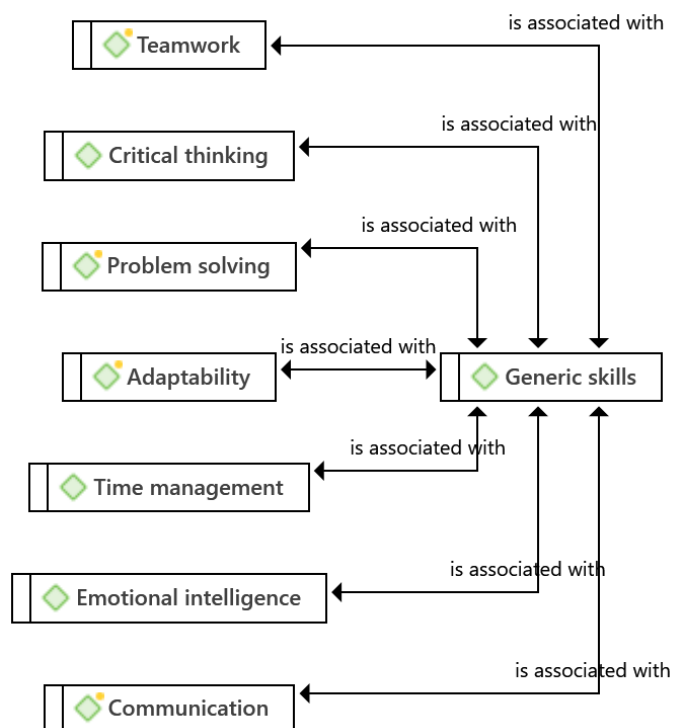


**Figure 4.5: Highest academic qualification profile of participants**

#### 4.4 Presentation of themes

##### 4.4.1 Theme One: Line managers' generic skills do influence subordinates' performance.

Based on the analysis of the data collected when conducting the interviews, it is evident that a line manager's generic skills influence subordinates' performance. The theme presented in the statement, "The generic skills of line managers have an impact on the performance of their subordinates", is that the abilities and competencies possessed by managers can significantly affect the output of their team members. This highlights the importance of generic skills such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving in the role of a manager. It emphasises the need for managers to possess a well-rounded skill set to effectively manage and motivate their subordinates towards achieving the desired goals and objectives. This theme also highlights the interdependence between managers and their subordinates, as the former's actions and abilities can directly impact the latter's performance. Figure 4.6 displays various codes associated with generic skills.



**Figure 4.6: Generic skill association**

*"I believe that a manager's generic skills have a significant impact on the performance of their subordinates. This is because I have worked with different managers, and I have noticed that if a manager takes pride in their work and is a critical thinker, it reflects positively on their team. They become problem solvers and are on top of their*

*game. On the other hand, if a manager has poor communication skills or time management, it trickles down to their team. Getting responses from their team or getting them to take action on requested tasks becomes difficult. In my opinion, the level of generic skills of the manager does correlate to how well their team performs, but it's not a guarantee. We are different people; having a bad manager does not mean one is bad. However, most of the time, a manager's skills do reflect on their team."*

*"Feeling supported, trusted, and safe with your line manager can greatly impact your performance. When your line manager understands that mistakes can happen, it fosters an environment where you feel free to learn, explore, and make mistakes. On the other hand, if you constantly worry about how your line manager will react, your performance can suffer. If your line manager can't regulate their emotions and handle situations appropriately, it becomes difficult for you to do your job effectively. Therefore, having a line manager with good generic skills can greatly affect your performance and the overall work environment."*

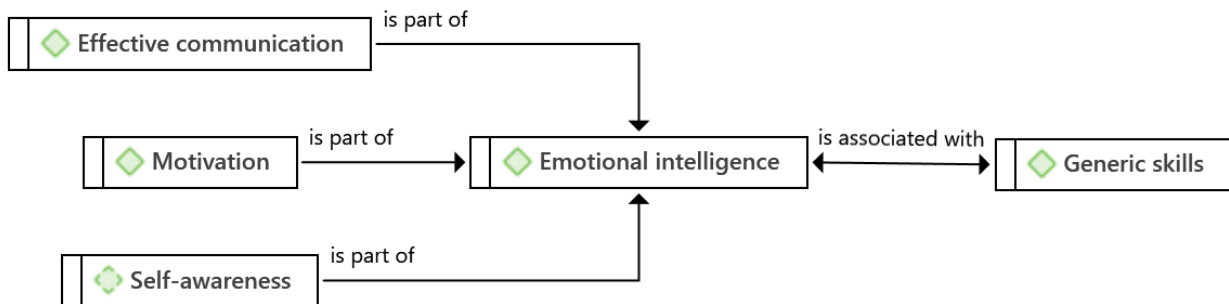
*"I strongly believe that performance relies on goodwill, particularly in academic environments where individuals have a fair amount of freedom. People are motivated to perform to the best of their abilities when there is goodwill. I have observed colleagues who lack goodwill, and as a result, they perform their duties grudgingly, adopting a work-to-rule approach. This attitude creates a poor work environment and hinders problem-solving, decision-making, and creativity. Conversely, when there is goodwill, performance follows. I have seen this in good and bad managers alike. This principle applies to the relationship between me and my superior, as well as between me and my supporters, and it is a universal experience."*

*"We are all working under the same line manager. Unfortunately, we have been experiencing a lot of resignations among employees due to a lack of generic skills from our manager. This problem is causing a lot of senior employees to leave the company, and it's affecting all of us in the same way. The root of the problem is the lack of conflict resolution and generic skills training for the line manager. Unfortunately, the manager is so powerful that no one can advise them, and there seems to be no resolution. As a result, many people feel they have no choice but to resign and find employment elsewhere."*

#### **4.4.2 Theme Two: A line manager's emotional intelligence influences the work environment.**

A line manager's emotional intelligence can be crucial when creating a positive work environment. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognise and understand one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, and to use this knowledge to guide behaviour and decision-making. A line manager with high emotional intelligence is more likely to manage their emotions effectively and respond appropriately to the emotions of their team members. This can help create a work environment that is supportive, collaborative, and respectful. On the other hand, a line manager with low emotional intelligence may struggle to manage their emotions, leading to outbursts or other negative behaviours that can create a tense or hostile work environment. Additionally, they may struggle to recognise or respond appropriately to the emotions of their team members, leading to feeling dismissed or undervalued. Overall, a line manager's emotional

intelligence is key in shaping the work environment. Investing in developing emotional intelligence skills can significantly impact team morale, productivity, and engagement. Figure 4.7 displays the interlink between generic skills and emotional intelligence as well as the components thereof:



**Figure 4.7: Emotional Intelligence**

*“I would rate my current line manager’s generic skills a 10 out of 10. I feel very fortunate to have an exceptional line manager with great generic skills such as empathy, patience, kindness, and tolerance towards different personalities. She is a good listener and takes the time to know the people she works with. I cannot stress enough how amazing her generic skills are; they are one of her greatest strengths, in my opinion.”*

*“Creating a cohesive and productive work environment requires strong, general skills. In my experience, some people excel in this area while others struggle. Poor emotional intelligence or a lack of willingness to develop these skills can lead to miscommunication and conflict. One particular issue I have noticed is that people often take critique personally rather than seeing it as an opportunity to improve. This is where generic skills come into play. It is important to know how to give and receive feedback effectively. It is immature to view critique as an attack on one’s character. Maturity is demonstrated by the ability to separate critique from personal identity, a skill that not everyone possesses.”*

*“I believe managing people in an academic environment can be challenging, especially during high-pressure times of the year. It’s essential to provide support and motivation to keep everyone on track. However, if a manager or director lacks emotional intelligence or conflict management skills, they may struggle to diffuse situations effectively. To create a healthy and productive environment, it’s crucial to be properly equipped with these skills. This way, you can encourage teamwork, recognise and address issues transparently, and find compromises when necessary. Emotional intelligence and conflict management significantly create a positive and productive work environment.”*

#### **4.4.3 Theme Three: Effective communication contributes to performance.**

Effective communication is a key component of a successful and high-performing team. When team members can clearly and efficiently communicate with one another, they can collaborate more effectively and avoid misunderstandings that may lead to mistakes or delays. Furthermore, effective communication helps to build trust and understanding among team members. When

individuals feel heard and respected, they are more likely to feel invested in the team's success and willing to go above and beyond to achieve common goals. Overall, it is clear that effective communication plays a critical role in team performance. Teams that prioritise communication and work to continually improve in this area are more likely to succeed and achieve their objectives.

Communication is vital to human interaction and crucial in our personal and professional lives. It involves exchanging information, ideas, and thoughts between individuals, groups, or organisations through various channels, such as verbal, written, or visual. Effective communication is essential for building strong relationships, fostering trust, and enhancing collaboration. It helps individuals and groups to share their perspectives, understand each other's needs, and work towards common goals. However, communication can also be a source of conflict and misunderstanding if not done properly. Poor communication can lead to confusion, frustration, and even hostility. It is crucial to ensure that the message is clear and concise and that the receiver understands it in the intended way. In today's fast-paced world, technology has revolutionised the way we communicate. With social media, emails, video conferencing, and instant messaging, communication has become faster and more accessible. However, it is also important to remember that technology should not replace face-to-face communication, which is still essential in many situations. Communication is one of the most important skills we can possess. It is essential for building relationships, conveying ideas, and achieving common goals. Effective communication requires active listening, clear and concise messaging, and understanding and respecting different perspectives. Figure 4.8 depicts the codes for effective communication.



**Figure 4.8: Effective Communication**

*“As a line manager, I realised that effective communication is crucial. In the past, I made decisions and solved problems without involving others or explaining the complexities of my thought process. However, now I understand that if I don't communicate effectively, my staff may feel inadequate and struggle to meet unattainable standards. Therefore, over the past two years, I have developed my communication skills to involve my team in decision-making and explain my thought process. This approach helps them critique my logic and inform me of concepts I may not have considered. I have also become more sensitive and less direct in my communication style.”*

*“If I had to give her any feedback, I would recommend that she communicate more timeously regarding certain things. She's got excellent problem-solving skills and*

*decision-making; I don't have an issue with that. She's an outstanding team player. She knows how to bring our team together, so I would say that she has a high level of generic skills, but I do feel that there is room for improvement in some areas."*

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

A thorough data analysis was conducted throughout this chapter, and the resulting themes were presented alongside relevant discussions. These discussions effectively addressed the research objectives and questions at hand. A thoughtful discussion conclusion was provided to bring the chapter to a close, followed by a section outlining the management implications stemming from the analysis.

## **CHAPTER 5      RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE STUDIES AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the preceding section, the results of the data analysis were presented. The section began with an overview of the participants' demographic profiles, including their gender, age group, work experience, and educational background. In this section, the study's findings and recommendations will be shared. The discussion will start by focusing on recommendations that pertain to the study objectives, followed by suggestions for further research in the area of generic skills and employee performance. To present the results, an outline of the research objectives will be provided, and the satisfaction with the findings will be discussed. Details on the research objectives can be found in the following section.

### **5.2 Objectives of the study**

The study found that managers who possessed strong generic skills had a positive impact on employee performance. The research also revealed that employees with a good understanding of generic skills were likelier to perform better in their roles. Additionally, the study found a relationship between line managers' communication skills and employee performance. The research findings confirmed the importance of generic skills training for managers and employees, highlighting the need for institutions to provide regular training opportunities to enhance employee performance. Overall, the study successfully achieved its primary objective of exploring the influence of managers' generic skills on employee performance and accomplishing its secondary objectives of establishing the understanding of generic skills among line managers and employees, elucidating the link between generic skills and employee performance, and determining the need for generic skills training for managers and employees.

### **5.3 Findings of the study**

**Secondary Objective 1: To establish the understanding of generic skills among line managers and employees.**

The study found that emotional intelligence is a crucial aspect of effective leadership, and line managers play a key role in promoting emotional intelligence within organizations. Generic skills such as communication, empathy, and self-awareness are important for line managers to possess to establish positive relationships with their subordinates, foster a sense of trust and psychological safety, and create a work environment conducive to emotional intelligence.

**Secondary Objective 2: To elucidate the link between generic skills and employee performance within the institution.**

Research has shown that line managers' generic skills, such as communication, empathy, and self-awareness, can significantly impact subordinates' performance. Line managers who possess these skills can help subordinates feel heard and valued by creating a safe space for open communication, improving their engagement and motivation. Additionally, line managers who demonstrate emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage conflict and navigate difficult conversations with their subordinates, resulting in better employee performance.

**Secondary Objective 3: To determine the need for generic skills training for managers and employees.**

The study highlights the importance of line managers developing and honing their skills to promote emotional intelligence within organizations. As organizations prioritize emotional intelligence as a critical component of effective leadership, line managers need to receive training to improve their generic skills such as communication, empathy, and self-awareness. This training can create a positive work environment that promotes productivity, engagement, and overall success.

#### **5.4 Managerial implications**

The finding that line managers' generic skills impact subordinates' performance has significant managerial implications. It suggests that organisations should focus on developing and enhancing their line managers' skills to improve their subordinates' performance. Managers should be trained and provided with the necessary resources to develop communication, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. This would not only benefit the subordinates but also the organisation, as it would lead to better performance and increased productivity. Additionally, managers should be encouraged to provide regular feedback and support to their subordinates to enhance their skills and knowledge. This would create a positive work environment and foster a culture of continuous learning and development.

Managers with high emotional intelligence positively impact the work environment and their team's productivity. They can understand and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of their team members. This helps them to effectively communicate, resolve conflicts, and build strong relationships with their employees. As a result, employees feel supported, valued, and motivated to perform their best. On the other hand, managers with low emotional intelligence may struggle to manage their own emotions and those of their team, which can lead

to a negative work environment and decreased productivity. Therefore, organisations need to invest in developing emotional intelligence among their managers to create a positive and productive work environment.

Effective communication is crucial for the success of any organisation. Managers who understand the importance of communication can create a more productive and efficient workplace. They can ensure that employees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as the goals and objectives of the organisation. This can help to align everyone's efforts towards achieving the organisation's overall mission. Managers who prioritise communication can also create a workplace culture of openness and transparency. By encouraging employees to share their ideas and concerns, managers can identify potential problems early on and work to resolve them before they escalate. This can help to build trust and foster a sense of collaboration among employees. Effective communication can also help managers build stronger relationships with their employees. By actively listening to their concerns and providing feedback on their performance, managers can help employees feel valued and supported. This can lead to increased job satisfaction and a lower turnover rate.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of the data collected, it is recommended that organisations should prioritise training and development programs that aim to improve the generic skills of their line managers. These skills include communication, leadership, problem-solving, and other interpersonal skills that can help managers manage and motivate their subordinates to achieve their goals and objectives. By investing in such training programs, organisations can help their managers develop a well-rounded skill set that will not only benefit their subordinates but also the organisation as a whole. This will ultimately result in improved performance, increased productivity, and a more positive work environment.

Invest in emotional intelligence training for line managers to help them better understand and manage their own emotions, as well as the emotions of their team members. This helps create a positive work environment and leads to better communication, stronger relationships among team members, and increased productivity. By being aware of their own emotions and those of their team members, line managers can respond appropriately and build trust with their team. Ultimately, investing in emotional intelligence training for line managers can significantly impact an organisation's success.

Based on my observation and analysis, I recommend that the company prioritise effective employee communication. I believe that clear, concise, and consistent communication can

contribute significantly to the team's overall performance. By encouraging open and honest communication, employees will be more likely to share ideas, ask questions, and seek clarification, which can lead to improved productivity, better decision-making, and, ultimately, higher levels of success for the company.

## **5.6 Suggestions for further studies**

The following suggestions for further studies were made:

- Investigating the effectiveness of various generic skills training programs for managers and employees.
- Exploring the impact of generic skills on employee retention and job satisfaction.
- Examining the relationship between generic skills and leadership effectiveness.
- Investigating the impact of generic skills on team dynamics and collaboration.
- Exploring the effectiveness of different methods for assessing employees' generic skills.
- Investigating the role of organizational culture in promoting the development of generic skills.
- Comparing the impact of generic skills training on employee performance across different industries.
- Examining the impact of generic skills on innovation and creativity in the workplace.
- Investigating the relationship between generic skills and employee well-being.
- Exploring the impact of generational differences on the development and application of generic skills in the workplace.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, investing in training and development programs that focus on improving the generic skills of line managers and emotional intelligence training can significantly impact an organisation's success. Additionally, prioritising effective organisational communication can significantly improve the team's overall performance. By implementing these recommendations, organisations can create a positive work environment, improve productivity, and ultimately achieve their goals and objectives.

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## ANNEXURE A: DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Dear Participant

The purpose of the interview guide is to collect data that would help in “Exploring the influence of line managers’ generic skills on subordinates’ performance at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa”. We appreciate your help in providing this crucial information. The information gathered in this research will remain confidential and anonymous. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw anytime. The outcome of this study will be shared with you upon request.

### To line managers

In this interview, I shall ask questions about your level of generic (“soft”) skills, as well as the performance of your subordinates. You are welcome to withdraw at any stage without penalty. I want to record the interview for accurate transcription. By continuing with the interview, you permit the data to be used in the research and for me to record the interview. The interview is about the effect of generic “soft” skills of managers on the performance of their subordinates. Generic skills include communication, problem-solving, decision-making, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Performance refers to the general quality and quantity of output by the subordinate.

1. Are you primarily employed in an academic or administrative position? Please elaborate on your line management responsibilities.
2. How would you describe your level of generic skills? Please elaborate.
3. To what degree has your level of generic skills developed since you first assumed a management position? How did this happen?
4. How would you rate the performance of your direct subordinates? Please explain your answer.
5. To what extent do your generic skills contribute to your subordinates’ performance? Why do you say so?
6. In your relationship with your direct superior, to what extent do you think that their level of generic skills contribute to your performance? Why do you say so? Do you think that your generic skills contribute to this?
7. When you look at the performance of your peers and their subordinates, to what extent do you think that the generic skills of a manager influence the performance of their subordinates?

### To subordinates

In this interview, I shall ask questions about your direct line manager's level of generic ("soft") skills and your performance as a subordinate. You are welcome to withdraw at any stage without penalty. I want to record the interview for accurate transcription. By continuing with the interview, you permit the data to be used in the research and for me to record the interview. The interview is about the effect of generic "soft" skills of managers on the performance of their subordinates. Generic skills include communication, problem-solving, decision-making, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Performance refers to the general quality and quantity of output by the subordinate.

1. Are you primarily employed in an academic or administrative position? Please elaborate on your responsibilities.
2. How would you describe your direct line manager's level of generic skills? Please elaborate.
3. To what degree has their level of generic skills developed since you first started reporting to them?
4. How would you rate your performance and fellow workers reporting to your manager? Please explain your answer.
5. To what extent do you think their generic skills contribute to your performance? Why do you say so?
6. If you have any direct subordinates in your relationship with your subordinates, to what extent do you think that your level of generic skills contributes to their performance? Why do you say so? Do you think that your subordinates' generic skills contribute to this?
7. When you look at the performance of your peers, to what extent do you think that the generic skills of a manager influence the performance of their subordinates?

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

The researcher will ensure that all results will be kept confidential and that no ethical guidelines will be breached. The researcher, researcher supervisor, and statistician will be the only persons with access to the data.

Principal Researcher: Dr Johan Jordaan

Researcher: Curtis Knight

Email: [jordaan.johan@nwu.ac.za](mailto:jordaan.johan@nwu.ac.za)

E-mail: [curtis.knight@nwu.ac.za](mailto:curtis.knight@nwu.ac.za)

# ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS



23 October 2023

DEAR PARTICIPANT

## INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a research study that forms part of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to say no to participating. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). It will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the North-West University and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study.

**Title of the project:** *“Exploring the influence of line managers’ generic skills on subordinates’ performance at a higher education institution in South Africa”*

**Institution:** NWU Business School

**Ethics Reference Number:** NWU-00682-23-A4

**NWU RDGC Reference Number:** NWU-GK-23-179

### Names and contact details of project staff

|                                  | Supervisor             | Researcher       |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Title, name &amp; surname</b> | Dr Johan Jordaan       | Mr Curtis Knight |
| <b>Full Names</b>                | Johannes Albertus      | Curtis Alcid     |
| <b>Function in Project</b>       | Principle Investigator | Researcher       |
| <b>Telephone</b>                 | 071 366 2262           | 061 254 8805     |

### What is this research study all about?

The purpose of the interview guide is to collect data that would help in “Exploring the influence of line managers’ generic skills on subordinates’ performance at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa”. We appreciate your help in providing this crucial information. The information gathered in this research will remain confidential and anonymous. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw anytime. The outcome of this study will be shared with you upon request.



### **Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in this research study because you fall into at least one of the following categories:

- You are a subordinate reporting to a line manager
- You are a line manager responsible for managing a subordinate

The inclusion criteria for participation in this study is as follows:

- Participants would need to be employed by the Higher Education Institute
- The participant would need to be a subordinate reporting to a line manager or a line manager responsible for managing a subordinate.
- Be employed by the Higher Education institute for more than the past 12 months
- Participants must be willing to disclose their performance

### **What will be expected of you?**

You will be expected to:

- Participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher at a suitable time and private area without interruptions that is convenient for both parties via an online platform.
- Respond to the questions openly and honestly.
- Inform the supervisor should you feel or experience any discomfort or distress during the research process, and inform the supervisor if you sometimes feel the need to terminate your involvement in the research process.

### **Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

This research study intends to give you a voice to reveal, explain and reflect on the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance. No monetary reward shall be made available for participation in the study.

### **Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

Participation in this study does not create any physical risk to you as the study does not involve any physical activities or experiments. We, however, have identified certain ethical principles that shall be always maintained to prevent any damage to you. The focus of these principles will be to protect your dignity and keep all records provided private and confidential.

### **How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

You will be assigned a unique participant ID. Our interview will be recorded and saved with reference to the ID, but data collected shall be regarded as confidential and will not be shared with any 3rd party that is not directly involved in the research process. Personal details of participants and their direct input to the research study shall not be made public. All records of the research shall be kept for a retention period and destroyed by an appropriate means. The findings of the study will be made public however will not contain any raw data that might incriminate certain individuals.

### **What will happen with the findings or samples?**

The findings concluded in the study will be for academic purposes and will only be utilized to add to the current body of available knowledge.

### **How will you know about the results of this research?**

Participants in the study, should they require, will be made aware of the results of the research, through a two-page communique, by means of electronic mail. The electronic final version of the dissertation will also be made available if requested.



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

Participation in this study will not yield monetary value to you. There is no cost envisaged to you except the time that you spend participating in this study. This study will be funded by the researcher himself.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

You may contact the supervisor, Dr. JA Jordaan, on 071 366 2262 if you have any further questions or problems. You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.



**DECLARATION**

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I (PARTICIPANT ID) agree to take part in the research study titled: *“Exploring the influence of line managers’ generic skills on subordinates’ performance at a higher education institution in South Africa”*.

I declare that:

I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable in. The research was clearly explained to me. I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressured to take part. I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so. I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at: \_\_\_\_\_

On: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration by researcher**

I CA Knight declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to (PARTICIPANT ID)
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged them to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them or I was available should they want to ask any further questions.
- I am satisfied that they adequately understand all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that they had time to discuss it with others if they wished to do so.

Signed at: Potchefstroom

On 24/11/2023

Signature of researcher

Signature of supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## ANNEXURE C: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Fax: 018 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Senate Committee for Research Ethics**  
Tel: 018 299-484  
Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

31 May 2023

### ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on, 23/05/2023 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

**Study title:** Exploring the influence of line managers' generic skills on subordinates' performance at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa

**Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher:** Prof J Jordaan

**Student:** C Knight (23559128)

|             |   |   |   |              |   |   |   |   |      |   |        |   |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|------|---|--------|---|---|---|
| N           | W | U | - | 0            | 0 | 6 | 8 | 2 | -    | 2 | 3      | - | A | 4 |
| Institution |   |   |   | Study Number |   |   |   |   | Year |   | Status |   |   |   |

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

**Application Type:**

**Commencement date:** 31/05/2023

**Expiry date:** 31/05/2024

**Risk:** Minimal

**Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.**

**Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):**

•

**General conditions:**

*While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:*

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.**
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*

- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
  - n the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:*
    - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
    - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
    - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
      - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
      - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
      - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
      - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mark

Rathbone

Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone  
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-  
West University, ou=Business  
management,  
email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za,  
c=ZA  
Date: 2023.06.01 06:38:32 +02'00'

**Prof Mark Rathbone**

**Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee**