



A framework for integrating selected operations management principles for effective human resources management at the Railway Safety Regulator

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Ayanda, and our amazing son, Nkazimulo Sibiya. May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you His favour and give you peace.

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic landscape of the South African railway sector, the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) plays a critical role in ensuring safety and compliance. However, the strategic integration of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices within the RSR remains underexplored, presenting challenges to its operational effectiveness. This research addresses this gap by investigating how strategic HRM can enhance the RSR's efficiency and compliance with safety standards. Through a comprehensive review of the literature and theoretical frameworks, including Strategic Human Resource Management, Resource-Based View, Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, Governance Theory, and the HR Business Partner model, the study aims to provide an understanding of the relationship between HRM practices and regulatory effectiveness within the railway sector. The primary objective of the study is to develop a modified HRM framework that supports operational efficiency, compliance, and stakeholder engagement within a highly regulated environment.

The study explores existing HRM practices within the RSR, identifies challenges hindering operational efficiency, and proposes a strategic HRM framework modified to the unique dynamics of the South African railway sector. Adopting a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews with managers and employees of the RSR, the thematic analysis revealed four key themes namely current HRM and operations practices, cultural aspects of organisational change, governance and ethical adherence, and strategic collaboration between HRM and operations. By examining the impact of HRM on operational effectiveness, compliance, and stakeholder engagement, the research seeks to offer actionable insights for regulatory improvement. Ethical considerations ensure participant confidentiality and transparency throughout the study.

The significance of the study lies in its potential to enhance safety standards, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction within the South African railway sector. The research aims to inform policy decisions and contribute to the global discourse on HRM strategies within railway regulatory bodies by bridging the gap between theory and practice. While acknowledging limitations and delimitations, the study provides practical recommendations for enhancing HRM practices within the RSR, ultimately contributing to the sector's efficiency and effectiveness. A conceptual HRM–Operations integration framework was developed as the main output of the study. Practical recommendations are

provided for the RSR to strengthen HRM practices, embed change management, and improve communication and training.

Limitations include the qualitative and single-sector focus, while recommendations for further research include quantitative validation of the framework, comparative studies across sectors, and investigations into the role of digital transformation in regulatory HRM practices.

Keywords: Human resources management, operations management, strategic management, recruitment, labour relations management, railways, employees, best practice.

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Definition of Key Terms

Key Term		Definition
Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)	:	A strategy focusing on the analysis and redesign of workflows and processes within an organisation to optimise performance and efficiency.
Capacity Planning	:	The process of determining the production capacity an organisation needs to meet changing demands for its products or services.
Contingency Theory	:	A theory that suggests the best way to manage depends on the specific circumstances or context of the situation.
Governance Theory	:	Focuses on the systems and processes that ensure overall accountability, transparency, and integrity within an organisation.
Human Capital Theory (HCT)	:	A theory emphasising the economic value of human skills and knowledge and the role of investing in people through education and training.
Human Resource Management (HRM)	:	The strategic approach to effectively managing people in an organisation helps the business gain a competitive advantage.
Institutional Theory	:	Explains how institutional norms and pressures establish organisational structures and processes as authoritative guidelines.
Lean Systems	:	Operations management approach that seeks to maximise customer value while minimising waste.
Operations Management (OM)	:	The administration of business practices to create the highest level of efficiency possible within an organisation.
Resource-Based View (RBV)	:	A managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources a firm can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Key Term		Definition
Stakeholder Theory	:	A theory of organisational management and ethics that addresses morals and values concerning stakeholders in managing an organisation.
Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)	:	An approach to managing human resources that supports long-term business goals and outcomes with a strategic framework.
Systems Theory	:	An interdisciplinary study of systems as they relate to one another within a larger, more complex system.
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	:	A model that explains how users come to accept and use technology, based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.
Theory of Constraints (TOC)	:	A methodology for identifying the most important limiting factor (i.e., constraint) that stands in the way of achieving a goal and systematically improving it.
Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)	:	A theory linking beliefs and behaviour, asserting that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control).

Abbreviations and Full Terms

Abbreviation		Full Term
APEC	:	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BPR	:	Business Process Re-engineering
CAQDAS	:	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
ERP	:	Enterprise Resource Planning
HCT	:	Human Capital Theory
HRM	:	Human Resource Management
ISO	:	International Organisation for Standardisation

JIT	:	Just-In-Time
MRP	:	Material Requirements Planning
MTM	:	Methods-Time Measurement
OM	:	Operations Management
RBV	:	Resource-Based View
RSR	:	Railway Safety Regulator
SHRM	:	Strategic Human Resource Management
SPC	:	Statistical Process Control
TAM	:	Technology Acceptance Model
TOC	:	Theory of Constraints
TPB	:	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TQM	:	Total Quality Management

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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

In the versatile and demanding South African transport sector, the railway industry emerges as a cornerstone, deeply rooted in the nation's history and playing a pivotal role in the country's economic development. As one of the oldest and most enduring modes of transportation, the railway sector carries not only the weight of cargo and passengers but also a profound responsibility for safety and reliability (Rehman Khan *et al.*, 2017). At the heart of this responsibility is the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), an entity established under the Railway Safety Regulator Act 16/2002, charged with safeguarding the complexity of railway operations through a comprehensive and vigilant oversight mechanism.

The significance of the railway industry in South Africa goes beyond its historical legacy. It is a vital artery, facilitating the movement of goods and people across the nation (Laurino *et al.*, 2015; Rehman Khan *et al.*, 2017). As a critical component of the country's transportation infrastructure, the railway sector is subject to stringent standards, regulations, and protocols to ensure the utmost safety, reliability, and compliance (Bešinović, 2020a; Pyrgidis, 2021). The railway network, with its extensive reach, plays a crucial role in connecting industries, fostering economic growth, and contributing to the overall development of the nation (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

Established as a response to the imperative need for a robust regulatory framework, the RSR holds a distinct mandate within the railway industry. Endowed with the responsibility of ensuring safety, the RSR operates through an approach that includes audits, inspections, investigations, and compliance enforcement. These measures collectively form a comprehensive regulatory strategy to foster a safety culture, mitigate risks, and uphold the highest standards in railway operations (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The legislative foundation provided by the Railway Safety Regulator Act 16/2002 empowers the RSR to execute its oversight role effectively. The Act

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establishes the RSR and delineates its authority to conduct audits, inspections, and investigations. By enforcing compliance through regulatory protocols, the RSR plays a pivotal role in shaping the operational landscape of the railway sector (RSR, 2017).

However, the evolving nature of the railway sector introduces challenges and opportunities that demand a strategic and forward-thinking approach. Amidst technological advancements, changing demographics, and global connectivity, the railway industry must adapt to remain a driving force in South Africa's transportation ecosystem (Mashoko & Shivambu, 2015; Railway Safety Regulator, 2023; Railway Safety Regulator, 2021).

This backdrop sets the stage for a critical examination of the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) within the railway sector, particularly in the operations of the RSR. As the industry navigates these dynamic challenges, the research seeks to explore how strategic human resource practices can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the RSR in fulfilling its legislative mandate. The ensuing chapters will look into the details of strategic management, HRM, and operations management within the railway context, proposing a framework that aligns human capital with the overarching goals of the RSR and the broader railway industry.

1.2 Background to the study

The South African railway sector, as a vital component of the nation's transportation infrastructure, faces a confluence of challenges that necessitate a strategic re-evaluation of its operational dynamics (Bruno *et al.*, 2018a; Dvořák *et al.*, 2017; Mashoko & Shivambu, 2015). This research explores the strategic role of Human Resource Management (HRM) within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), situated within the broader international, regional, and local contexts of the railway industry.

Globally, railway industries encounter challenges ranging from technological disruptions to evolving safety and compliance standards (Bruno *et al.*, 2018b; Kaewunruen *et al.*, 2015). As countries strive to modernise their transportation

systems, the role of HRM in aligning workforce capabilities with strategic objectives becomes paramount. Internationally, the railway sector is witnessing transformative changes in response to globalisation, climate concerns, and the imperative for efficient, safe, and sustainable transportation (Bešinović, 2020b; Dehghan Shabani & Safaie, 2018; Lidén, 2015). This study positions itself within this global discourse, seeking to contribute insights that align with and potentially inform international best practices in strategic human resource management within railway regulatory bodies.

Within the African continent, regional disparities in infrastructure development, regulatory frameworks, and economic conditions impact the railway sector (Laurino *et al.*, 2015; Rehman Khan *et al.*, 2017). Regional collaborations and shared challenges highlight the need for context-specific solutions that address the unique dynamics of each region (Borda-de-Água *et al.*, 2017). This study acknowledges the regional factors within Africa's railway landscape and seeks to contextualise its findings, recognising potential implications and applications for neighbouring countries facing similar challenges. By situating the research within the regional context, the study aims to offer insights contributing to the South African railway sector and regional discussions on enhancing operational efficiencies through strategic HRM.

At the local level, South Africa's railway industry operates as a critical lifeline for economic activities, connecting urban centres and facilitating the movement of goods and passengers (Blumenfeld *et al.*, 2019; George *et al.*, 2018). Challenges such as aged infrastructure, safety concerns, and workforce management intricacies characterise the local context (Blumenfeld *et al.*, 2019; Borda-de-Água *et al.*, 2017; Bruno *et al.*, 2018a). Within this framework, the RSR emerges as a critical player tasked with ensuring the safety and compliance of railway operations (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The study recognises the local imperatives shaping the railway sector and positions itself as a response to the unique challenges faced by the RSR. By delving into the local intricacies of HRM within the regulator, the research aims to provide actionable recommendations modified to the specific needs of the South African railway industry.

Despite the critical role of the RSR in ensuring safety within the South African railway industry, a gap exists in the literature concerning the strategic integration of HRM within operations management. This research addresses this gap by investigating how strategic human resource practices can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the RSR. The urgency of this study is underscored by the rapidly evolving landscape of the railway sector, both globally and locally, necessitating a proactive approach to workforce management to address emerging challenges and opportunities. This study seeks to provide a detailed understanding of the strategic role of HRM within the RSR, contributing to the global discourse on railway management practices, addressing regional disparities, and offering locally relevant solutions to bolster the efficiency and safety of South Africa's railway operations.

1.3 Problem statement

The strategic role of HRM within the context of the RSR is a critical yet underexplored dimension within the South African railway sector. As the railway industry undergoes dynamic changes locally and globally (Bruno *et al.*, 2018b; Dvořák *et al.*, 2017; Pyrgidis, 2021), there is a compelling need to investigate and address the specific challenges and opportunities associated with integrating strategic HRM practices within the RSR. This research problem emerges from the following considerations:

- **Lack of strategic HRM integration:** The absence of a comprehensive framework that strategically integrates HRM practices with the overall strategic direction of the RSR poses a substantial challenge. While the regulator has the task of ensuring safety and compliance, the strategic management of its human capital, aligned with the broader organisational goals, remains underdeveloped. This gap impedes the RSR's ability to adapt proactively to industry shifts, technological advancements, and changing workforce dynamics.
- **Operational inefficiencies and compliance risks:** The lack of a well-defined strategic HRM approach may contribute to operational inefficiencies within the RSR. Inadequate alignment of workforce capabilities with the railway sector's

evolving demands may expose the regulator to compliance risks, potentially compromising safety standards. The problem statement revolves around the urgent need to address these inefficiencies to ensure the continued effectiveness of the RSR in fulfilling its legislative mandate.

- **Unexplored impact on stakeholders:** The strategic role of HRM extends beyond internal processes, influencing stakeholder relationships and service delivery. This study examines the impact of the absence of a modified HRM framework within the RSR on stakeholders, including trade unions, employees, management, and job applicants. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for proposing solutions to a collaborative and inclusive organisational culture.
- **Global relevance and best practices:** As the railway industry undergoes global transformations, the absence of a focused exploration of HRM within the RSR limits the potential for drawing insights from international best practices. Addressing this research problem is pertinent to local challenges and positions the study within a global discourse on optimising HRM strategies within railway regulatory bodies.

The study will benefit several intended and unintended stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the primary beneficiary of this study, which is the RSR itself. The study aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of HRM by incorporating and applying several operations management principles, providing the regulator with actionable insights and recommendations to improve operational effectiveness, compliance, and adaptability in a rapidly changing railway landscape. This is achieved by investigating and addressing strategic HRM challenges. The secondary beneficiaries of the study would be the operations functions or departments, as the integration of HRM strategies with operations management principles should enable HRM to strategically enable effective operations and improve the bottom line of the operations function. The tertiary beneficiary of the study would be employees within the railway sector, as well as stakeholders such as trade unions, who will benefit from a more strategic and inclusive HRM approach. From a beneficiary's point of view, the study aims to strategically and systematically provide HRM with tools that will guide the fostering of an organisational

culture based on a value-adding approach that values employee well-being, collaboration, and engagement.

The other tertiary beneficiaries of the study would be government bodies and policymakers involved in transportation and safety regulation. The study aims to inform policy decisions by providing evidence-based recommendations on integrating strategic HRM practices within regulatory frameworks and operations management-oriented approaches. In conclusion, the study aims to contribute practical and theoretical insights by developing a modified HRM framework that integrates operations management principles to add value to the organisation's bottom line.

The study addresses the perceived view that HRM supports operations to improve and enhance efficiencies, thereby contributing to the bottom line. This will be approached by facilitating the development of tools that contribute to a collaborative and inclusive organisational culture, benefiting both employees and stakeholders. In essence, this study aims to address a pressing problem, offering a pathway to enhance the strategic role of HRM within the RSR and, by extension, contribute to the overall safety and effectiveness of the South African railway sector.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do the existing human resource management practices contribute to or hinder the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the RSR in fulfilling its legislative mandate?
- How can a strategic human resource management framework be designed and implemented within the RSR to address identified challenges, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with safety standards?
- What strategies can successfully integrate the proposed human resource management framework, including addressing potential resistance and fostering a collaborative organisational culture?

- How can the proposed framework be modified to meet the unique regional and local dynamics of the South African railway sector, taking into account variations in infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and economic conditions?

1.5 Research Objectives

1.5.1 Primary Objective

- This study aims to provide a framework for adapting operations management principles to ensure adequate human resources management at the railway safety regulator.

1.5.2 Secondary Objectives

- To have an in-depth understanding of the operations of the human resources function of the RSR.
- To critically evaluate the potential role of operations management principles within the human resources function of an organisation.
- To critically evaluate the impact of existing human resource management practices on the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the RSR in fulfilling its legislative mandate.
- To propose a strategic human resource management framework that specifically includes a strong focus on OM principles to address identified challenges, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with safety standards within the RSR.
- To propose strategies for ensuring the successful implementation of the proposed human resource management framework.
- To tailor the proposed framework to meet the South African railway sector's unique regional and local dynamics, considering variations in infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and economic conditions.

1.6 Ethical considerations

The study aims to understand the impact of strategic human resources management and the integration of operations management approaches on ensuring the effective and efficient operations of the railway sector, with a specific focus on the RSR. The research was submitted to the EMSRec Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University and has received ethical clearance (Ethics approval number NWU-01860-24-A4). All qualitative responses from participants were collected in a strict, anonymous manner. Consent forms serve as an essential aspect of the study, and in this regard, they were distributed to the identified participants with sufficient detailed information about the study.

The consent form approach allowed potential participants to make an informed, voluntary decision to participate in the study. Consent forms were given to the identified participants in a language they could easily understand. This allowed participants to either participate in or decline participation. All the participants willing to participate in the study were required to sign consent forms. The researcher ensured the protection and confidentiality of subjects, guaranteeing that the information shared by participants during the interview was kept confidential.

Each participant was given a unique identification number to ensure anonymity. This study continuously observed the right to confidentiality and the right to withdraw. Ethics issues relating to the research are outlined in detail in Chapter 5.

1.7 Rationale for the Study

The motivation for conducting this study comes from the complex relations between the strategic management of human resources and the operational effectiveness of the RSR within the South African railway sector. Several factors converge to highlight the significance and genuineness of this research effort. As a phenomenon, HRM plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational strategies, fostering a conducive work environment, and aligning the workforce with overarching goals. In the regulatory

landscape of the RSR, where safety and compliance are paramount, the strategic integration of HRM practices becomes a crucial element to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation's strategic operations. The study is motivated by the understanding that a well-structured HRM framework can significantly enhance the regulator's operational effectiveness in fulfilling its legislative mandate.

A thorough review of existing literature reveals a notable gap in exploring strategic HRM practices within railway regulatory bodies, with a specific absence of studies focused on the South African context. Existing research often emphasises general principles of HRM or broad regulatory frameworks, neglecting the detailed challenges and opportunities within the RSR. This study is motivated by the need to contribute to this gap by providing context-specific insights and recommendations modified to the South African railway sector.

The study notes that the railway industry, both locally and globally, is undergoing transformative changes driven by technological advancements, changing demographics, evolving safety standards, and government interventions aimed at improving and growing the economy. This dynamic landscape necessitates a responsive and proactive approach to workforce management. By investigating the strategic role of HRM within the RSR, this study aims to provide timely insights that enable the regulator to adapt to industry shifts, mitigate risks, and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

The adaptation to the industry will be practicalised and attained through recognising the multifaceted nature of the railway sector. This study is motivated by a commitment to stakeholder engagement and collaboration, aiming to understand and address the perspectives of stakeholders, including trade unions, employees, management, and job applicants. The study seeks to foster a collaborative organisational culture. The fostering of organisational culture aligns with the broader goals of enhancing operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and engagement. From an empirical point of view, the study considers the international dimension of the railway industry, which necessitates going beyond local considerations. The study aims to align the

proposed HRM framework with international best practices, drawing insights from global experiences.

This approach positions the research within a broader context, contributing to the global discourse on optimising HRM strategies within railway regulatory bodies. The study aims to go beyond theoretical contributions, driven by a practical orientation. The research aims to provide tangible recommendations and strategies that could translate into actionable policies and practices. Policymakers, regulatory bodies, and industry stakeholders can benefit from the study's findings, which could inform decision-making and improve the overall regulatory landscape of the South African railway sector.

In conclusion, the rationale for this study is rooted in recognising the strategic role that HRM plays in shaping the operational dynamics of the RSR. Addressing the identified gaps in the literature and responding to the evolving dynamics of the railway sector provides valuable insights with practical implications for regulatory effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction within the South African context.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study is significant across various dimensions, encompassing the regulatory landscape, the workforce, stakeholders, and the broader field of railway management. Its significance articulates its potential to contribute to the strategic enhancement of the RSR's effectiveness in fulfilling its legislative mandate. By proposing a modified HRM framework, the study seeks to optimise workforce capabilities, align them with organisational goals, and enhance the RSR's ability to navigate dynamic challenges and changes within the railway sector.

Considering that safety and compliance are at the core of the RSR's responsibilities, the study's outcomes are poised to improve safety standards and regulatory compliance within the South African railway sector by enhancing efficiencies from an HRM perspective. The significance lies in the potential to foster a culture of safety, mitigate risks, and ensure the reliability of railway operations, thereby benefiting both industry stakeholders and the public.

Through the study, it will be prudent to recognise the importance of stakeholders, including trade unions, employees, management, and job applicants, in the regulatory landscape. The proposed HRM framework aims to foster stakeholder satisfaction, engagement, and collaboration by addressing their perspectives and concerns. This significance extends beyond the immediate regulator to influence the broader socio-economic ecosystem connected to the railway industry and potentially goes beyond the sector.

The study further emphasises the value of aligning the proposed HRM framework with international best practices, thus contributing to a broader understanding of optimal HRM strategies within railway regulatory bodies. This global perspective positions the study as a valuable resource for industry practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seeking insights that transcend regional boundaries. The study's valuable contribution and potential lies in the capacity to offer practical guidance for policymakers involved in transportation and safety regulation.

The translation of research findings into actionable recommendations enables the study to inform policy decisions, thereby contributing to the formulation of effective regulatory frameworks that address the complexities of the contemporary railway sector. Further to its contribution to policy and decision-making, the study aims to aid by emphasising the value of technology integration, governance processes, and stakeholder collaboration, which sets the stage for continuous improvement within the RSR and potentially the railway sector as a whole. The proposed HRM framework is designed not only as a solution for current challenges but also as a flexible and adaptive model that can evolve in response to emerging trends and industry advancements.

In addition to the practical implications, the study contributes to the academic discourse on strategic HRM within regulatory bodies. By addressing identified gaps in the literature and proposing a context-specific framework, the research adds depth to scholarly discussions. It serves as a foundation for future studies exploring similar themes within the railway management field.

In conclusion, the significance of this study extends beyond the immediate regulatory context. It aims to improve safety, enhance collaboration, inform policymaking, and contribute to the broader academic understanding of HRM within and beyond the railway sector, thereby benefiting the industry, stakeholders, policymakers, and advancing knowledge in the field.

Perhaps the most significant contribution is to the role of the Human Resources function in general, where the common vision achieved by the application of operations management principles could significantly influence the strategic role of HR beyond its traditional roles.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes a cooperative and transparent organisational environment within the RSR. It assumes that key stakeholders, including management, employees, and relevant departments, will collaborate openly to provide necessary information and insights.

The study further assumes the availability of accurate and reliable data related to the current state of HRM practices within the RSR. It also assumes that the data collected will adequately reflect the organisational dynamics and provide a comprehensive foundation for the proposed framework.

As part of the study, it is assumed that stakeholders, including employees, management, and other participants, are willing to actively participate in providing candid feedback and insights during interviews, surveys, or focus group discussions. This assumption is crucial for understanding diverse perspectives on HRM practices.

Another assumption in the study is that the RSR operates within the framework of existing laws, regulations, and standards governing its operations. The study assumes that the regulator adheres to established protocols, providing a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of HRM practices in alignment with regulatory requirements. The

further assumption is that international best practices in HRM within the railway industry are relevant and adaptable to the South African context. The other assumption is that insights from global experiences can inform the development of a context-specific HRM framework for the RSR.

In conclusion, the study assumes that implementing the proposed HRM framework within the RSR will have a positive impact on organisational effectiveness, safety standards, and stakeholder satisfaction. A further assumption is that the recommendations derived from the study will be feasible and practical in the organisational context. These assumptions provide a foundation for the study, shaping the expectations regarding organisational dynamics, data availability, stakeholder engagement, and the feasibility of proposed interventions within the context of the RSR and the South African railway sector.

1.10 Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to the context of the RSR within the South African railway sector. While the findings and proposed HRM framework may have broader applications, the study primarily addresses the specific challenges and opportunities within the RSR. The primary focus of the study is on the strategic role of HRM within the RSR. While it recognises the multifaceted nature of organisational management, the study does not comprehensively explore other organisational management perspectives, such as financial management or marketing strategies. The study does not encompass the implementation of the proposed HRM framework within the RSR. While implementation strategies are a recommendation, the study does not track the long-term organisational impact post-implementation.

In conclusion, the study's delimitation is articulated in a manner that aims to strike a balance between depth and manageability, ensuring a thorough exploration of specific aspects within the chosen context while acknowledging the practical constraints and considerations that influence the research design and scope.

1.11 Theoretical Foundation

The study's theoretical foundation draws guidance from several interrelated theoretical perspectives that collectively contribute to understanding and exploring the strategic role of HRM within the context of RSR in South Africa. These theories provide the foundation for a conceptual framework for analysing the complex relationship between HRM practices, organisational strategy, and regulatory effectiveness or operations within the specific dynamics of the railway sector.

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) serves as the core theoretical foundation, guiding the examination of how HRM within the RSR can strategically integrate to contribute to operational effectiveness, compliance, and fulfilment of legislative mandates.

The *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (TPB) was first conceptualised and brought to the fore by Icek Ajzen in 1991. The Theory of Planned Behaviour further builds on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen conceptualised in the late 1970s. While the TRA focused primarily on the role of attitudes and subjective norms in predicting behaviour, TPB provides an important third dimension that is fundamentally aligned with perceived behavioural control.

This key aspect recognises that people's intentions to engage in a behaviour are predominantly influenced by their attitudes toward the behaviour, the social pressures they experience (subjective norms), and their confidence in their ability to perform the behaviour (control beliefs).

Another aspect of this is that internal factors, such as skills, abilities, and willpower, as well as external factors, including obstacles or opportunities, can influence perceived behavioural control. This is critical in the human resources management approach, as planned behaviour, with variables such as attitudes, social pressure, and the ability to control behaviours, contributes significantly to the effective management of human behaviour, which is central to human resource management.

The more a person believes they have control over performing a certain action, the more likely they are to intend to perform that action and eventually carry it out.

TPB has been applied over several years in a wide range of disciplines. This includes areas such as health psychology, which forms the basis for industrial psychology, from which human resource management takes direction. TPB is commonly used to explain and predict behaviours. In this context, interventions often aim to alter attitudes by highlighting the benefits, changing the predictable subjective norms by emphasising social approval, and enhancing perceived control by offering resources and support (Ajzen, 2020).

The concept of TPB is not foolproof, as some critics argue that it does not adequately account for habitual behaviours or behaviours performed impulsively. Additionally, TPB may not fully capture the complexity of behaviours that are strongly influenced by emotions, even though it attempts to measure attitudes. Moreover, actual behavioural control is what people can do and is not always accurately reflected by perceived behavioural control, leading to discrepancies between intention and behaviour (Sniehotta, Presseau & Araújo-Soares, 2019).

Systems Theory (ST) emerged in the 1950s as a multidisciplinary framework for understanding complex interrelations between system components. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist, was one of the primary proponents of this theory. He argued that every system, whether mechanical, biological, or social, consists of various parts working together to maintain equilibrium. In an organisational context, Systems Theory perceives an organisation as an open system that interacts with its external environment and requires constant adaptation to sustain itself.

A primary concept within Systems Theory is the feedback loop process. Negative feedback loops help a system maintain stability by counteracting changes, while positive feedback loops reinforce changes, which can lead to growth or, if unchecked, instability. Organisations that effectively manage these feedback loops can better respond to market fluctuations and internal inefficiencies (Skyttner, 2020). Systems Theory is commonly applied in areas where managers employ systems thinking to

understand the broader implications of their decisions, thereby promoting a holistic approach to problem-solving and innovation.

This theory is instrumental in understanding the interconnected nature of organisational processes. For example, changes in one department (such as marketing) can significantly impact production, customer service, and overall organisational culture. A systems approach enables managers to optimise processes while considering the potential ripple effects on the organisation as a whole (von Bertalanffy, 2019)

A *Resource-Based View* (RBV) views organisational resources, including human capital, as sources of competitive advantage. It informs the study by highlighting the strategic value of human resources within the RSR and the significance of optimising HRM practices to enhance the regulator's overall capabilities and competitiveness.

Stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of considering the interests and perspectives of various stakeholders in organisational decision-making. This theory explores how HRM practices within the RSR impact and are perceived by stakeholders. It further emphasises the need for a holistic and inclusive approach in designing the HRM framework.

The other theoretical foundation is *institutional theory*, which examines how organisations conform to institutional pressures and norms. Institutional theory is relevant to understanding how external regulatory pressures, industry norms, and societal expectations shape HRM practices within the RSR and contribute to examining organisational legitimacy and conformity in HRM practices. The theoretical foundation deemed pertinent to the study is the HR Business Partner model, which emphasises the strategic role of HR professionals in aligning HR practices with organisational goals. This model serves as a practical guide for implementing the proposed HRM framework. It emphasises HR professionals' collaborative and strategic role in driving organisational success.

The *Organisational Learning Theory* (OLT) was developed by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. It focuses on the processes by which organisations learn and adapt

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over time. According to the theory, organisations engage in single-loop learning when they modify their actions to achieve predetermined goals without questioning the underlying assumptions. In contrast, double-loop learning occurs when an organisation reflects on its goals and values, allowing for more profound and strategic change (Argyris & Schön, 2019).

For instance, an organisation might implement single-loop learning by addressing declining performance through increased interventions. However, double-loop learning would involve questioning whether the work being performed meets the needs or purpose for which it is intended. This reflective process is essential for long-term adaptability and competitiveness.

Organisational learning is closely linked to knowledge management, as organisations must effectively capture, store, and disseminate knowledge across their workforce to facilitate learning. A learning organisation fosters a culture where employees are encouraged to experiment, take risks, and learn from both successes and failures. Leaders play a crucial role in fostering this culture by supporting ongoing development and creating opportunities for learning (Fiol & Lyles, 2019). Furthermore, organisations prioritising learning are better equipped to handle change, innovate, and maintain a competitive advantage in rapidly evolving industries.

The other critical theory is the *Human Capital Theory* (HCT), which was first proposed by economists Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker in the 1960s and 1970s. The theory emphasises the economic value of human abilities and skills. It pronounces that people's knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes constitute human capital, which contributes to individual and organisational productivity. The theory holds that investments in education, training, and healthcare yield returns through increased productivity and economic growth (Becker, 2018).

In modern organisational settings, HCT emphasises the importance of employee development as a key driver of competitive advantage. As economies transition from being industry-based to knowledge-based, organisations increasingly rely on a highly skilled workforce to innovate, adapt, and maintain productivity. Training programs,

leadership development, and continuous education are investments that not only enhance employees' capabilities but also benefit the organisation as a whole (Becker, 2018).

Human capital is a critical component of an organisation's intellectual capital, which, in turn, influences its financial performance. Organisations that invest heavily in their human capital often outperform competitors by fostering innovation and increasing employee engagement. For instance, technology-oriented companies like Google and Apple place a significant emphasis on human capital investment, offering extensive training and development opportunities, as well as attractive benefits that enhance job satisfaction and employee retention (Wright & McMahan, 2021).

The *Contingency Theory* (CT) emerged as a response to the limitations of earlier management theories that prescribed a "one-size-fits-all" approach to organisational structure and leadership. This theory, developed by Fred Fiedler in the 1960s, articulates that there is no universal best way to manage an organisation, but instead suggests that the most effective management style depends on the specific context in which it is applied. Factors such as organisational size, the environment, the nature of tasks, and the characteristics of the workforce all play a role in determining the appropriate management approach (Donaldson, 2019).

One of the key contributions of CT is its emphasis on situational variables. According to Fiedler's research, the effectiveness of leadership styles, such as task-oriented or relationship-oriented leadership, varies depending on the context. For instance, a highly structured task may require a different leadership style than a creative, ambiguous project. This adaptability is crucial for organisations in today's dynamic business environment, where rapid technological advances, globalisation, and changing workforce expectations demand flexible and responsive management approaches (Donaldson, 2019).

CT has had a significant impact on organisational design, leading to the recognition that companies must adapt their structure to align with strategic goals and environmental demands. For instance, a technology start-up might benefit from a flat,

flexible structure, while a large manufacturing firm might require a more hierarchical, formalised organisation.

The *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM), introduced by Fred Davis in 1989, is one of the most widely used models for explaining and predicting the adoption of technology by users. TAM articulates that two primary factors influence an individual's intention to use technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which a person believes that using the technology will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use pertains to the degree to which they think that using the technology will be free of effort (Venkatesh & Davis, 2020).

TAM has been instrumental in fields such as information systems, where it helps to predict the likelihood that new technologies will be adopted within an organisation. This is evident in instances where, for example, an employee perceives that a new software application will make their job easier and enhance their productivity, they are more likely to adopt and continue using the technology. This model has also been extended to include external factors such as organisational support, user training, and the availability of resources, which can further impact technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2020). TAM has practical implications for organisations looking to implement new technologies, particularly in ensuring that the technology's perceived benefits are communicated to users. Providing proper training and support can enhance ease of use and facilitate smoother technology adoption.

Eliyahu Goldratt introduced the *Theory of Constraints* (TOC) in the 1980s. TOC provides a framework for identifying and addressing the bottlenecks that limit an organisation's performance. TOC states that every system has at least one constraint (the "bottleneck") that restricts it from achieving higher output. According to Goldratt's model, it consists of five steps, namely: identifying the constraint, exploiting it, subordinating other processes to the constraint, elevating the constraint, and repeating the process if new constraints emerge. TOC is highly effective in operations management, where it helps improve productivity and optimise workflows by focusing on the most critical limiting factor (Goldratt, 2021).

In conclusion, the final framework developed will not specifically refer to any of these theories, but integrating these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive foundation for the study, enabling the analysis of HRM practices and operations management. This analysis will provide in-depth information and knowledge on integrating operations management principles into human resource management within the RSR. By drawing on these theories, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how strategic HRM can contribute to organisational effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and the achievement of regulatory objectives within the railway sector, thereby enhancing the organisation's operations.

1.12 Outline of the Study

The study explores the integration of strategic human resource management with operational management elements for the Railway Safety Regulator. The study employs a qualitative research methodology with the primary objective of conceptualising a human resources operations management framework that is adaptive and cognizant of the various factors that influence or impact railway sector operations from a strategic human resource management perspective.

The study comprises eight chapters, of which Chapter One provides a technical overview of the information. Chapter One also includes the problem statement, research aims and objectives, the significance of the study, and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research.

Chapter Two provides a brief overview of operations management, with a specific focus on its history and the various elements deemed critical by current operations management to add value to the organisation. This chapter is crucial for this study, as it outlines the key elements of operations management that are essential for effective operations management and analyses the current state of operations management in general practice.

Chapter Three outlines the importance of the railway industry and the practical value it holds as a pivotal role player in the fabric of transportation networks. This chapter examines the diverse landscape of the railway sector, exploring its historical evolution, modern infrastructure, and the various operations that contribute to its significance. Each section unfolds a different facet, from the formation of national networks to the challenges faced, the evolution in the 20th century, and the contemporary landscape of South Africa's rail network.

Chapter Four defines human resources management from both traditional and strategic perspectives, providing a clear understanding of HR management in an environment such as the RSR through a literature review. The chapter further articulates the various human resources pillars or functional areas set out in the South African Board of People Practice (SABPP). The chapter further outlines the elements deemed critical in the human resources competency model in the SABPP context.

The role of human resource management in the overall business operations is under exploration, and how it improves efficiencies and effectiveness for the business is discussed. It is imperative for the development of the study framework. This chapter explores the history of human resources, various approaches to human resources, and the elements or functional areas that comprise this field. The unpacking of the history contributes towards contextualising human resources management as a strategic role player in the overall strategic approach to business.

Chapter Five presents the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter includes data collection, analysis, and sampling techniques. The fifth chapter also explored the study area, design, and methods to maintain and ensure rigour and reflexivity. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology and focused on a population of 148 RSR employees in South Africa. The study undertakes a semi-structured interview approach. The semi-structured interviews included interview guides to collect important demographic information from the participants.

The next chapter outlines and articulates the framework that was determined and adapted through the rigorous evaluation of the information and theories in the study.

This chapter provides information on the framework and its integrations for organisational processes, with specific insights into the human resource management and operations management aspects.

The research results are presented in Chapter Seven, where the findings from the literature review and the data collected through the semi-structured interview guide form the basis of the analysis. This chapter explores recommendations concerning addressing the findings and challenges identified in the study. Arguments for and against the research, as well as progressive inputs into the study's improvement, form part of this. Challenges arising from undertaking the study are addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Eight concludes the study, presenting a summary and final recommendations derived from the findings. Finally, a summary of the findings and concluding remarks shall be in Chapter Eight.

1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the introduction and background of the study, including its rationale, significance, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. It also includes the problem statement and the study's research aims and objectives.

The study explores the integration of strategic human resource management with operations management elements for the Railway Safety Regulator. The study employs a qualitative research methodology with the primary objective of conceptualising a human resources operations management model that is adaptive and cognizant of the various factors influencing or impacting operations in the railway sector from a strategic human resource management perspective.

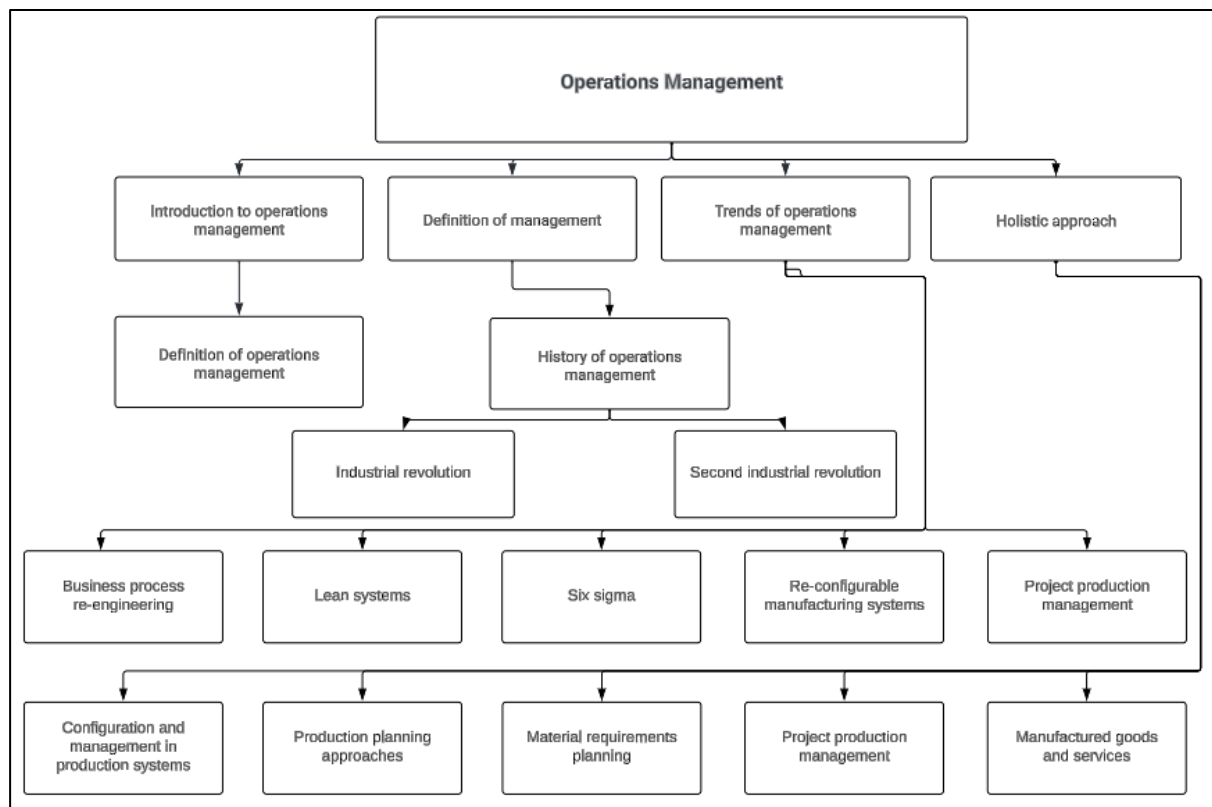
To adequately address the study objective, Chapter Two will discuss the literature reviewed for the study. In Chapter Two, the study further articulates the various human resources pillars or functional areas set out in the South African Board of People

Practice (SABPP). The study further outlines the elements deemed critical in the human resources competency model in the SABPP context. The study also explores the role of human resource management in the context of overall business operations, and how it improves efficiencies and effectiveness for the business is discussed.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW PART A: OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

2.1 Introduction

Figure 2.1: Structure of Chapter 2



Chapter Two reviews the concept of operations management, including its various elements and aspects. It also provides an overview of the different approaches and interventions of operations management deemed critical for an organisation's operations.

This chapter examines operations management, reviewing its history, dissecting the various elements or functional areas, and discussing critical approaches in operations management, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

This chapter further outlines the trends within operations management that have significantly impacted the fraternity. The chapter further examines the efficiencies and

effectiveness of metrics within operations management, as well as the holistic approach to operations management.

Operations management serves a critical role in the organisational landscape, encompassing the strategic design and meticulous control of the production of goods or services, which are the bottom-line output for any organisation (Meredith & Shafer, 2023; Olsen & Tomlin, 2020). This critical discipline ensures that businesses optimise their resource utilisation to meet the dynamic demands of customers. Beyond mere efficiency, operations management involves the comprehensive oversight of entire production or service systems, transforming diverse inputs such as raw materials, labour, consumers, and energy into tangible outputs in the form of goods and services.

The scope of operations management encompasses various sectors, including the banking industry and hospitals, as well as diverse industries, where collaboration with suppliers and customers, combined with the integration of necessary technological innovations, is required (Ivanov *et al.*, 2021; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). As one of an organisation's critical functions, operations management operates synergistically with other essential domains, such as supply chains, marketing, finance, and human resources. This multifaceted role demands the adept management of strategic considerations and day-to-day operational intricacies associated with producing goods and services in line with the organisation's strategic objectives.

Many manufacturing or service operations decisions are made to orchestrate seamless functionality (Ivanov *et al.*, 2021). These decisions entail operations strategy, product design, process design, quality management, capacity planning, facilities layout, production planning, and inventory control. The basis of executing these decision-making processes depends on the ability to analyse the current operational landscape and develop innovative solutions to enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of manufacturing or service operations, in support of the organisational strategic objectives.

2.2 History of Operations Management

The origins of production and operation systems trace back to around 5000 B.C. The Sumerian priests developed an ancient system for recording inventory and transactions. Around 4000 B.C., the Egyptians applied planning, organising, and control in monumental projects, such as the construction of the pyramids. The evolution also has its origins in China, dating back to approximately 1100 B.C., when labour specialisation emerged, and by approximately 370 B.C. Xenophon highlighted the benefits of dividing production operations among specialised individuals in ancient Greece (Benjaafar & Hu, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2018).

As the evolution continued, the Middle Ages witnessed the rise of the feudal system. The feudal system refers to kings and queens ruling vast territories and loyal noblemen managing specific sections as delegated to them through the monarchical process. This hierarchical organisation led to the feudal system, where vassals and helots utilised the ruler's land and resources to produce for themselves and the upper classes (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023; Pilkington & Meredith, 2018). In this era, the artisans formed guilds to contribute to economic output. However, while regulating work quality, the guild system became rigid in its structure. Services in the Middle Ages included the rendering of services by servants who catered to the nobility's needs, and in this period, court jesters were considered service providers. Even the Medieval army could be considered a service for defending the nobility.

The Industrial Revolution brought about a significant shift caused by the interchangeability of parts and the division of labour. While the division of labour has existed throughout history (Benjaafar & Hu, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2018), the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery saw an increase in specialisation, particularly in growing European cities and trade networks. Eli Whitney's introduction of the interchangeability of parts in the late eighteenth century revolutionised manufacturing by improving efficiencies. This innovation enabled the mass production of standardised parts, independent of the final products. This innovation culminated in the establishment of an entirely new market for selling and manufacturing goods, exemplified by Whitney's production of 10,000 muskets.

Around 1883, Frederick Winslow Taylor revolutionised the field of operations and production management by introducing the stopwatch method. The stopwatch method is a meticulous approach to measuring the time required for each task within a complex job. Taylor's contributions extended to the scientific study of productivity, focusing on coordinating tasks to eliminate time wastage and enhance overall work quality (Barnes, 2018; Brown *et al.*, 2018). On the foundation of Taylor's work, subsequent generations advanced scientific study by introducing work sampling and predetermined motion time systems (PMTS). Work sampling measured the random variable associated with task times, while PMTS utilised standardised tables of minimal body movements to predict the time needed for simple tasks. The foundational work of Frank B. and Lillian M. Gilbreth, conducted in 1912, which involved motion pictures taken at timed intervals during task performance, significantly contributed to the development of aspects of PMTS.

The twentieth century saw the evolution of service industries, which, although developed, remained largely fragmented. The U.S. service industry in 1900 consisted of banks, professional services, schools, general stores, railroads, and telegraph services, primarily owned by entrepreneurs and families (Arnes, 2018; Olsen & Tomlin, 2020). The employment distribution at the time was 31% in services, 31% in manufacturing, and 38% in agriculture.

The next critical concept or process is the development of the concept of production lines, which has its historical precedents, including the Venetian Arsenal in 1104, Adam Smith's pin manufacturing in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), and Brunel's Portsmouth Block Mills (1802). Ransom Olds pioneered assembly line car manufacturing; however, Henry Ford further developed the concept by creating the first fully automated auto assembly system. This approach or system featured a moving chassis on a conveyor belt with workers adding components to the chassis, thus producing an automobile. The unstable period of World War II spurred the development of efficient manufacturing methods, which leveraged computing power and advanced mathematical and statistical tools. The collaboration between operations research, systems engineering, and management science facilitated problem-solving in large-scale and complex scenarios.

2.2.1 The Industrial Revolution

Before the onset of the First Industrial Revolution, work was primarily conducted through two systems: the domestic system and craft guilds. Within the domestic system, merchants would deliver raw materials to artisans at their homes or at the locations where the necessary work was performed. On the other hand, the craft guilds established the associations of artisans and facilitated the sequential passing of work from one shop to another. For example, leather could be moved from a tanner to curriers, eventually reaching shoemakers and saddlers who produce the final product.

The commencement of the Industrial Revolution aligns with the eighteenth-century English textile industry. This era is critical to inventions such as the flying shuttle (1733), created by John Kay. This era includes inventions such as the spinning jenny (1765) by James Hargreaves and the water frame (1769) by Richard Arkwright. Inventions such as the steam engine (1765) by James Watt also form part of this era (Brown *et al.*, 2018). These innovations transformed the manufacturing landscape and laid the foundation for the mechanised, large-scale production era that characterised the Industrial Revolution.

The significant development in the United States during this era was the emergence of the American manufacturing system. Founded at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851, this term encapsulated a new approach based on two central features: interchangeable parts and extensive mechanisation (Barnes, 2018; Brown *et al.*, 2018).

The Interchangeable parts approach allowed for the standardisation and mass production of components, facilitating assembly line processes and easing the repair and replacement of individual parts. The widespread adoption of mechanisation further propelled manufacturing efficiency, transforming industries and shaping the trajectory of global economic systems during this transformative period (Barnes, 2018).

2.2.2 Second Industrial Revolution and Post-Industrial Society

The founding of the Ford Motor Company in 1903 by Henry Ford marked a pivotal moment in the Second Industrial Revolution. At 39, Henry Ford initiated this venture with a capital investment of \$28,000 from twelve investors. The Model T car was introduced in 1908. It was only during this period that the assembly line concept gained prominence, bringing Ford's vision of making an affordable car accessible to every middle-class American into reality. The assembly line was introduced at the Highland Park factory in 1913. The assembly line approach became a cornerstone of mass production and a vital element of the Second Industrial Revolution (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). Henry Ford laconically articulated his production philosophy: *"The thing is to keep everything in motion and take the work to the man and not the man to work."* That became the fundamental principle of Ford production, and conveyors were only one of the many means to an end. This principle revolutionised manufacturing processes, contributing to the efficiency and affordability of goods.

The Second Industrial Revolution was characterised by mass production and significant advancements in the electrical and petroleum industries. These advancements collectively redefined the economic and industrial landscape by laying the groundwork for modern industrial practices (Brown *et al.*, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). Around 1973, the transition to a post-industrial economy gained recognition through the emergence of Daniel Bell.

Bell predicted a future economy characterised by services that would contribute more to GDP and employment than manufacturing. The view of the GDP contribution marked a profound societal shift. This transition did not diminish the importance of manufacturing, agriculture, or mining; however, it significantly contributed to the transformation of economic activities (Barnes, 2018). The interconnectivity of sectors remained, reflecting a dynamic evolution rather than a decline in significance for traditional industries. This shift underlined the rise of service-oriented economies and the increasing role of technology and information in shaping the economic landscape.

Recently, the innovation brought about by faster computers, intelligent systems, and the World Wide Web has ushered in new opportunities for operations, manufacturing, production, and service systems. This technological evolution continues to shape and redefine the operations management landscape(Ivanov *et al.*, 2021; Olsen & Tomlin, 2020). Through the pioneering work of Frederick Taylor, the systematic measurement of performance and the formulation of calculated formulas to enhance productivity began to gain focus. In his early career, Taylor developed the "differential piece-rate system" and conducted experiments on cutting metals and manual labour.

This system offered two pay rates for a job: a higher rate for workers who demonstrated high productivity and produced high-quality goods, and a lower rate for those who followed the standard (Meredith & Shafer, 2023). Through this approach, Taylor addressed the issue of soldiering, where faster workers intentionally reduced their production rate to match that of the slowest workers. Around 1911, Taylor published "*The Principles of Scientific Management.*" He outlined scientific management, also known as Taylorism, in this body of work. This body of work exhibits characteristics of actual science, comprising the selection, education, and development of scientific workers, as well as intimate cooperation between management and workers (Meredith & Shafer, 2023).

Taylor's contribution extends to introducing the stopwatch time study, complemented by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth's motion study, forming the basis for time and motion studies focused on standard methods and standard time. Frank Gilbreth further enhanced this work by introducing the flow process chart in 1921 (Brown *et al.*, 2018; Feng & Shanthikumar, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). Taylor's contemporaries played a pivotal role in advancing the principles of scientific management. Morris Cooke advanced Taylor's ideas by implementing rural electrification in the 1920s. Carl Barth developed speed-and-feed-calculating slide rules through his contribution, and Henry Gantt contributed to the body of work by introducing the Gantt chart. In 1910, Hugo Diemer published the first industrial engineering book, "*Factory Organisation and Administration.*"

In 1913, Ford Whitman Harris's work contributed to the field by publishing a paper on the economic order quantity model (Brown *et al.*, 2018). His paper addressed the challenge of determining the optimal quantity of parts required for manufacturing. Harris emphasised the impact of factors such as interest on capital tied up in wages, materials, and overhead costs. He established a framework for efficiently managing production lots through this work.

The work undertaken by Harris added another layer to the evolving landscape of operations management as it provided a valuable perspective on economic order and production optimisation (Barnes, 2018). Despite Ford Whitman Harris describing his theory as "*reasonably correct*" but "*not rigorously accurate*," this laid the foundation for a significant body of mathematical literature focused on production planning and inventory control. The paper produced by Harris around 1913 inspired further exploration into the problem through advancements in understanding efficient production and inventory management.

Around 1924, the era saw contributions by Walter Shewhart. He contributed by introducing the control chart while working at Bell Labs. The method or approach introduced by Shewhart distinguished between common cause and particular cause variation. This approach laid the foundation for Statistical Process Control (SPC). Through his work around 1931, "Economic Control of Quality of Manufactured Product," Shewhart defined control as the ability to predict, within limits, how a phenomenon can vary in the future based on experience.

In the 1940s, H.B. Maynard, J.L. Schwab, and G.J. Stegemerten developed the methods-time measurement (MTM) system, the first predetermined motion time system. MTM analysed manual operations into basic motions, assigning predetermined time standards based on industry norms. This approach became a valuable tool for method analysis, providing time estimates without the need for stopwatch time studies. Throughout the historical period, optimisation techniques, from the methods used by Harris to the calculus of variations used by Euler and Lagrange, were known. However, during World War II, the field of mathematical optimisation faced a significant boost with the development of the Colossus computer and the ability

to solve significant linear programming problems computationally. This development was also notable with the simplex method by Dantzig. These advancements ushered in the emergence of operations research as a distinct field of study.

After the war, a divergence in development occurred. For instance, in the United States, the utilisation of computers for business operations led to the creation of management software architecture, including Material Requirements Planning (MRP). These were sophisticated optimisation techniques and manufacturing simulation software. In the same period, post-war Japan witnessed the development of the Toyota Production System (TPS) and Lean Manufacturing at Toyota Motor. These divergent paths reflected different approaches to optimising and managing production processes, influencing the evolution of operations management in the second half of the 20th century (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). In approximately 1943, Taiichi Ohno joined the Toyota Motor Company in Japan, where he played a pivotal role in developing a distinctive manufacturing system.

The system developed by Ohno at Toyota centred on two core principles: just-in-time (JIT), which emphasised the production of only what is needed, and automation, which integrated automation with human intervention. The JIT system drew inspiration from American supermarkets, treating workstations as shelves where products are available at the right time and in the correct quantity. The automation system was developed by Toyota's Sakichi to automatically detect and address problems in the manufacturing process (Barnes, 2018).

The advancements of the systems were evident in 1983, as J.N. Edwards outlined JIT goals in terms of seven zeros. The seven zeros emphasised zero defects, zero (excess) lot size, zero setups, zero breakdowns, zero handling, zero lead time, and zero surging. Simultaneously, the Japanese approach incorporated Total Quality Management (TQM), with principles such as process control, visible quality, insistence on compliance, line stop, correcting one's errors, the 100% check, and continual improvement (Meredith & Shafer, 2023). In the 1960s, a distinct approach to operations management emerged.

This approach was pioneered by George W. Plossl and Oliver Wight and further developed by Joseph Orlicky. This approach was known as Material Requirements Planning (MRP), and it gained momentum in 1972 with the launch of the "MRP Crusade. The book by Orlicky titled *"Materials Requirement Planning,"* published in 1975, was a seminal contribution that distinguished between dependent and independent demand. The MRP II, developed by Gene Thomas, expanded the original MRP software to encompass broader production functions, ultimately leading to the modern software architecture of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) (Meredith & Shafer, 2023).

The service industry also underwent significant transformations. This transformation was through McDonald's, which introduced a production-line approach to service in 1955. A standardised menu, assembly-line production, and a strong emphasis on customer service marked this. In 1971, FedEx revolutionised package delivery with its overnight service that reshaped the industry and facilitated fast online order delivery by retailers like Amazon. Starting in 1962, Walmart revolutionised retailing with a low-cost model, efficient supply chain management, and customer-centric service (Brown *et al.*, 2018). In 1987, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) issued the ISO 9000 standards. These standards recognised the importance of quality management systems in manufacturing and service organisations. The arrival of the Internet in 1994 marked the emergence of online retailing and distribution, a phenomenon that Amazon helped pioneer.

This leveraged large-scale computer operations, dispersed warehouses, and efficient transportation for a seamless customer experience (Barnes, 2018; Benjaafar & Hu, 2020; Olsen & Tomlin, 2020). These developments and transformations highlight the evolution of operations management in response to changing technological landscapes, globalisation, and the increasing significance of customer-centric approaches. The principles and practices developed in various industries continue to shape operations management in the modern era.

2.3 Trends of Operations Management

Recently, operations management trends have been evolving concepts and methodologies. Some notable trends include Business Process Re-engineering (BRP), Lean Systems, Six Sigma, Reconfigurable Manufacturing Systems, and Project Production Management.

2.3.1 Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)

Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), introduced by Michael Hammer in 1993, is a transformative business management strategy to enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Zaini & Saad, 2019). At its core, BPR revolves around the meticulous analysis and subsequent redesign of workflows and business processes within an organisation.

Unlike incremental improvements, BPR advocates for a radical restructuring of processes, starting afresh to eliminate inefficiencies and optimise performance (Nkomo & Marnewick, 2021; Pasaribu *et al.*, 2021). Prioritising a ground-up redesign approach aligns processes with strategic goals, enhances productivity, and streamlines operations for maximum impact. This methodology deviates from traditional practices, encouraging organisations to challenge existing norms and embrace innovative solutions to drive sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

2.3.2 Lean Systems

Lean systems represent a systematic approach to minimising waste within manufacturing or service processes. This methodology, originating from the Toyota Production System, focuses on identifying and eliminating various forms of waste, including overburden and unevenness in workloads, to optimise efficiency and productivity (Jituri *et al.*, 2018). The term "lean manufacturing" gained prominence through the influential book "The Machine That Changed the World," which highlighted the revolutionary practices of Japanese automakers.

Since then, Lean principles have transcended manufacturing and found application in service industries, emphasising continuous improvement, value creation, and the relentless pursuit of operational excellence (Das, 2018). By adopting Lean principles, organisations can streamline processes, enhance quality, and deliver greater value to customers while reducing costs and improving competitiveness in the marketplace.

2.3.3 Six Sigma

Six Sigma, developed at Motorola between 1985 and 1987, is a rigorous approach to quality management that sets control limits at six standard deviations from the mean of a normal distribution. This methodology minimises process defects and variations, enhancing efficiency and customer satisfaction. Jack Welch of General Electric propelled Six Sigma into the mainstream by launching a company-wide initiative in 1995 to adopt its methods across manufacturing, service, and administrative processes (Patel & Desai, 2018).

Since then, Six Sigma has evolved to encompass methodologies such as DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control) for process improvement and DFSS (Design for Six Sigma) for designing new products and processes (Antony *et al.*, 2018; Patel & Desai, 2018). By emphasising data-driven decision-making, statistical analysis, and continuous improvement, Six Sigma enables organisations to achieve heightened performance, reliability, and profitability levels across various industries and sectors.

2.3.4 Reconfigurable Manufacturing Systems

Reconfigurable Manufacturing Systems (RMS) represent a dynamic approach to production systems, engineered to adapt their structure, hardware, and software components swiftly (Maganha *et al.*, 2018; Yelles-Chaouche *et al.*, 2021). These systems facilitate the rapid reconfiguration of production capabilities and functionalities

within a specific part family, enabling manufacturers to respond promptly to sudden market fluctuations or intrinsic changes in the system(Bortolini *et al.*, 2018). The primary objective of RMS is to enhance agility and flexibility within the production process, allowing for seamless adjustments in response to evolving customer demands, technological advancements, or other external factors. By enabling swift reconfiguration, RMS empowers manufacturers to optimise resource utilisation, minimise downtime, and maintain competitiveness in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

2.3.5 Project Production Management (PPM)

Project Production Management (PPM) represents the application of analytical tools and techniques derived from operations management, as elucidated in Factory Physics, to large-scale capital projects (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). Particularly prominent in industries like oil and gas and civil infrastructure delivery, PPM is indispensable for meticulously planning and executing complex projects. By leveraging insights from operations management, PPM aims to optimise resource allocation, minimise waste, and enhance overall project efficiency and effectiveness.

The adoption of PPM stresses a persistent commitment to efficiency, adaptability, and quality within operations management (Barnes, 2018; Brown *et al.*, 2018; Choi *et al.*, 2018). This trend reflects the imperative to navigate evolving market dynamics, leverage technological advancements, and contend with the escalating complexity of global supply chains and project environments. As organisations increasingly recognise the value of PPM in driving project success, its integration into project management practices continues to gain momentum across diverse industries.

2.3.6 Holistic Approach

Based on systems theory, according to Hill (2020), a holistic approach distinguishes between order winners and order qualifiers when defining operations strategy. The order winners are those variables that differentiate a company from its competitors, and the order qualifiers are prerequisites for engaging in a transaction. This approach effectively aligns operations management with marketing, emphasising segmentation and positioning. Productivity is a standard efficiency metric that represents the ratio of outputs to inputs. This metric can take various forms, such as machine productivity, workforce productivity, raw material productivity, and warehouse productivity (Hill, 2020). The mathematical understanding of the productivity process is critical, and it is clarified by breaking down productivity into U (the productive percentage of total time) and η (the ratio between the produced volume and productive time), which enhances the evaluation of production system performance.

Cycle times of productivity can be modelled through manufacturing engineering, incorporating methods like time and motion study, predetermined motion time systems, and work sampling, depending on the level of automation in the individual operations (Barnes, 2018; Benjaafar & Hu, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2018; Hill, 2020). ABC Analysis is crucial in understanding productivity rates, as it is based on the Pareto distribution. The Pareto distribution effectively classifies items in inventory into three classes (A, B, and C) based on cumulative item revenues and the corresponding inventory levels. This method guides different management strategies for items with varying revenue and inventory levels.

The throughput concept aims to quantify the number of parts produced per unit of time. Estimating throughput for an entire production system becomes complex due to queues resulting from various factors, such as machine breakdowns, processing time variability, and others. Identifying and managing bottlenecks in production systems is crucial to understanding capacity measures and utilisation. The concept of understanding Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) is a key performance indicator used in conjunction with lean manufacturing (Schiraldi & Varisco, 2020). OEE is the product of system availability, cycle time efficiency, and quality rate, providing a

comprehensive measure of equipment performance. Through OEE, the overall effectiveness of production systems in achieving their objectives can be efficiently assessed (Cheah *et al.*, 2020; Schiraldi & Varisco, 2020).

2.3.7 Configuration and Management in Production Systems

Designing a production system configuration would involve carefully considering both technological and organisational variables. Within the realm of production technology, it takes into consideration aspects such as dimensioning capacity, fractioning capacity, selecting capacity locations, outsourcing processes, choosing process technology, implementing automation of operations, and managing the trade-off between volume and variety (Benjaafar & Hu, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). The approach is a critical decision that includes the entire process. Concerning the organisational front, crucial choices pertain to defining worker skills and responsibilities. It contributes to fostering team coordination, establishing worker incentives, and ensuring an adequate flow of information.

2.3.8 Production Planning Approaches

Within the domain of production planning, a significant challenge exists between the push approach and the pull approach, with the latter encompassing the distinctive concept of just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing. The pull approach involves authorising production based on inventory levels, while the push approach concept relies on the occurrence of demand, whether forecasted or present. Significantly, an individual production system can seamlessly integrate push and pull elements. In certain instances, activities preceding the Critical Order Due Point (CODP) may operate under a pull system, while activities post-CODP may function under a push system (Barnes, 2018; Ivanov *et al.*, 2021; Lee & Tang, 2018). The concept of the traditional pull approach to inventory control has given rise to various techniques, leading to the development of the Economic Order Quantity (EOQ) model.

This model consists of a trade-off between ordering cost and holding cost. This concept has laid the foundation for subsequent inventory theories, which include models such as the Wagner-Whit procedure, the newsvendor model, the base stock model, and the fixed period model (Brown *et al.*, 2018; Choi *et al.*, 2018; Ivanov *et al.*, 2021). These models enable the calculation of cycle stocks and buffer stocks, with the latter typically modelled as a function of demand variability. An alternative model, the Economic Production Quantity (EPQ), assumes a constant fill rate for the part under production, deviating from the instantaneous refilling of the EOQ model.

2.3.9 Material Requirements Planning (MRP)

The other concept considered in the process is Material Requirements Planning (MRP), which introduced a push approach to inventory control and production planning. The MRP process utilises both the Master Production Schedule (MPS) and the Bill of Materials (BOM) to generate schedules for the materials needed in the production process (Lestari & Nurdiansah, 2018). As a form of aggregate planning, MRP manifests in two opposing varieties: plans that chase demand and level plans that maintain uniform capacity utilisation.

Various models, including analytical, optimisation algorithmic, and heuristic models, have been considered to address MPS challenges (Bogataj & Bogataj, 2019; Hasanati *et al.*, 2019; Lestari & Nurdiansah, 2018). To effectively overcome MRP's challenges, including infinite capacity and fixed lead times, subsequent developments led to the emergence of MRP II, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), and Advanced Planning and Scheduling (APS).

2.3.10 Project Production Management (PPM)

The process of Project Production Management (PPM) applies operations management principles to the execution of capital projects. This process views the

sequence of activities in a project as a production system and incorporates principles for reducing and managing variability. It includes buffering through a combination of capacity, time, and inventory, a fundamental strategy employed in PPM to ensure successful project delivery (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). This approach highlights the application of operations management concepts to the unique challenges of capital projects in various industries, including oil and gas and civil infrastructure delivery.

2.4 Differences between Manufactured Goods and Services

Several key differences exist between manufactured goods and services. They include simultaneous production and consumption, perishability, ownership, and tangibility.

2.4.1 Simultaneous Production and Consumption

Within a high-contact service environment, such as healthcare, services are produced in the customer's presence and consumed as they are being produced. This form of service requires being near the customers. The simultaneous production and consumption aspect also entails the self-service sub-element (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023). This simultaneous production and consumption allows the customer to interact with the service or production by self-serving themselves at the point of consumption. For example, producing purified water in various retail stores allows customers to self-serve while it is purified in large containers.

2.4.2 Perishability

The reality is that services are perishable and cannot be stored for later use. It contradicts manufactured goods, wherein an inventory can buffer supply and demand. Naturally, services must meet highly variable demand through operational adjustments

by ensuring service rendering and consumption when required. The concept of differentiating between services and manufactured goods is primarily outlined by perishability, as one can be stored while the other must be utilised and not necessarily preservable (Barnes, 2018; Meredith & Shafer, 2023).

2.4.3 Ownership

The differentiating factor between manufactured goods and services is that the ownership of manufactured goods, in the end, is transferred to the customer, and on the other hand, services, even though rendered and consumed, remain the property of the service render (Barnes, 2018; Brown *et al.*, 2018; Pilkington & Meredith, 2018). Services cannot be owned or resold.

2.4.4 Tangibility

Considering that services are intangible, it is more challenging for customers to evaluate them effectively in advance. The most common and practical reasons quality assurance is often achieved through licensing, government regulation, and branding effectiveness are cited in Benjaafar & Hu (2020), Feng & Shanthikumar (2018), and Ivanov *et al.* (2021). The tangibility aspect is more feasible in manufacturing than in service goods because manufacturing follows specific standards and regulations. Further, consumers can evaluate the quality of the goods in advance.

Despite these differences, there are also similarities between manufacturing and service operations. For instance, quality management approaches, including the Baldrige Award and Six Sigma, have been successfully applied to services. Concepts such as the Lean service principles, which focus on efficiency and waste reduction, have become more effective in service operations upon their application. However, the active presence of the customer during service delivery necessitates careful consideration of their experience when applying these practices.

2.5 Key Operations Management Principles, Practices and Processes

It is often difficult to distinguish between operations management principles and operations management practices or processes. Principles are the underlying philosophies that are described in the theories mentioned in paragraph 1.11. Practices are the practical ways in which these principles are applied in the organisation through various processes, as described in paragraph 2.5.2 below. To distinguish between principles and practices, principles can be regarded as those fundamental elements that are essential for any organisation to stay in business. In contrast, operations management practices refer to the practical elements that yield measurable outcomes for the organisation.

2.5.1 Operations Management Principles

2.5.1.1 Transformation principle

The overriding principle of operations management is rooted in its definition that operations management is the function that defines an organisation (Krajewski, Ritzman, & Malhotra, 2019), known as the transformation principle, where input is transformed into output (Heizer & Render, 2020). If an organisation fails to add value, it ceases to exist. This principle is equally applicable to production and service organisations, in both the private and public sectors. (Stevenson, 2018).

2.5.1.2 Quality principle

Quality management has evolved from being a source of competitive advantage to a necessity for staying in business (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). Hence, it can be regarded as one of the basic principles of operations management. It culminates in the processes that ensure that an organisation's products or services are consistent and meet customer expectations (Pycraft *et al.*, 2020). This Operations Management principle involves establishing quality standards, implementing quality control processes, and continually improving quality (Heizer & Render, 2020). It further sets objectives to

reduce defects, enhance product reliability, and increase customer satisfaction with the products or services offered by the business or organisation (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

Quality Management, as an Operations Management principle, has adopted various practices and techniques, including Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma, and ISO 9001 standards, to operationalise the process and ensure the effective delivery of quality management in a business or organisation (Stevenson, 2018). These are discussed in more detail below (Evans & Lindsay, 2019). The adoption of quality management ensures that high-quality products and services enhance brand reputation, reduce costs associated with rework and returns, and increase customer loyalty, which in turn supports the achievement of the organisation's business objectives (Pycraft et al., 2020).

2.5.1.3 Productivity

Closely related to the transformation principle, productivity is defined in its simplest form as the amount of output that can be obtained from a specific amount of input. It is mathematically measured as output divided by input and expressed as a percentage. The principle of productivity underlies practices such as production optimisation, inventory management and supply chain management, as described in paragraph 2.5.2 below (Evans & Lindsay, 2019).

2.5.1.4 Performance Measurement

At the heart of continuous improvement, statistical process control, total quality management, lean management, and the theory of constraints lies accurate measurement. In principle, no process can be managed or optimised.

The performance measurement principle in operations management involves assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation by tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) such as production efficiency, defect rates, and on-time

delivery (Stevenson, 2018). This approach effectively identifies areas for improvement, enhances productivity levels, and ensures alignment with the organisation's strategic goals (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

In service-oriented organisations, performance measurement monitors key performance indicators (KPIs) such as service efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee performance, providing metrics for assessing efficiencies and productivity levels (Chopra & Meindl, 2022). Performance measurement as an operations management principle ensures effective service quality improvement, increases customer satisfaction, and aligns operations with business objectives (Stevenson, 2018).

2.5.2 Operations Management practices and processes

For operations management setup, fundamental principles must be The fundamental Operations Management principles include but are not limited to Forecasting (Chase, Jacobs, & Aquilano, 2006), Capacity Planning (Vonderembse & White, 2013), Inventory Management (Wild, 2017), Process Design (Russell & Taylor, 2023), Lean Management (Womack & Jones, 2003), Supply Chain Management (Christopher, 2016), and Performance Measurement (Neely, 2002).

2.5.2.1 Forecasting

Forecasting is the process that involves predicting future demand for an organisation's products or services (Stevenson, 2018). This principle further uses historical data, market analysis, and statistical models to predict future demands for a business or organisation and enable effective operations management (Chase *et al.*, 2006). Forecasting as an operations management principle enables organisations to plan their production schedules effectively, manage inventory, and allocate resources to achieve their primary objectives and goals (Russell & Taylor, 2011).

As part of Operations Management, it is common practice to utilise specific forecasting methods, which include qualitative techniques (such as expert judgment and market research) and quantitative techniques (such as time series analysis, causal models, and machine learning algorithms) to enable better the process of determining future requirements and approaches for the business or organisation (Wild, 2017). Through continuous improvement and the utilisation of forecasting methods, accurate forecasting has, over time, helped businesses and organisations prevent overproduction or underproduction, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction as a strategic intervention in Operations Management (Stevenson, 2018).

2.5.2.2 Capacity Planning

Capacity planning refers to a process undertaken by businesses or organisations to determine the production capacity needed to address the changing demands for their products and services (Heizer & Render, 2020). This operations management principle enables an organisation to effectively have the necessary resources (such as equipment, labour, and facilities) to address its current and future demands (Vonderembse & White, 2013). The process also involves long-term decisions about the size and timing of capacity changes that the business or organisations can envisage or face (Krajewski *et al.*, 2019).

As part of the capacity planning process, practitioners implementing these principles consider specific techniques, including lead strategy (adding capacity in anticipation of demand), lag strategy (adding capacity after demand has been realised), and match strategy (adding capacity incrementally in response to demand changes) (Heizer & Render, 2020). Effective capacity planning is crucial, as it enables businesses or organisations to balance costs, optimise resource utilisation, and maintain service levels, thereby contributing to operational success and achieving business objectives and goals (Krajewski *et al.*, 2019).

2.5.2.3 Inventory Management

Inventory management, as an operations management principle, refers to the process developed and adopted to oversee the ordering, storing, and use of a business's or organisation's inventory (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). This principle aims to maintain an optimal inventory level that meets customer demand without incurring excess costs (Stevenson, 2018). Inventory Management entails effective management of raw materials, work-in-progress, and finished goods, benefiting both goods and service-oriented operations (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

To operationalise the principle of inventory management, standard techniques utilised include Just-In-Time (JIT), Economic Order Quantity (EOQ), and ABC analysis (Chase *et al.*, 2006). The effective utilisation of proper inventory management assists businesses or organisations in reducing carrying costs, minimising stockouts and overstock situations, and improving cash flow, thereby optimising efficiencies and promoting the bottom line (Stevenson, 2018).

2.5.2.4 Process Design

As a fundamental principle of Operations Management, process design involves developing efficient processes for producing goods and delivering services (Heizer & Render, 2020). The process design principle aims to create workflows that maximise efficiency and minimise wastage from both production and service-rendering perspectives for the business or organisation (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

The process design approach also includes designing facility layouts, selecting appropriate technology, and standardising operating procedures to improve effectiveness and efficiency (Stevenson, 2018). For effectiveness, the process design approach utilises tools and techniques such as process mapping, value stream mapping, and business process reengineering (BPR) (Heizer & Render, 2020). This approach structurally reduces production time, lowers costs, and improves product and service quality (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

2.5.2.5 Lean Management

Lean management means creating more value for customers with fewer resources by eliminating waste through streamlined and robust approaches (Pycraft *et al.*, 2020). It involves identifying and eliminating non-value-added activities in production or service-rendering processes. Through improved efficiencies, lean management promotes continuous improvement and employee involvement (Stevenson, 2018).

The implementation of Lean management is through various techniques, including the 5S approach (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardise, and Sustain), Kaizen (continuous improvement), and Kanban (visual workflow management) to aid in practical and visual workflow management for effective operations management (Heizer & Render, 2020). Lean management emphasises improving efficiency, reducing costs, enhancing product quality, and enhancing employee satisfaction (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

2.5.2.6 Supply Chain Management

The Supply Chain Management process is one of the standard principles of operations management. It involves coordinating and integrating the flow of materials, information, and finances as they move from suppliers to manufacturers, to wholesalers, to retailers, and ultimately to consumers (Chopra & Meindl, 2022). This process ensures the efficient supply of resources, materials, and other requirements necessary for organisational operations (Stevenson, 2018).

This operations management principle further ensures that the right products are available at the right time and place, effectively minimising costs and maximising customer value (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). The principle involves managing relationships with suppliers, optimising logistics, and synchronising supply and demand to maintain the high-quality availability of all necessary resources for operations (Chopra & Meindl, 2022).

The supply chain management principle in operations management approaches the process through considerations of aspects such as Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI), Collaborative Planning, Forecasting, and Replenishment (CPFR), as well as Supply Chain Optimisation (Stevenson, 2018). These are critical supply chain management techniques that enable organisations to effectively provision materials, resources, services, and goods required for operations (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). The fundamental role of supply chain management as an operations management principle is to effectively reduce costs, improve delivery performance, and enhance customer satisfaction, enabling the organisation or business to achieve its bottom-line objectives (Chopra & Meindl, 2022).

From a service-based operations perspective, supply chain management provides the resources, skills, and materials critical for effective service delivery (Stevenson, 2018). From the perspective of production goods, supply chain management articulates how materials, parts, raw materials, and other production components are transformed into final, consumable products (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

2.5.3 Effectiveness Measurement for Key Operations Management Principles and Practices

Operations Management, as a field of study and management practice, has its roots firmly established in business operations and studies, providing empirical and theoretical insights that enable the field to thrive (Stevenson, 2018). It presupposes that the field must entail an approach for assessing the effectiveness of the key principles to ensure the objectives of each principle are attained (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

In this regard, the fundamental operations management principles should contain methodological means of measuring the effectiveness of each principle. Scientific and empirical, measuring the effectiveness of each key operations management principle refers to metrics, which are scientific means of determining or understanding the effectiveness of these principles (Chopra & Meindl, 2022).

The metrics for measuring the effectiveness of each key operations management principle are crucial for operations management as they provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the principles in attaining their objectives (Stevenson, 2018). This data enables businesses or operations to plan, direct resources, and optimise processes for continuous improvement and enhanced effectiveness, aiming to maximise operations and achieve organisational objectives (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). Through measuring effectiveness, the metrics approach for each key principle of operations management scrutinises elements such as impact, value-added, and output (Chopra & Meindl, 2022). This detailed scrutiny provides information on the effectiveness of the principles and their direct correlation to the business or organisation's operations.

2.5.3.1 Forecasting Metrics

Measuring the effectiveness of forecasting as an operations management principle entails sales revenue, customer acquisition rate, customer churn rate, and inventory turnover rate (Chase & Aquilano, 2023). These forecasting metrics enable businesses or organisations to measure key elements effectively, such as generated sales revenue, the rate of customer acquisition in a market, and the inventory turnover rate, which predicts the speed at which goods or services are sold (Stevenson, 2018). It enables businesses to forecast each element scientifically and intervene to address factors that may impair or impact the effectiveness of these elements, contributing to overall operational effectiveness (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

In the forecasting world, understanding and applying the right metrics is crucial to gauge the accuracy and reliability of any prediction model. The Mean Absolute Deviation (MAD) stands out for its simplicity and clarity among these metrics. MAD is essentially the average magnitude of errors between forecasted and actual values, calculated without regard to the direction of those errors (Silver, 2021). Its simplicity lies in the straightforward calculation and interpretation, making it a favourite for assessing forecast accuracy. However, MAD has its drawbacks; it does not account

for the direction of errors and may not be as sensitive to more significant discrepancies between predicted and actual figures (Chopra & Meindl, 2022).

Another key metric, the Mean Squared Error (MSE), takes a slightly different approach by focusing on the average of the squared differences between forecasted and actual values (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). This calculation highlights more significant errors, providing a more detailed picture of a model's forecasting capabilities. While MSE provides a valuable perspective, especially when comparing different forecasting methods, it can be sensitive to anomalies and somewhat more sophisticated to understand than MAD (Stevenson, 2018).

The tracking signal adds another layer of sophistication to forecasting analysis. It is defined as the ratio of the cumulative sum of forecast errors to the MAD, serving as a vital tool for identifying systematic biases in predictions (Chase & Aquilano, 2023). Whether forecasts consistently overshoot or undershoot actual values, the tracking signal helps pinpoint these trends. Although invaluable for maintaining the long-term accuracy of forecasts, it demands ongoing vigilance and can be impacted by fluctuating data (Stevenson, 2018).

These metrics offer a comprehensive toolkit for evaluating and enhancing forecasting models. By strategically employing MAD, MSE, and the tracking signal, one can monitor performance and refine forecasting methods over time, ensuring more accurate and reliable predictions. Each metric, with its unique advantages and limitations, plays a critical role in the continuous improvement process of forecasting accuracy.

2.5.3.2 Capacity Planning Metrics

Measuring capacity planning involves determining utilisation, throughput, and cycle time measurements concerning the capacity requirements utilised (Stevenson, 2018). This metric enables operations to understand capacity utilisation, throughput (production rate), and cycle time (the time it takes to complete a process).

Capacity planning metrics are crucial for operations management, as they provide valuable insights into resource-efficient use and effective production process management (Chase & Aquilano, 2023). By monitoring these metrics, organisations can optimise resource allocation, improve production efficiency, and effectively meet changing demand requirements (Jacobs & Chase, 2019).

Capacity planning is crucial for understanding and effectively managing resources to meet future needs. It guides critical metrics, including utilisation rate, efficiency, and throughput time, offering unique insights and benefits.

The utilisation rate is a critical metric that denotes the percentage of total capacity currently in use (Jacobs & Chase, 2019). It is derived by dividing the actual output by the maximum possible output and multiplying the result by 100. This rate is an excellent indicator of the efficient use of resources, highlighting both underutilised and overutilised assets. However, it is essential to note that the utilisation rate may not account for periods of downtime or maintenance, and a very high rate could indicate the overuse of resources, risking wear and attrition.

On the other hand, efficiency measures the actual output against the adequate capacity, gauging the sound utilisation of resources relative to their potential output (Stevenson, 2018). This metric highlights areas where resource usage can be improved and helps identify inefficiencies within the production process. However, it is susceptible to external factors outside of its control and might not fully account for quality issues. Regularly assessing efficiency is advisable to pinpoint and mitigate inefficiencies, optimise resource usage, and enhance productivity.

Lastly, throughput time is integral to understanding the total time taken from the start to the end of a process, encompassing processing time, waiting time, and any delays encountered (Chase & Aquilano, 2023). This metric is invaluable for identifying bottlenecks and delays that hinder process speed and efficiency. Though throughput time aims to capture all elements influencing process time, it may fall short in accounting for every factor and is also subject to variations in demand. A detailed

analysis of throughput time can help identify and eliminate bottlenecks, streamline processes, and enhance efficiency across the board.

In summary, adequate capacity planning hinges on thoroughly understanding and applying these metrics. Each offers its own set of advantages in measuring and improving resource utilisation, although they also come with limitations. Monitoring and analysing these key metrics can strike a balance in workloads, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and preserved for sustained operational success.

2.5.3.3 Inventory Management Metrics

Inventory management is crucial for business operations, focusing on controlling inventory levels to meet customer demand while minimising unnecessary costs. One of the core metrics in inventory management is the inventory turnover ratio. It is defined as the ratio of the cost of goods sold to average inventory (Heizer & Render, 2023), providing insight into how frequently inventory is sold and replaced over a given period. The utility of tracking inventory turnover lies in its ability to highlight the effectiveness of inventory management practices, offering a way to manage cash flow and storage costs more efficiently. However, it is essential to note that seasonal demand fluctuations can significantly impact inventory turnover, and a high turnover rate may lead to stockouts, ultimately affecting sales and customer satisfaction.

Another critical metric is the Days of Inventory on Hand (DOH), which represents the average number of days it takes for inventory to be sold. Calculated by dividing the average inventory by the daily cost of goods sold (Schroeder *et al.*, 2022), DOH helps businesses manage their inventory levels more effectively, preventing issues like overstocking and stockouts. Accurate inventory and sales data are crucial for reliable DOH calculations, and it is vital to consider changes in demand that can affect inventory levels. Regular monitoring of DOH helps maintain optimal inventory levels, ensuring products are available when needed while being cost-efficient.

Lastly, the stockout rate, which quantifies the frequency at which inventory runs out, is a vital measure of the reliability of inventory management systems (Stevenson & Hojati, 2021). The determination is made by dividing the number of stockouts by the total stockout opportunities. A high stockout rate could lead to lost sales and dissatisfied customers, while a low rate may suggest excess inventory. By tracking the stockout rate, businesses can adjust their inventory practices to ensure a reliable supply of products, minimising lost sales opportunities and enhancing customer satisfaction. Overall, understanding and effectively using these metrics allows for more precise inventory management, balancing the need to meet customer demand and optimise inventory levels.

2.5.3.4 Supply Chain Management Metrics

Supply chain management is crucial to any business, ensuring that products are delivered efficiently and effectively from suppliers to customers. Key metrics play an essential role in evaluating and improving supply chain operations. Order Fulfilment Cycle Time, Perfect Order Rate, and Supply Chain Cost stand out due to their impact on overall performance and customer satisfaction.

Order Fulfilment Cycle Time is the average time required to fulfil a customer's order from when the order is processed until delivery. It encompasses several stages: order processing, production, and delivery (Li *et al.*, 2021). This metric is invaluable because it reflects the efficiency and responsiveness of the supply chain, directly influencing customer satisfaction and retention (Fawcett *et al.*, 2019). However, it can be affected by external factors, such as supplier delays and demand coordination across various departments (Chopra & Meindl, 2020). Effectively monitoring and managing the Order Fulfilment Cycle Time can significantly improve the supply chain's efficiency and customer contentment.

The Perfect Order Rate is another critical measure, representing the percentage of orders delivered without any issues, including those that are on time, complete, and undamaged (Van Hoek, Harrison, & Christopher, 2021). It provides a comprehensive

view of the supply chain's effectiveness and reliability. Achieving a high Perfect Order Rate is directly linked to enhancing customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, this metric relies on accurate data collection and can be difficult to maintain consistently (Fugate, Stank, & Mentzer, 2019). Tracking and improving the Perfect Order Rate can help businesses identify and rectify issues within the supply chain, leading to higher reliability and customer satisfaction.

Lastly, Supply Chain Cost encompasses the total expenditures related to supply chain operations, covering procurement, production, transportation, and storage costs (Waters, 2020). This metric is pivotal for identifying opportunities for cost savings and boosting the profitability of operations (Chopra & Meindl, 2020). However, accurately calculating Supply Chain Costs can be challenging and requires detailed cost data (Fawcett *et al.*, 2019). Analysing these costs enables companies to pinpoint areas for cost reduction, leading to enhanced efficiency and profitability of the supply chain.

In summary, these metrics are indispensable for managing a supply chain effectively. Businesses can optimise their operations by focusing on Order Fulfilment Cycle Time, Perfect Order Rate, and Supply Chain Cost, improving efficiency, customer satisfaction, and profitability.

2.5.3.5 Quality Management Metrics

Quality management is a crucial aspect of production that directly impacts customer satisfaction, warranty costs, and the overall efficiency of production processes. One key metric in assessing product quality is the defect rate, which calculates the number of defects per unit produced (Oakland, 2020). This metric is instrumental in measuring the quality of products, as it directly affects customer satisfaction and warranty costs. The advantage of tracking the defect rate lies in its ability to precisely measure product quality and help identify areas that require improvement.

However, it is worth noting that the accuracy of inspections can influence the defect rate, and that high defect rates may lead to customer dissatisfaction. To effectively

utilise this metric, it is crucial to consistently monitor defect rates to identify and address quality issues promptly, ensuring that products maintain high quality and customers remain satisfied.

Another integral metric is the First Pass Yield (FPY), which represents the percentage of products that pass inspection without rework (Pyzdek & Keller, 2019). This metric indicates the effectiveness and efficiency of the production process. The primary advantages of tracking FPY include measuring the effectiveness of the production process and reducing the costs associated with rework and scrap. On the downside, FPY requires accurate inspection data and can influence the variability in production processes. The effective use of this metric involves tracking FPY to pinpoint and rectify process inefficiencies, thereby improving production quality and reducing costs.

Lastly, the Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) measures how well products and services meet or exceed customer expectations (Kotler *et al.*, 2020). It is typically gauged through surveys and customer feedback, serving as a mirror to the overall performance of quality management. CSAT has the benefit of reflecting on quality management's performance and directly impacts customer loyalty and retention. However, its subjective nature, susceptibility to external factors, and the need for ongoing data collection and analysis present challenges. Therefore, regularly measuring CSAT is crucial for assessing customer satisfaction and pinpointing areas for improvement to enhance the overall customer experience.

Together, these metrics form the backbone of a comprehensive quality management strategy, enabling businesses to monitor and enhance product quality and the production process, ultimately leading to satisfied customers and efficient operations.

2.5.3.6 Performance Measurement Metrics

In performance measurement, a few key metrics stand out for their ability to provide insightful data on the efficiencies of various operations and overall alignment with strategic goals. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are particularly noteworthy. KPIs

are carefully selected metrics that track the performance of different operations within a business. They offer a deep dive into how efficiently and effectively these operations run while ensuring they align with the company's strategic objectives (Dixit & Arora, 2021).

One of the significant benefits of KPIs is their ability to be customised to meet the specific needs of a business, providing actionable insights that aid in decision-making (Nudurupati *et al.*, 2017). However, selecting and aligning the right KPIs with business goals can be challenging. Moreover, tracking too many KPIs can become overwhelming. Choosing KPIs that closely align with strategic goals and provide clear, actionable insights is advised for optimal use. Another metric worth considering is the Balanced Scorecard, which adopts a multidimensional approach that incorporates financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth perspectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). This framework ensures a balanced performance evaluation, addressing not just financial outcomes but also how these outcomes are measured.

The advantage of using a Balanced Scorecard lies in its ability to offer a holistic view of the organisation's performance and encourage alignment with strategic goals. However, it does demand extensive data collection and analysis, and the complexity of its implementation and maintenance can pose significant challenges (Niven, 2016). Effective use of the Balanced Scorecard involves applying it as a comprehensive performance measurement tool that aligns operational activities with strategic objectives, ensuring a balanced approach to achieving success.

The Return on Assets (ROA) metric, defined as the net income divided by total assets, is another critical measure. It assesses a company's assets' profitability, providing insights into operational efficiency. ROA is beneficial for its clarity in measuring how efficiently a company uses its assets to generate earnings. It is also invaluable for comparing performance across different periods. However, ROA does have its shortcomings, including susceptibility to accounting practices and a failure to consider the quality of assets (Palepu *et al.*, 2016). Effectively leveraging ROA requires evaluating and enhancing the efficacious use of assets, thereby optimising profitability. Each of these metrics KPIs, Balanced Scorecard, and ROA plays a pivotal role in

evaluating a business's performance. When used effectively, they can offer comprehensive insights into operational efficiency, strategic alignment, and overall profitability.

2.5.3.7 Lean Management Metric

Lean management employs various metrics to enhance process efficiency and effectiveness, each with distinct advantages and drawbacks. One critical metric is Cycle Time, which encompasses the total duration from the start to the completion of a process, including processing time, waiting time, and any delays that occur. Monitoring cycle time is advantageous as it highlights areas where minimising waste is possible, improving process efficiency and streamlining operations. However, cycle time may fluctuate due to demand variability and requires precise data collection for accurate assessment (Dahlgaard *et al.*, 2020).

Value Stream Mapping is another pivotal metric in lean management, providing a visual representation of process steps to identify waste and opportunities for improvement. This method simplifies the identification of inefficiencies and facilitates process optimisation. While creating and maintaining value stream maps can be labour-intensive and require a detailed understanding of the process, the benefits of eliminating inefficiencies are substantial (Womack *et al.*, 2021). Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) is crucial for measuring equipment productivity based on availability, performance, and quality. It provides a comprehensive view of equipment efficiency, helping pinpoint areas for improvement in equipment usage and performance. Monitoring OEE requires accurate data on equipment usage and can be influenced by external variables (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2019). These metrics are integral to lean management, providing diverse perspectives for improving process efficiency, reducing waste, and enhancing organisational productivity.

2.5.3.8 Process Design Metrics

Several key metrics are essential for understanding and improving the efficiency and overall performance of organisational processes in Process Design. These metrics include Process Efficiency, Process Cycle Efficiency (PCE), and Benchmarking, each playing a crucial role in process management.

Starting with Process Efficiency, this metric is the ratio of value-added time to the total process time. It focuses on identifying the proportion of time spent on activities that add value, thus highlighting areas for process improvement and encouraging a focus on value-added activities (Dahlgaard *et al.*, 2020). However, accurate process time data is crucial for its practical use, and variability in process steps can impact its reliability. Regular assessment of process efficiency helps identify and eliminate non-value-added activities, enhancing overall process performance.

Process Cycle Efficiency (PCE) is another vital metric, defined as the ratio of value-added time to the total lead time of a process. It measures process efficiency by emphasising areas where lead time can be reduced (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2019). PCE provides a precise efficiency measure, helping to pinpoint process bottlenecks and delays. Like Process Efficiency, PCE requires accurate data on process times and influences by external factors. Monitoring PCE enables organisations to identify and address inefficiencies, improving process efficiency and performance.

Lastly, Benchmarking is crucial for comparing process performance against best-in-class standards or industry competitors. It helps identify performance gaps and opportunities for adopting best practices (Womack *et al.*, 2021). Benchmarking provides a benchmark against industry standards, facilitating continuous improvement initiatives. However, effective benchmarking requires access to accurate benchmark data and can be a resource-intensive process. Regular comparisons against benchmarks allow organisations to implement best practices, enhancing overall process performance and competitiveness. In conclusion, these metrics collectively form a framework for evaluating and improving the efficiency, performance, and

competitiveness of organisational processes, ensuring continuous improvement and operational excellence.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the intricacies inherent in in-service operations, characterised by simultaneous production and consumption, perishability, intangibility, and extensive customer interaction, demand customised management strategies. Organisations and businesses must navigate these complexities adeptly, recognising that traditional manufacturing principles alone are insufficient. Modified approaches are essential, encompassing a deep understanding of customer needs, flexibility in response to demand fluctuations, and an unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality service. While service operations may diverge from manufacturing in many aspects, they can still benefit from adopting certain principles. It involves optimising processes, standardising procedures, and implementing performance metrics to ensure efficiency, consistency, and scalability. By integrating these strategies, organisations and businesses can effectively meet the challenges of their industry while delivering exceptional customer experiences.

Integrating these operations management principles for goods-producing and service-rendering businesses or organisations can enhance efficiency, productivity, and overall performance. These operations management principles are critical in optimising processes, managing resources, and delivering value to customers, contributing to the organisation's long-term success. It also enables the business or organisation to effectively measure efficiency and effectiveness, as these principles, in their respective rights, can generate measurements or metrical measures to demonstrate efficiency and output levels.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the history of operations management, detailing various timeframes and articulating the different eras and their influences on the field. In this chapter, the eras, such as the Industrial Revolution, the Second Industrial Revolution, and the Post-industrial Revolution, are examined in terms of the different inventors and contributors to operations management. The chapter further outlined operations management trends, such as Lean Systems, Six Sigma, and business process reengineering. This chapter examines the various trends in operations management to provide context on the impact and value they add to the overall field of operations management.

This chapter provided an overview of the holistic approach to operations management, which included the distinction between manufacturing goods and services, the aspects of the operations management planning process, and elements such as project production management. This chapter further articulates the relevant elements that outline the difference between manufacturing and services, including tangibility, perishability, ownership, and simultaneous production and consumption.

This chapter provides a review of the principles of operations management that enable businesses to operate effectively. It includes principles such as Forecasting, which is the process of predicting future demand for an organisation's products or services, and capacity planning, which is a process undertaken by businesses or organisations to determine the production capacity needed to address the changing demands for their products and services.

The chapter also encompasses operations management principles, such as Inventory management. As an operations management principle, it refers to the process developed and adopted to oversee the ordering, storing, and use of a business or organisation's inventory. Quality management is the process that ensures an organisation's products or services are consistent and meet customer expectations based on quality standards set, as well as process design focused on developing efficient processes for producing goods and delivering services.

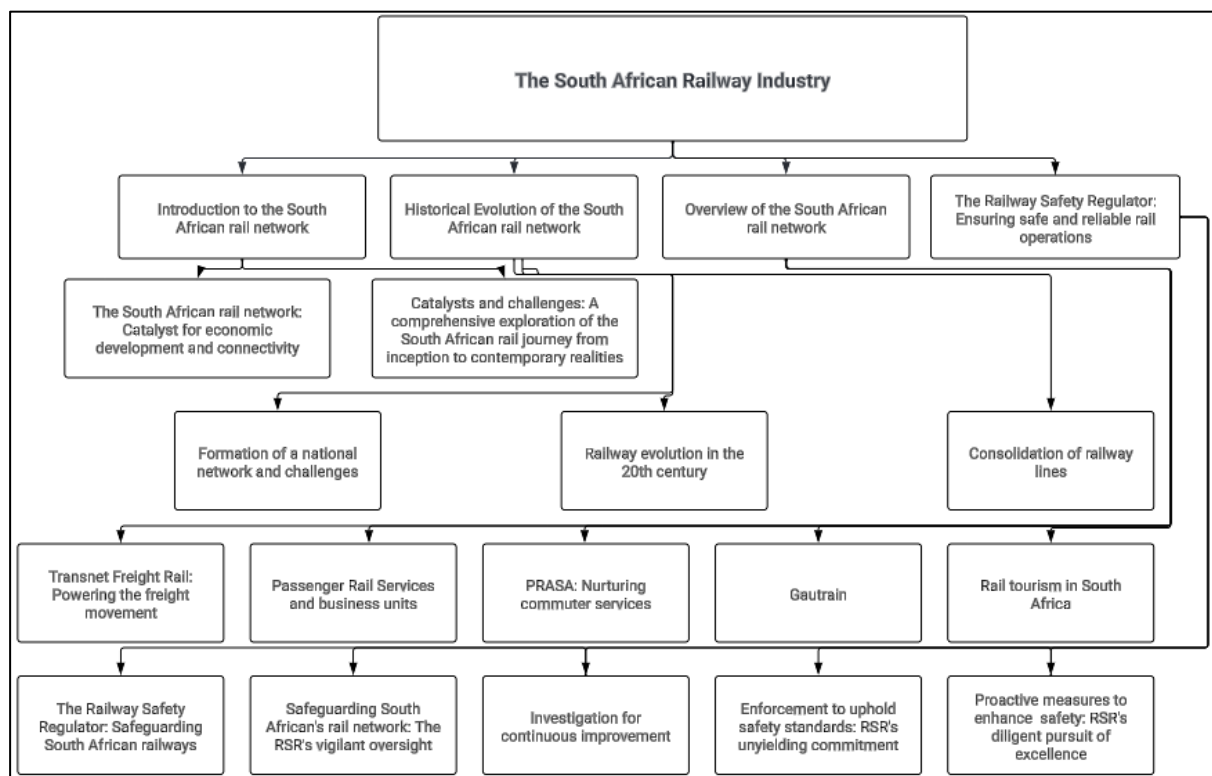
The chapter concludes with articulating key operations management principles such as supply chain management, which is one of the standard operations management principles that involves coordinating and integrating the flow of materials, information, and finances as they move from supplier to manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer to the consumer as well as performance measurement principle in operations management is that assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation.

Performance measurement as an operations management principle entails tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) such as production efficiency, defect rates, and on-time delivery based on effective measurement metrics.

3. CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW PART B: THE SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAY INDUSTRY

3.1 Introduction

Figure 3.1: Structure of Chapter 3



Chapter Three builds upon the foundation laid in the previous chapter, which meticulously traces the historical trajectory and key trends within operations management. The chapter embarks on a deeper exploration of the railway industry, a vital sector in transportation. While Chapter One provided a comprehensive overview of the research problem, Chapter Three shifts its focus to the railway sector, which plays a crucial role in global transportation networks.

The railway industry has undergone a significant historical evolution, with modern infrastructure development and diverse operations, all of which underscore its importance. From the early days of locomotives traversing scenic landscapes to the advent of high-speed rail systems in the 21st century, the railway industry has reflected

technological advancements and complex socio-economic connections. This chapter examines the various aspects of the railway sector, including the establishment of national networks, the persistent challenges faced, the transformative evolution in the 20th century, and a contemporary assessment of South Africa's rail landscape. Through the exploration of these topics, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the railway industry's past, present, and future, shedding light on its enduring role as a nation's lifeline and a catalyst for economic development.

3.2 The South African Rail Network

Rail transport is a cornerstone of South Africa's well-developed and extensive transport infrastructure, standing out as one of the most advanced on the African continent (Dehghan Shabani & Safaie, 2018b). Predominantly publicly owned, the rail network reflects significant government influence and has been subject to continuous modernisation and expansion efforts, aligning with the National Development Plan (NDP) and its integrated transport objectives. This commitment stems from recognising rail as a vital alternative mode of transport, crucial for alleviating challenges posed by high passenger and freight traffic on roads (Bouraima *et al.*, 2020).

Establishing a robust safety regulatory framework is central to achieving the NDP and rail policy objectives, emphasising the government's dedication to ensuring the sector's efficiency, safety, and sustainability. Recent reports highlight ongoing initiatives to upgrade rail technology and infrastructure, aligning with the growing demands of the economy and population. Investments in state-of-the-art technologies, such as digital signalling systems and advanced rolling stock, demonstrate South Africa's commitment to staying at the forefront of railway innovation, including the introduction of eco-friendly practices like electrification projects and the use of sustainable materials (Brenna *et al.*, 2018; Weiss *et al.*, 2015a). This further highlights the nation's commitment to environmentally conscious transportation.

The interconnectedness of major cities through rail promotes efficient transportation and significantly contributes to economic development. The comprehensive rail

connectivity in South Africa is a cornerstone for economic growth, providing a cost-effective and reliable means of transporting goods and people, ultimately contributing to the nation's development goals. Despite considerable success, South Africa's railway system faces challenges in maintenance, security, and the need for further expansion in certain regions (Bruno *et al.*, 2018c). Research has emphasised the importance of addressing these challenges for sustained growth by outlining potential strategies and investments to overcome existing issues, including increased public-private partnerships, enhanced security measures, and targeted infrastructure development in key regions.

In essence, South Africa's railway system stands as a testament to the country's commitment to efficient and inclusive transportation (Bouraima *et al.*, 2020; Dehghan Shabani & Safaie, 2018b). The government's involvement through its ongoing modernisation efforts by interconnecting rail networks positions it as a critical component in fostering economic development and connectivity within the region. As South Africa looks ahead, the focus remains on creating a sustainable and inclusive future for its rail industry, ensuring it continues to be a driving force for national progress.

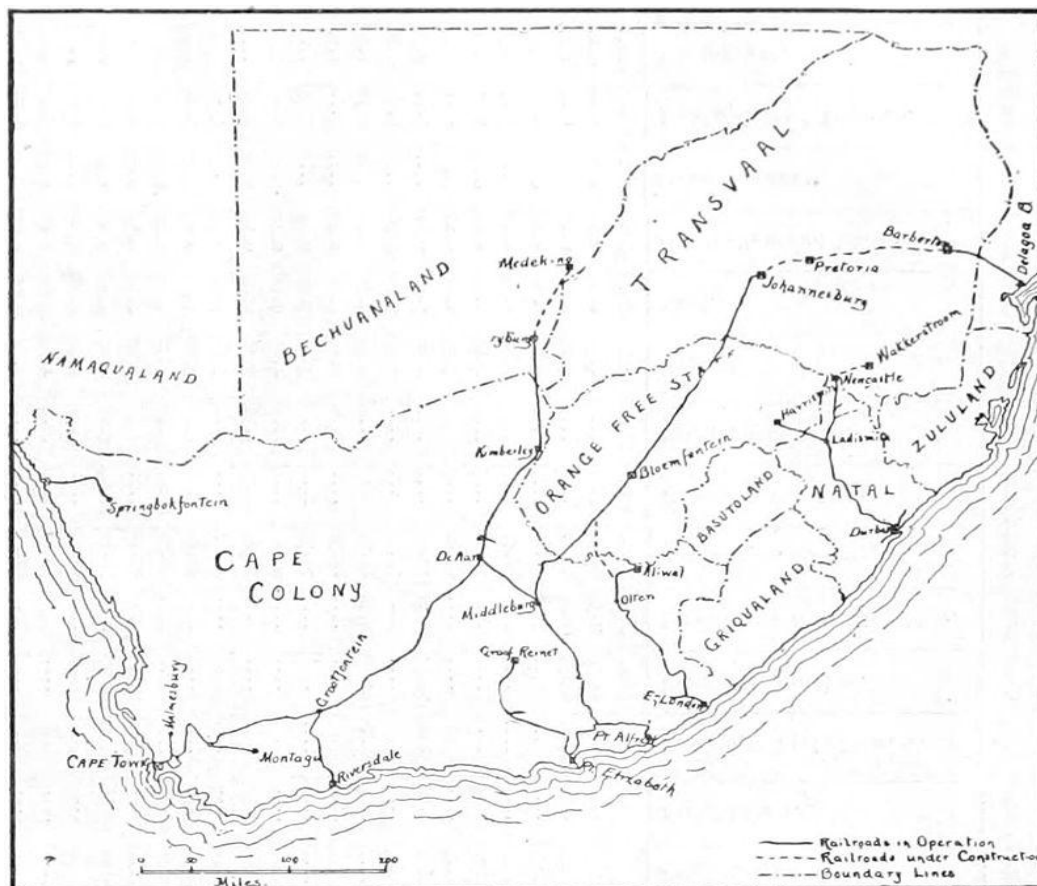
3.3 Historical Evolution of South Africa's Rail Network

South Africa's railway system began in 1859 with the construction of the Cape Town to Wellington line. It was through the inception of a small locomotive. The Natal Railway Company opened a 3.2-kilometre line from Durban to Harbour Point in 1860. At the same time, Cape Town started a 72-kilometre line to Wellington. Despite encountering delays, it inaugurated passenger service to the Eerste River in 1862 (Girouard, 1903; Jagger, 1905). In 1872, the establishment of the Cape Government Railways catalysed a massive expansion of the railway network. According to railway historians, this pivotal moment was the stage for the extensive growth and integration of South Africa's rail infrastructure (Havenga & Pienaar, 2012; Jagger, 1905).

In the independent South African Republic, the Netherlands-South African Railway Company (NZASM) constructed vital lines, as depicted in Figure 3.2, connecting

Pretoria to Lourenço Marques in the Portuguese East Africa Colony and a shorter line to Johannesburg.

Figure 3.2 Rail map of South Africa, 1892



Source: Girouard, 1903

Cecil Rhodes envisioned a grand Cape-Cairo railway uniting British territories. However, economic realities altered his plans, redirecting focus to mineral-rich areas like Southern Rhodesia and ultimately halting the dream of a continuous rail link from the "Cape to Cairo." Rhodes' strategic shifts emphasise economic considerations that impact railway expansion in Southern Africa (Girouard, 1903).

3.3.1 Formation of a National Network and Challenges

By the late 19th century, South Africa's railway system had undergone a significant transformation. These efforts culminated in 1898 when a national "link-up" was successfully established, marking a significant milestone in the country's transportation history. This ambitious undertaking aimed to create a comprehensive and interconnected rail network, a feat largely completed by 1910. The completion of the national network facilitated domestic travel and played a crucial role in promoting economic activities and regional integration (McKay *et al.*, 2017; Pirie, 1987). The visionary railway expansion extended northward, reaching as far as Northern Rhodesia, which is present-day Zambia. This extension accentuated the ambition to connect diverse regions, fostering economic ties and resource accessibility. However, despite successfully creating an extensive national network and the northern extension, Cecil Rhodes's grand vision of establishing a continuous rail line from the "Cape to Cairo" remained elusive.

The realisation of Rhodes' grand vision faced numerous challenges, marked by the involved interplay of geopolitical factors and economic constraints that presented formidable obstacles. Territorial disputes and diplomatic complexities, constituting significant geopolitical challenges, added complex layers of difficulty to implementing this expansive project (Pirie, 1987). Despite the notable accomplishment of establishing a national network, the ambitious dream of a seamless rail line spanning from the 'Cape to Cairo' was impeded by the convergence of geopolitical intricacies and economic realities.

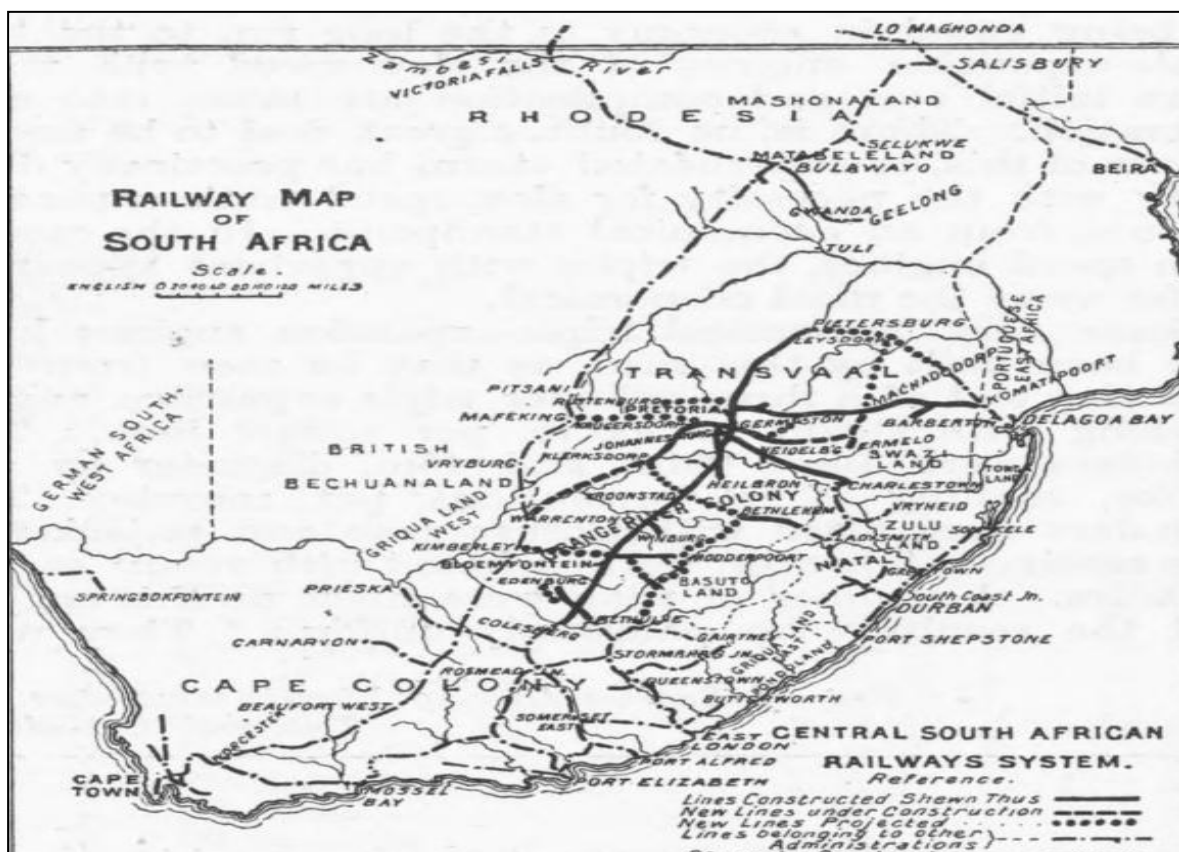
The sheer magnitude of such an undertaking, along with changing political landscapes, posed formidable challenges that ultimately restrained Rhodes' ambitious dream. The narrative of the national "link-up" and subsequent challenges is a testament to the complex relationship between ambition and reality in railway development. While the grand Cape-Cairo railway remained unrealised, establishing a national network laid the foundation for subsequent endeavours, leaving a lasting legacy in South Africa's rail transport history. The lessons learned from the challenges

faced during this period continue to inform contemporary discussions on the expansion and management of rail infrastructure.

3.3.2 Railway Evolution in the 20th Century

The 20th century began a transformative era for South Africa's railway system, characterised by significant organisational restructuring and technological innovations. Following the establishment of the modern state in 1910, the consolidation of railway lines under the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR & H) aimed to create a more streamlined and efficient national rail network. Concurrently, electrification in the 1920s revolutionised locomotive power sources, setting the stage for more sustainable and advanced railway infrastructure (Mitchell, 2014; Pirie, 1987).

Figure 3.3 Rail map of South Africa (1906)



The University of Michigan, 1906

Central to this evolution was the Colenso Power Station, a cornerstone in electrifying the Glencoe to Pietermaritzburg route. This electrification initiative improved the speed and reliability of train services, marking a commitment to modernising transportation methods. The 20th-century railway evolution remains a testament to South Africa's dedication to staying abreast of technological advancements, shaping a more efficient and sustainable future for the nation's rail transport (Mitchell, 2014; Parida, 2014). This brief exploration sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the organisational and technological shifts that defined this critical period in South Africa's railway history.

3.3.3 Consolidation of Railway Lines

A significant transformation occurred in the wake of the establishment of the modern state of South Africa in 1910. It saw the amalgamation of the railway lines spanning the country under the banner of the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR & H). This consolidation aimed to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, and create a more unified and coordinated approach to rail transportation on a national scale.

One of the pivotal advancements during this period was the introduction of electrification to the railway infrastructure. In the 1920s, South Africa initiated an ambitious electrification program, marking a significant shift in the power sources for locomotives (Katzenellenbogen, 1982). The electrification efforts aimed to improve operational efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and address the challenges associated with traditional steam-powered engines. A significant milestone in this electrification initiative was the construction of the Colenso Power Station. This power station played a crucial role in electrifying the Glencoe to Pietermaritzburg route, showcasing the commitment to modernising the rail system. The electrification of critical routes increased the speed and reliability of train services, representing a forward-looking approach to sustainable and efficient transportation.

The electrification milestone of the South African railway system in the 1920s is extensively documented, providing a comprehensive historical account of South Africa's railway electrification projects. The documented history examined the

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technical, economic, and strategic aspects of the electrification process, offering valuable insights into the motivations and challenges faced during this transformative phase (Pirie, 1987). The electrification of railway lines in the 20th century had a profound impact on the operational dynamics of the South African Railways. It enhanced the speed and reliability of train services while reducing the environmental pollution associated with traditional steam-powered locomotives.

This period of railway evolution in the 20th century, marked by organisational consolidation and electrification initiatives, has demonstrated South Africa's commitment to staying at the forefront of technological advancements in rail transport within the continent. Through the documented history and records, the intricacies of electrification projects and their enduring impact on the nation's railway infrastructure are well-articulated as part of the country's rail history.

3.3.4 Historical Evolution and Early Rail Development in South Africa

The inception of railways in South Africa is traceable back to the mid-18th century. Initial developments surrounded Cape Town and extended to Durban around the 1840s (Girouard, 1903; Jagger, 1905). The first railway line opened on June 27, 1850, primarily serving the agricultural production area between Cape Town and Wellington (Girouard, 1903). The discovery of gold deposits in the Transvaal Republic fuelled ambitious railway projects. The Cape Colony Government, supported by the British Government, aimed to link Kimberley swiftly to Cape Town. This initiative is formally rooted in the concept of the colonial dream and the strategic importance of connecting key regions.

3.3.4.1 Central South African Railways (CSAR)

Between 1902 and 1910, the Central South African Railways (CSAR) operated public railways in the Transvaal Colony and the Orange River Colony. In the present day, it

is what has come to be known as South Africa. The CSAR played a crucial role during the Anglo-Boer War when it took over existing railway entities like the Orange Free State Government Railways and the Pretoria-Pietersburg Railway (Girouard, 1903).

3.3.4.2 Formation of the South African Railways (SAR)

After the Anglo-Boer War, the Imperial Military Railways, which had taken control during the conflict, transformed into the Central South African Railways. In 1910, with the creation of the Union of South Africa, the CSAR merged with the Cape Government Railways and the Natal Government Railways to form the South African Railways (SAR). This historical consolidation laid the groundwork for what is now known as Transnet Freight Rail (Pyrgidis, 2021).

3.4 Overview of South Africa's Rail Network

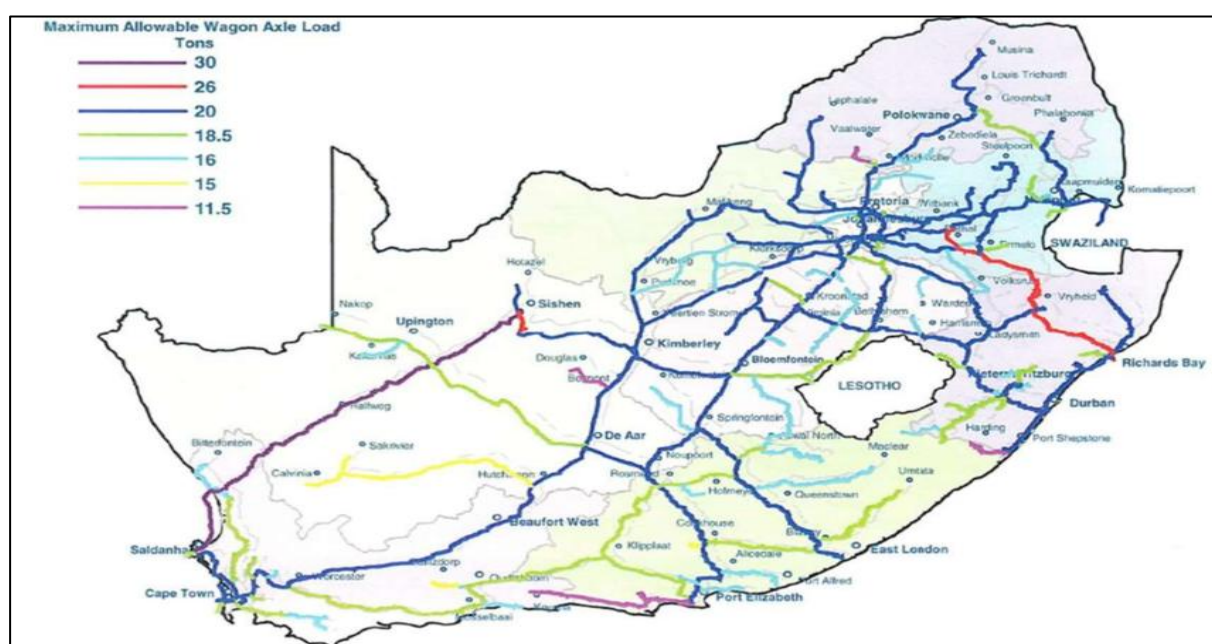
The rail network in South Africa is a critical artery in the nation's transportation infrastructure. It seamlessly connects urban centres and their people while facilitating the movement of goods across the country. This complex web of railways operates through two critical state-owned entities: Transnet Freight Rail (TFR), primarily a goods carrier, and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), which oversees regional commuter and long-distance passenger services.

3.4.1 TFR - Powering the Freight Movement

TFR is a crucial player in South Africa's transportation landscape as it is the largest division within Transnet. Transnet remains a state-owned company, owned by the Government of the Republic of South Africa. Transnet functions as the custodian of rail, ports, and pipelines. TFR, as the freight rail operator, plays a pivotal role in steering the freight movement across the country (Ngepah *et al.*, 2023).

As the primary operator of freight services, TFR is responsible for efficiently transporting goods within and beyond South Africa's borders. Considering the extensive rail network operated by this entity, TFR contributes significantly to the movement of a diverse range of commodities, including minerals, agricultural products, and manufactured goods (Havenga *et al.*, 2023). The operations of TFR are entrenched in South Africa's economy, ensuring the reliable and timely delivery of goods to various destinations, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Transnet Railway Network



Toth, 2022

TFR is a South African state-owned entity that strategically supports the country's economic growth and development agenda. As a government-owned company, TFR's operations align with national interests and economic objectives. It efficiently manages and transports freight, contributing to the country's economic growth and development.

3.4.2 TFR Operations

TFR has evolved into a multifaceted freight logistics and passenger transport railway. Africa's most significant freight haulier comprises several integral businesses that contribute immensely to the country's economy through their respective operations. TFR businesses include general freight, coal line, ore export line, luxury passenger rail, agriculture, bulk liquids, intermodal, and automotive businesses, as well as iron ore and manganese businesses, mineral mining, and chrome businesses, as well as steel and cement businesses Mathabatha, 2015; Mitchell, 2014).

General Freight Business (GFB) Commercial

The operations of TFR have the GFB Commercial standing as the largest division within the entire state-owned entity (Bouraima *et al.*, 2023; Parida, 2014). This area of their business plays a pivotal role in the efficient movement of freight across South Africa. Its significance lies in its responsibility for handling over 50% of Transnet's overall freight operations. Some of its essential functions include overseeing a diverse freight portfolio and handling a wide range of goods and commodities critical to the South African economy.

As a strategic network management role play, GFB has to ensure timely and efficient delivery to various destinations (Bouraima *et al.*, 2023). GFB, as a business, serves as a collaborative logistics solution for various industries by providing modified logistics solutions that address the unique transportation needs of different sectors.

Another essential function of GFB is serving as the most efficient and reliable role player within logistics. It emphasises this through its operational efficiency and reliability, and contributes to the overall effectiveness of TFR freight services.

Coal Line

The other critical business role payer within TFR is the coal line. It is a crucial component of TFR operations, dedicated explicitly to transporting coal. The coal line

operates on the Mpumalanga, Richards Bay railway line, the second-largest coal railway in the world, considering its immense significance in the coal transport sector.

The coal line has distinctive features and functions, which include playing a significant role as a global coal transport hub, as it serves as a central global hub for transporting coal through the channel connecting the coal-rich region of Mpumalanga to the export facilities at Richards Bay (Havenga & Pienaar, 2012; McKay *et al.*, 2017). Given the significance of the operations and the high volume transported through this line, its efficiency and capacity must also be known. The coal line handles substantial volumes of coal, which significantly contribute to South Africa's export capabilities and capacity as an active economic citizen globally. The coal line is also a strategic business linkage, connecting key coal-producing areas to export terminals. The coal line plays a vital strategic role in facilitating the export of South Africa's abundant coal resources to international markets.

Ore Export Line

The ore line is one of the critical business areas that TFR manages. This line is primarily for the transportation of iron ore. The ore export line is a specialised division within TFR that operates on the Sishen to Saldanha line. It is critical as it facilitates the export of iron ore from the mining region to the port for shipment abroad (Havenga *et al.*, 2023). The ore export line is an iron ore export facility designed to efficiently transport iron ore from the Sishen mines to the Saldanha port, a crucial route for exporting this valuable mineral. The ore line business or division focuses on logistical optimisation by ensuring that the transportation process is streamlined and cost-effective, with the primary objective of supporting the competitiveness of South Africa's iron ore exports.

Luxury Passenger Rail

Although TFR is a freight mover operating within the South African context, it is also responsible for one of the most luxurious passenger trains, known as the Blue Train. This opulent five-star hotel, situated on moving rail tracks, adds a touch of luxury and exclusivity to rail travel in South Africa. The Blue Train offers a premium rail travel

experience, providing passengers with an unparalleled journey(Christie, 2024). This magnificent passenger train is renowned for its luxurious interiors, exquisite dining, and breathtaking scenic journeys.

As a passenger train operation that extends beyond tourism and hospitality, the Blue Train is a luxurious endeavour that further contributes to the tourism and hospitality sectors by offering a unique and upscale travel option, attracting discerning travellers who seek to experience a refined and elegant journey across South Africa (Lutter, 2000). Given its luxurious status and popularity, the Blue Train has attained global recognition as one of the most luxurious trains, contributing to South Africa's profile as a premier destination for high-end rail tourism.

Agriculture and Bulk Liquids (ABL)

One of the other significant functioning units with TFR is the Agriculture and Bulk Liquids (ABL) business unit, which is central in transporting bulk liquids and agricultural products. This critical function contributes to the agricultural supply chain and the movement of essential commodities (Ngepah *et al.*, 2023). ABL within TFR specialises in the safe and efficient transportation of bulk liquids, which industries that rely on the movement of liquid goods require. The unit is also pivotal in facilitating the transportation of agricultural products, including grains and other commodities, thereby supporting the distribution needs of the agricultural sector.

As an operational role player in TFR and the country's overall economic activities, ABL contributes to integrating the agricultural supply chain, ensuring the timely and reliable delivery of bulk liquids and agricultural goods.

Intermodal and Automotive Business Unit

The Intermodal and Automotive Business Unit within the TFR operation primarily focuses on container and automotive transportation. This unit plays a crucial role in facilitating intermodal logistics and the movement of automotive products (Havenga *et al.*, 2023). The container transportation wing manages the transportation of containers by facilitating the seamless movement of goods between different modes of transport.

On the other hand, the automotive logistics wing specialises in transporting automotive products, ensuring the efficient distribution of vehicles and related components. The container and automotive units operate on the Johannesburg-Durban line and are vital in the transportation corridor between these two major economic hubs.

Iron Ore and Manganese Business Unit

The iron ore and manganese business units manage the transportation of iron ore and manganese. The key performance area for this unit is supporting the mining and export activities associated with these valuable resources (Mathabatha, 2015; Mitchell, 2014). This key performance area aims to facilitate the effective and efficient movement of iron ore from mining sites, such as those in Kimberley, to export terminals, thereby contributing to South Africa's global iron ore exports.

This efficiency is also applicable in manganese logistics, wherein the transportation of manganese is undertaken through the unit to support the mining and export operations related to this crucial industrial mineral. The iron ore and manganese operations are located on the Kimberley-Port Elizabeth line, and the unit operates strategically to connect the mining regions to export ports.

Mineral Mining and Chrome Business Unit (MMC)

Mineral Mining and Chrome (MMC) specialise in the transportation of minerals, notably chrome, and is instrumental in supporting the mining industry's logistical needs. The MMC unit is responsible for managing the transportation of minerals, playing a vital role in the movement of chrome and other mineral commodities (Ngepah *et al.*, 2023). This operation is effective on the Witbank-Komatipoort and Phalaborwa-Komatipoort lines. These lines connect mining sites to export terminals, contributing to the efficient export of mineral resources.

Steel and Cement Business Unit (SAC)

The steel and cement (SAC) business unit is strategically and actively involved in transporting steel and cement products. This operation is responsible for supporting

the construction and manufacturing sectors. The steel transportation aspect of the operations facilitates the movement of steel products, which significantly contributes to the supply chain effectiveness of the construction and manufacturing industries and has a valuable impact on the overall growth and sustainability of the economy. The cement logistics wing of the operation is responsible for the efficient transportation of cement, ensuring the timely delivery of this essential construction material (Havenga *et al.*, 2023; Mathabatha, 2015).

The historical evolution of TFR reflects the development of South Africa's railways, driven by economic imperatives, resource discoveries, and the overarching goal of creating a comprehensive and efficient transportation network (Mitchell, 2014; Parida, 2014). While TFR has transitioned passenger rail services to other entities, its diverse business units continue to be instrumental in supporting various industries through the efficient transportation of goods, thereby contributing to South Africa's economic growth and connectivity.

In summary, TFR has several significant divisions and business units deemed imperative for the successful operation of the state-owned enterprise. These highly specialised divisions within TFR include GFB Commercial, the Coal Line, the Ore Export Line, Luxury Passenger Rail, Agriculture and Bulk Liquids, Intermodal and Automotive, the Iron Ore and Manganese Business Unit, Mineral Mining, and Chrome, Steel, and Cement.

Each of these operations or units plays a distinctive and critical role in the broader spectrum of freight services in the South African context. They contribute to the efficiency, economic vitality, and global connectivity of South Africa's railway system, as well as to the country's overall participation in global economic activities. The contribution made by the blue train from a tourism perspective is valuable to the economy, as it attracts many tourists who want to experience the country from a rail perspective.

3.4.3 PRASA - Nurturing Commuter Services

On the commuter front, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) assumes a central role in overseeing passenger services, catering to the needs of both urban and long-distance travellers. PRASA's urban commuter services consist of Metrorail, which operates in key provinces such as Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape. Metrorail is a lifeline for millions of South African commuters, providing daily transportation to work, school, and various destinations within urban centres (Bouraima *et al.*, 2023; Mitchell, 2014; Parida, 2014).

This passenger rail operation has historically managed services such as Shosholoza Meyl. Shosholoza Meyl, a long-distance passenger rail service, is a significant player in connecting major metropolitan areas across South Africa, including Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and East London. This service offered an essential transportation link for passengers traversing substantial distances within the country.

Historical Evolution

The purview of the railway sector indicates that the roots of PRASA trace back to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1901 (Jagger, 1905). The period above marks a significant moment when all railway services in the country merged into the South African Railways and Harbours and later rebranded as the South African Transport Services. Subsequently, the restructuring of the amalgamation occurred in 1990 when Transnet took over most operations from the South African Transport Services (Makaepea, 2017; Ngepah *et al.*, 2023).

The operations aspect focused on commuter rail, which transitioned to the newly established South African Rail Commuter Corporation (SARCC). The newly established SARCC also consisted of Metrorail, which initially operated as a Spoornet unit. At the time, Spoornet was Transnet's rail subsidiary. The evolution continued, leading to Metrorail becoming a separate business unit of Transnet in 1996. At the time, Metrorail was responsible for managing commuter rail services.

Integration and Formation of PRASA

Recognising the challenges brought about by the separation of ownership between SARCC and Transnet, the South African Cabinet of the day decided to integrate the state-run passenger rail and the state-owned bus services in 2004. It culminated in Metrorail transitioning to SARCC in 2006, unifying the responsibility for commuter rail. The manifestation of this process occurred on 23 December 2008, when SARCC was renamed the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Makaepea, 2017).

In the subsequent months, various assets, including those of Metrorail, Shosholoza Meyl, Autopax, and Intersite Property Management Services, were consolidated under PRASA. The official launch of PRASA took place in March 2009, marking the beginning of a new era in integrated passenger rail services.

Diverse Divisions of PRASA

PRASA, over the years following its establishment, has operated through four distinct branches. Each of the four branches serves specific facets of passenger transportation within South Africa. Notably, rail has always been the largest of the four transportation facets. Below is a diagrammatic representation (Figure 4.5) of the distinction of the various facets of PRASA:

Figure 3.5: Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA)



Urban Commuter Excellence

Metrorail, as a commuter rail operation, stands as the urban commuter backbone of PRASA. It operates vital rail services in urban areas across South Africa, with an extensive network covering provinces such as Gauteng, the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape. Metrorail plays a crucial role in daily commuting for millions of South Africans (Pyrgidis, 2021). The fundamental objective of Metrorail is to serve as an urban connectivity conduit, focusing on connecting urban centres through the effective and efficient facilitation of residents' daily commutes to work, schools, and various destinations within cities. However, it is paramount that Metrorail's operations are in good standing, which requires consistent frequency and reliability.

Metrorail, as an operator of the passenger rail, must first recognise the importance of punctuality. Secondly, they must maintain a reliable schedule to ensure passengers' daily commuting efficiency (Mathabatha, 2015). The heartbeat of Metrorail lies in its role as a lifeline for urban communities by providing them with an affordable, accessible, and integral mode of transportation that underpins the daily lives of countless South Africans.

Bridging Regions and Distances

The other critical passenger transportation platform from PRASA is the long-distance trains, also known as the Shosholoza Meyl, which operate as a critical division of PRASA. These operations purely specialise in regional and inter-city rail services. This faction of the passenger rail operations division plays a pivotal role in connecting different regions of South Africa, facilitating both regional travel and long-distance journeys (Mitchell, 2014). Shosholoza Meyl primarily focuses on regional connectivity by ensuring seamless connectivity between cities and regions, fostering economic and social ties across the country.

It is through tapping into the long-distance travel required by commuters (McKay *et al.*, 2017). By catering to passengers' needs, Shosholoza Meyl aims to cover substantial distances and offer a comfortable and efficient mode of long-distance rail travel. Its role is more than providing long-distance transport; it also serves as the glue that links diverse regions and contributes to the accessibility and integration of South Africa's vast landscape.

Inter-City Coach Services

The division under PRASA, which manages regional and inter-city coach services, is Autopax. This branch extends the reach of PRASA's transportation services, providing comfortable and efficient land-based travel options. To a large extent, Autopax is integrated into the rail facet of PRASA, as buses are, in certain instances, used to augment or aid where trains are insufficient or lack capacity (McKay *et al.*, 2017).

The primary function of Autopax is to ensure and promote connections between various regions and cities through a network of inter-city coaches, offering passengers an alternative and comfortable means of transportation while linking with the railway aspect of the business (Bruno *et al.*, 2018c).

Considering that Autopax relies on South Africa's extensive road network, it is evident that it can manage routes that cover significant distances, ensuring connectivity between urban centres and regions. Autopax plays a critical role in diversifying transportation options by offering passengers a comfortable and reliable choice for land-based travel, while complementing rail services by providing Metrorail and Shosholoza Meyl with support and facilitating passenger movement into the rail system.

Managing Property and Infrastructure

PRASA Cres is a sub-function of PRASA that represents the branch responsible for managing the properties owned by PRASA. This division oversees the organisation's infrastructure and real estate (Bruno *et al.*, 2018c; Weiss *et al.*, 2015b). The business's

property management involves managing PRASA's properties, including stations, surrounding land, and other infrastructure assets.

PRASA Cres is also strategically involved in infrastructure development, overseeing the planning and development of infrastructure projects to ensure that PRASA's properties align with the organisation's strategic goals. This function holds strategic significance in optimising the utilisation of PRASA's real estate assets and contributing to the organisation's overall efficiency and effectiveness.

PRASA's Strategic Priorities

From a strategic point of view, PRASA has reimagined its priorities, emphasising the improvement and expansion of urban commuter services. This strategic direction focuses more on urban transportation. PRASA aims to create a reliable and efficient network that meets the daily travel requirements of millions of South Africans.

This shift in focus aligns with the organisation's dedication to safety and responsiveness to the population's evolving needs. While the challenges in the long-distance domain have prompted a re-evaluation of safety measures, PRASA continues to explore avenues for future enhancements (Mathabatha, 2015; Ngepah *et al.*, 2023). The commitment to commuter services reflects PRASA's vision for a resilient and effective rail network that not only addresses safety concerns but also contributes significantly to the accessibility and connectivity of South African communities.

At the start of the 2021/2022 financial year, PRASA unveiled an ambitious plan to enhance its services with a substantial investment of R97 billion. This transformative approach aimed to replace rolling stock and procure 6600 new trains. The plan aligned with the modernisation strategy adopted by PRASA, which included improving its fleet, improving service quality, and meeting the evolving needs of South African commuters (Mathabatha, 2015).

Despite their historical significance, long-distance rail services faced considerable challenges, with safety concerns emerging as a predominant issue. Like many others, the railway industry faces the critical need to maintain safety standards and ensure the

well-being of its passengers. Incidents, such as the tragic train collision near Horizon View west of Johannesburg in February 2020, highlighted the urgency of addressing safety concerns within long-distance rail operations.

The Railway Safety Regulator suspended all Shosholoza Meyl train operations indefinitely in response to the safety challenges and the imperative to ensure passenger well-being following the Horizon View incident. This suspension reflects a commitment to reevaluating and fortifying safety protocols before resuming long-distance passenger services (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023).

Despite the challenges and the suspension of long-distance operations, PRASA remains steadfast in its commitment to providing comprehensive transportation solutions for the South African population. Recognising the diverse transportation needs of the people, PRASA focuses on enhancing and expanding its commuter services (Dehghan Shabani & Safaie, 2018a). PRASA is a comprehensive entity, weaving together a rich tapestry of historical evolution, strategic integration, and ambitious plans. They are committing to enhancing passenger services and modernising infrastructure, positioning PRASA as a central player in South Africa's dynamic transportation landscape.

In summary, PRASA's operations were integrated following its establishment as a juristic person. It has various sub-functions, ranging from actual rail operations to bus services and property management, which collectively work towards providing services to the population.

3.4.4 Gautrain

In 2010, the Gauteng government unveiled the first high-speed rail project in Southern Africa, the Gautrain. This express commuter rail system spans 80 kilometres and connects major urban centres like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Kempton Park, and OR. Tambo International Airport. The Gautrain enhances regional connectivity, making commuter travel more efficient than other passenger rail services (Arnold *et al.*, 2017).

The Gautrain offers a quick journey from Sandton to O. R. Tambo International Airport, taking just under 15 minutes. The train provides a comfortable and speedy commute for passengers travelling from Pretoria to Johannesburg, which takes only 35 minutes. The efficiency and speed of the Gautrain make it a convenient and accessible travel route (Fombad, 2015).

The Gautrain network consists of ten stations strategically located in Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, and Johannesburg. This comprehensive transport solution caters to both daily commuters and travellers. The Gautrain operations are a well-coordinated infrastructure of buses, shuttles, and minibus services that ensure seamless connectivity to and from all stations, except for the OR. Tambo International Airport Station (Arnold *et al.*, 2017; Fombad, 2015; Makaepa, 2017).

In addition to reducing travel time, Gautrain's modern and efficient design provides a comfortable and reliable mode of transportation for commuters across Gauteng. As a crucial component of the region's transportation landscape, the Gautrain plays a significant role in enhancing mobility, fostering economic connectivity, and contributing to the overall development of Gauteng's urban centres.

Background and Implementation of Gautrain

During the initial stages of the project, the Gautrain was a strategic initiative aimed at creating an integrated and innovative public transportation system. This system not only meets current mobility needs but also promotes long-term, sustainable economic growth in Gauteng, South Africa's economic hub. The project aligns with a broader vision for the modernisation and industrialisation of the region, including a commitment to improving public transport efficiency and uses (Fombad, 2015).

The Gautrain project operates as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and adheres to Treasury Regulation 16 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). The Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) is the public partner and the primary driving force behind the project. The Bombela Concession Company (Pty) Ltd (BCC) acts as the private partner and holds a 19½-year concession for the comprehensive scope of the Gautrain

project. It includes the design, construction, financing, operation, and maintenance (Arnold *et al.*, 2017).

The Concessionaire, Bombela Concession Company (BOC), is responsible for various aspects of the project as outlined in the concession agreement. The agreement covers the design, construction, and partial financing of the Gautrain infrastructure (Arnold *et al.*, 2017). The concession extends beyond construction to include the train and bus operations, safety measures, station management, revenue collection, marketing strategies, and passenger communication.

Operational Excellence and Ownership Structure

The Bombela Concession Company (Pty) Ltd has substantial responsibilities outlined in the concession agreement and plays a pivotal role in managing and maintaining all system assets within the Gautrain project. The company adheres to international best practices and has a robust corporate governance regime to ensure the entire transportation system's longevity, efficiency, and safety. BOC operates as a private and ring-fenced entity, allowing focused attention on the specific requirements of the Gautrain project (Arnold *et al.*, 2017).

This organisational structure contributes to streamlined decision-making and operational efficiency. Murray & Roberts, a listed construction company on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, is a significant stakeholder who brings a wealth of experience to the project. Their global reach spans Southern Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Australasia, and North and South America, showcasing a robust international presence (Van Der Westhuizen, 2007).

SPG Concessions represents Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) partners in the operations. SPG Concessions adds a crucial dimension to the ownership structure as it is involved in various sub-contracts, which stresses a commitment to inclusivity and empowerment within the framework of the Concessionaire. The J&J Group, a South African broad-based investment holding and management company, plays a vital role in the diverse ownership landscape. Their contributions align with the overarching goals of creating a balanced and

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representative ownership structure within the Gautrain project (Fombad, 2015). BOC upholds a robust corporate governance regime, ensuring its operations are transparent, accountable, and ethically sound. This commitment fosters trust among stakeholders and maintains the integrity of the Gautrain project.

The collaboration with Murray & Roberts brings in-depth expertise in construction and global infrastructure development. This strategic partnership enables BOC to leverage international best practices, incorporating cutting-edge solutions in the Gautrain system's design, construction, and operation (Fombad, 2015). The inclusion of SPG Concessions in the project aligns with the principles of BBBEE, promoting inclusivity and economic transformation. This commitment reflects legal requirements and a dedication to positively impacting local communities. The involvement of J&J Group signifies a commitment to a diverse investment portfolio. Their participation contributes to a well-rounded and resilient ownership structure for the Bombela Concession Company.

The Bombela Concession Company (Pty) Ltd is a dynamic and capable entity with robust corporate governance, global partnerships, and a diverse ownership structure comprising Murray & Roberts, SPG Concessions, and J&J Group. This collective effort underlines the commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and sustainable development within the Gautrain project. This partnership and ownership structure highlights the collaborative efforts and expertise pooled from the public and private sectors, underpinning the Gautrain project's multifaceted approach towards achieving sustainable economic growth and modernising the transportation landscape in Gauteng.

3.4.5 Exploring Rail Tourism in South Africa

South Africa's rail network is vital to its transportation infrastructure and a gateway to unparalleled travel experiences. Rail tourism in the country has gained significance by providing a unique perspective on its diverse landscapes. From the Karoo's arid expanses to the Western Cape's vibrant vineyards, exploring rail tourism looking into

the world of rail tourism in South Africa. Luxury meets panoramic views here, and travellers embark on unforgettable journeys through some of the nation's most captivating regions. The luxury tourism rail sector includes key players such as Rovos Rail, Shongololo Express, and the Blue Train.

Rovos Rail

Rovos Rail is a luxurious train service offering scenic journeys from Pretoria to Cape Town. It is known for its vintage-inspired decor, exquisite cuisine, and observation cars providing panoramic landscape views. The train is in Pretoria's historic Capital Park Station and has been privately owned by the Vos family since its establishment in 1989 (Lutter, 2000). The train features Rhodesia Railways coaches that have been meticulously restored and equipped with modern amenities. The train has two lounges, two restaurant cars, and private sleeping compartments in three tiers of accommodation: Pullman, Deluxe Suite, and Royal Suite. Each compartment has an en-suite bathroom with a shower, sink, and toilet. The Royal Suite is the most spacious, occupying half of a train car and featuring a Victorian-style bathtub.

Apart from the luxurious travel experience, Rovos Rail is also committed to preserving the heritage of rail travel (Christie, 2024). The company has 434 dedicated employees, including skilled artisans who restore the carriages at the Capital Park depot. The company's commitment to tradition and contemporary comfort makes it a unique and unforgettable passenger experience. Rovos Rail is not just a mode of transportation but a journey into a bygone era where luxury knows no bounds.

The Shongololo Express

In 2016, Rovos Rail expanded its portfolio by acquiring the Shongololo Express train. It was a significant move for the tourism rail industry and economic growth. The decision to retain the existing staff emphasised the commitment to preserving the essence of the Shongololo Express experience. The coaches were transformed and adorned in vibrant green and cream colours, while introducing new dining and observation cars elevates customer satisfaction. From the very beginning of the journey, the Shongololo Express strives to create a memorable and enchanting

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experience for its guests. The warm welcome sets the tone for an unparalleled adventure with thrilling tours, diverse landscapes, and exquisite culinary offerings. The train delivers delightful breakfasts and dinners, complementing the finest South African wines. The ambience aims to transport guests to an 'out of this world' realm, ensuring an immersive and unforgettable sojourn (Borda-de-Água *et al.*, 2017; Pyrgidis, 2021).

The Shongololo Express has a stellar reputation for its unwavering commitment to exceptional service and meticulous attention to detail. The seamless and safe train operation at night maximises travellers' vacation time by unveiling new destinations each morning. Experienced multilingual guides enhance the journey with insightful excursions, emphasising destinations and expeditions while maintaining the ease, style, and convenience of the train experience. The Shongololo Express embarks on six captivating routes, spanning 12 to 15 days, exploring the diverse landscapes of Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa. Beginning in Pretoria and concluding in Namibia, this extraordinary trip unfolds a tapestry of Southern African wonders. With its compelling beauty and vast landscapes, Namibia has become a focal point, offering travellers a rich blend of culture, tradition, and untamed wilderness (Rehman Khan *et al.*, 2017).

The journey includes stops at iconic locations, such as Kimberley's Big Hole and Diamond Mine Museum, the Sossusvlei Lodge, Windhoek for a city tour, and an overnight stay at the Etosha National Park for game-viewing activities, concluding in Swakopmund. The train offers various accommodations, with the Emerald and Gold Suites as the most spacious and luxurious. These well-appointed suites feature lounge areas and en-suite bathrooms, ensuring a comfortable retreat throughout the journey.

The Blue Train

The Blue Train is an acclaimed train renowned for its luxurious amenities and services, and it epitomises the ultimate in rail travel in South Africa. The train offers traversing routes that connect major cities like Pretoria and Cape Town, where passengers enjoy opulent suites, gourmet dining, and personalised service that defines sophistication. The Blue Train is an iconic symbol of luxury in South Africa's rail domain, operated by

Transnet Freight Rail. It represents a unique fusion of elegance and functionality within freight rail operations (Lutter, 2000).

The Blue Train is renowned for its exceptional standards of luxury, and its reputation is a testament to its unwavering commitment to providing an unparalleled travel experience. For a decade, spanning from 2010 to 2019, The Blue Train was recognised as the most luxurious train in Africa. This prolonged acknowledgement is a testament to its sustained legacy. The Blue Train has been honoured three times at the prestigious World Travel Awards as the world's most luxurious train, elevating its global stature (Christie, 2024).

Beyond being a mode of transportation, the Blue Train is a captivating tourist attraction. Several travel enthusiasts and connoisseurs flock to experience its lavish interiors, impeccable service, and mesmerising landscapes that unfold during the Cape Town to Pretoria journey. What sets The Blue Train apart is its destinations and the journey itself. Passengers experience sumptuous meals prepared by renowned chefs and an exquisite selection of wines. The meticulously designed cabins exude refinement, featuring details and modern amenities to ensure a lavish and comfortable voyage (Christie, 2024; Lutter, 2000).

The Blue Train's legacy is deeply rooted in a commitment to excellence and an unwavering dedication to providing passengers with an unforgettable sojourn. Its distinctive blue livery has become synonymous with a regal travel experience, inviting travellers to embark on a journey where luxury knows no bounds. In essence, The Blue Train is more than a mode of transport; it is an immersive encounter with opulence, a showcase of South Africa's rich rail heritage, and an enduring symbol of luxury in global rail travel.

In the Southern African rail luxury, Rovos Rail, Shongololo Express, and The Blue Train stand as epitomes of opulence, seamlessly blending nostalgic elegance with contemporary comfort (Christie, 2024; Lutter, 2000). Rovos Rail, a family-owned venture, weaves a tapestry of enchantment as it traverses the diverse landscapes of Southern Africa. With restored Rhodesia Railways coaches and meticulous attention

to detail, Rovos Rail invites travellers on an extraordinary journey with exquisite accommodation and exceptional service. The Shongololo Express, a distinguished addition to the Rovos Rail portfolio, offers a unique adventure through its expertly refurbished coaches. Retaining an unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction, the Shongololo Express ensures an 'out of this world' experience. From guided excursions led by multilingual experts to the captivating landscapes of Namibia, this luxury train creates memories that linger long after the journey's end.

The Blue Train, a symbol of luxury in South Africa's rail landscape, unfolds a royal experience for its passengers (Christie, 2024; Lutter, 2000). Operating between Pretoria and Cape Town, this prestigious train delights travellers with its sumptuous interiors and impeccable service. As it glides through South Africa's scenic beauty, The Blue Train captures the essence of sophistication and indulgence, making every moment a celebration of refined travel.

In conclusion, these luxury trains offer a kaleidoscope of experiences, each catering to the discerning traveller seeking transportation and a transformative journey. Whether it is the timeless charm of Rovos Rail, the immersive adventure aboard the Shongololo Express, or the regal elegance of The Blue Train, Southern Africa's rail luxury landscape stands as a testament to the harmonious blend of heritage, comfort, and unparalleled travel experiences. One can embark on a journey with these iconic trains, where every mile becomes a canvas painted with the rich hues of Southern Africa's cultural diversity and natural splendour.

3.5 Ensuring Safe and Reliable Rail Operations

The paramount importance of safety and its significance within the dynamic landscape of South Africa's railway operations. At the core of maintaining the integrity and reliability of the nation's rail network lies the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), a pivotal regulatory authority dedicated to ensuring the highest safety and operational excellence across the railway industry. As the guardian of safety protocols, the RSR

plays a crucial role in safeguarding passengers, freight, and rail infrastructure, thereby fostering public trust and upholding the integrity of the country's extensive rail network.

This research section examines the significance of the Railway Safety Regulator, investigating its roles, responsibilities, and the far-reaching impact it has on shaping the operational landscape of South Africa's railways. The Regulator sets and enforces safety standards, conducts rigorous safety audits and inspections, and investigates occurrences. The RSR's multifaceted safety approach mitigates risks and contributes to the sustained growth and efficiency of the entire rail sector.

3.5.1 Safeguarding South Africa's Railways

The RSR, as a creature of statute, is established in terms of the National Railway Safety Regulator Act 16 of 2002 as amended. This state-owned entity is a pivotal statutory organisation in South Africa as it oversees and enhances safety standards within its extensive railway network. This legislative mandate is crucial to the development and sustainability of the railway sector, supporting economic growth and sustainability. Since its inception in 2005, the RSR has diligently fulfilled its mandate, ensuring compliance and conducting proactive inspections, audits, and occurrence investigations to improve safety performance in the railway sector continuously (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023).

With a current workforce of 148 dedicated professionals distributed across its offices in Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal, the RSR operates with a strategic regional presence. Its head office, Waterfall Midrand, serves as the nerve centre for orchestrating safety measures and is supported by regional offices in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. The three regional offices are instrumental in executing the mandate as these offices house the inspectorate function, which is central to undertaking the critical functions of the RSR.

As a transformational and committed designated employer to the government's agenda on women, youth, and persons with disabilities empowerment, the RSR's

commitment to diversity within the historically male-dominated railway industry is evident in its efforts to empower women, particularly in technical and strategic roles. The RSR, further recognising the significance of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, has aligned its objectives with the national agenda of promoting the development and empowerment of women in society (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023).

As directed by the mandate, the regulator's core responsibilities encompass implementing safety-related legislative requirements across the railway fraternity. Through effective monitoring, ensuring compliance, and promoting safety standards, the RSR upholds its mission to promote and support safe rail operations in South Africa. It is not only to improve efficiency but, above all, to ensure safe and secure rail operations (Hutchings, 2017). Consistent with modern economies' reliance on railways for public transport, the RSR remains steadfast in prioritising and supporting safety, acknowledging its paramount importance for all operators.

As the legislated custodian of safety standards, the RSR is crucial in guiding operators to develop, implement, and maintain robust safety management systems (Mbombo, 2019). The regulator sets the benchmark for safe railway operations in South Africa by adopting and developing national and international safety standards. Following proactive measures and continuous improvement initiatives, the RSR ensures that the railway system evolves to meet and exceed safety expectations, contributing to the sustained growth and resilience of South Africa's rail industry.

3.5.2 The RSR's Vigilant Oversight

Following its legislative mandate, the RSR is the guardian of safety, assuming a pivotal role in safeguarding South Africa's expansive rail network. By adopting a proactive approach towards safety management, the RSR ensures the well-being of passengers, communities, and all stakeholders associated with rail operations. The oversight role commences long before the inaugural journey of any train, as train

operators must navigate the stringent process of obtaining a safety permit from the RSR (Hutchings, 2017; Mbombo, 2019).

To be proactive in executing its mandate, the RSR is committed to continually improving rail network standards, striving to prevent safety occurrences through diligent monitoring and stringent regulations. The organisation's expert monitoring and enforcement team, in the form of Railway Safety Inspectors, conducts regular safety audits and inspections of the operators' overall safety management system, infrastructure, and rolling stock (Hutchings, 2017; Mbombo, 2019).

To monitor compliance with applicable safety standards and regulations proactively. The RSR's commitment to ongoing development in regulations and safety standards ensures that innovations and infrastructure improvement initiatives align seamlessly with an uncompromised safety regime. Before embarking on their journeys, train operators must undergo a meticulous safety permit application process overseen by the RSR (Hutchings & Thatcher, 2018; Mbombo, 2019).

This process is a crucial checkpoint, validating the operators' compliance with meticulously defined operational safety standards. The RSR scrutinises every aspect of the proposed operations, ensuring that safety protocols are met and exceed the mandated requirements. The operators must develop and submit a safety management system that outlines how the operations will be managed and undertaken from a safety perspective. It is against this safety management system that the operator would receive a safety permit, which serves as an operating license valid for the period stipulated by the RSR upon approval (Mbombo, 2019; Railway Safety Regulator, 2023).

Through its stakeholder management initiative and approaches, the RSR fosters collaboration with stakeholders, including train operators and relevant authorities, to create a collaborative safety rail ecosystem. Regular communication, training initiatives, and information-sharing sessions contribute to a collective commitment to safety across the rail network. The RSR's proactive engagement with the industry ensures safety considerations are in every aspect of rail operations.

In addition to proactive measures, the RSR is responsible for investigating rail safety occurrences with the primary objective of delving into root causes to establish protocols that prevent recurrence. The approach focuses on understanding why incidents happen and actively implementing procedures to prevent their repetition. This approach reflects the RSR's dedication to continuous improvement and a proactive approach to addressing safety concerns.

The Occurrence Regime

The RSR occurrence investigation regime conducts comprehensive root cause analysis, aiming not only to understand why incidents occur but also to identify the source of the challenges and contribute to future prevention. It involves a multifaceted examination of operational procedures, infrastructure, equipment, and human factors contributing to the occurrence. By identifying the root causes, the RSR gains insights beyond surface-level assessments, enabling effective and targeted solutions (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). Capacitated with a profound understanding of the underlying causes, the RSR establishes protocols and guidelines to prevent the recurrence of similar rail occurrences. This proactive approach involves formulating specific and actionable recommendations for industry stakeholders, including train operators and infrastructure managers. These recommendations serve as a roadmap for enhancing safety measures and mitigating the identified risks.

The RSR's commitment to continuous improvement extends beyond theoretical recommendations (Mbombo, 2019; Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The organisation actively collaborates with industry partners to implement preventive measures. It may involve updating operational protocols, enhancing training programmes, or implementing technological advancements to address identified vulnerabilities and challenges. The RSR ensures that its insights translate into tangible safety improvements by actively participating in the implementation phase. The knowledge gained from each safety investigation contributes to the development of regulations and safety standards. Insights from incidents shape the evolution of safety protocols, ensuring that the railway industry remains resilient and responsive to emerging challenges.

The RSR's dedication to learning from experience positions it as a dynamic force in shaping the future of rail safety. The emphasis on continuous improvement through rigorous investigation cultivates a safety culture within the railway industry. By addressing safety concerns proactively, the RSR fosters an environment where all stakeholders actively pursue enhanced safety measures. This approach prevents future occurrences and creates a resilient and adaptable railway ecosystem. Overall, the RSR's occurrence investigation regime is one of continuous improvement, rather than just a reactive response to incidents. It is a proactive and dynamic process that drives positive change, enhances safety standards, and fortifies South Africa's rail network against potential risks.

3.5.3 The Regulatory Approach

The legislative mandate requires the RSR to enforce safety regulations and protocols rigorously. In cases of non-compliance or contravention, the RSR issues appropriate enforcement notices and directives (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). It imposes reduced speed limits or suspends services to protect passengers and communities near rail infrastructure without compliance with safety standards. The RSR's enforcement actions emphasise its unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest safety standards across South Africa's rail network, promoting the well-being of all those connected to the railway ecosystem.

The RSR is a vigilant guardian of safety regulations and protocols within South Africa's expansive rail network (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). Empowered by a mandate to ensure compliance, the RSR plays a pivotal role in upholding the highest safety standards across the railway industry. When operators or entities within the rail sector fail to meet prescribed safety requirements, the RSR employs rigorous enforcement measures. These include issuing enforcement notices and directives modified to address issues of non-compliance and contravention. These measures serve as a structured and targeted response to deviations from safety standards.

The RSR's enforcement actions and regime are mere procedural steps, and compliance and strategic intervention safeguard passengers, infrastructure, and communities within the rail domain (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). When safety standards are compromised, the RSR can implement interventions such as imposing reduced speed limits or, in extreme cases, suspending services. This extreme intervention is typically implemented through the prohibition directive issued to a rail operator, or the suspension or withdrawal of a safety permit. These interventions act as immediate measures to mitigate risks and ensure the well-being of those directly impacted by railway operations.

3.5.4 Compliance through Enforcement

The enforcement activities by the RSR highlight an unwavering commitment to safety excellence. Hold operators accountable and insist on compliance. The RSR contributes to building a culture of safety within the railway industry. This commitment extends beyond regulatory obligations, reflecting a dedication to the well-being of all individuals connected to the dynamic railway ecosystem (Mbombo, 2019; Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). Enforcement actions address immediate safety issues and play a pivotal role in promoting the resilience and robustness of South Africa's rail network. Through stringent adherence to safety standards, the RSR actively contributes to the sustainable development of the railway sector, fostering a safe and reliable mode of transportation for the nation.

In essence, the RSR's enforcement initiatives are emblematic of its commitment to maintaining the highest safety standards, ensuring compliance, and protecting the interests of passengers and communities along the railway corridors. The RSR is a formidable guardian, actively shaping a railway landscape characterised by unwavering safety and operational excellence (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). Aiming to be proactive, the RSR is dedicated to continual improvement in rail network standards, striving to prevent safety occurrences through diligent monitoring and stringent regulations. The RSR's commitment to ongoing development in regulations

and safety standards ensures that innovations and infrastructure improvements align seamlessly with uncompromised safety.

The RSR stands at the forefront of fostering a culture of safety and excellence within South Africa's dynamic rail network. Driven by a commitment to continual safety improvement, the RSR actively takes proactive measures to elevate safety standards across the rail fraternity (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The RSR's proactive stance is rooted in a dedicated effort to prevent safety incidents before they unfold. By striving for incident prevention, the regulator contributes to the safety and well-being of passengers, communities, and stakeholders associated with rail operations. The emphasis is on responding to incidents and crafting a resilient and incident-resistant railway environment. At the core of the RSR's proactive approach is an expert monitoring team equipped with the skills and knowledge to anticipate and address potential safety challenges. Through comprehensive system audits, the RSR ensures that rail operators adhere to stringent safety protocols, creating a robust framework for incident prevention.

3.5.5 The Operational Function

The RSR's monitoring team goes beyond routine inspections, actively anticipating and preventing significant incidents. By leveraging their expertise, the team identifies potential risks and areas of concern, implementing corrective measures to eliminate vulnerabilities. This anticipatory approach positions the RSR as a proactive force, mitigating risks before they escalate into significant safety incidents (Hutchings, 2017; Mbombo, 2019). The RSR is committed to the ongoing development of regulations and safety standards to maintain a dynamic and responsive safety framework.

It ensures that the railway industry aligns seamlessly with advancements and innovations while prioritising uncompromised safety. By staying abreast of emerging trends and technologies, the RSR plays a crucial role in shaping a forward-looking and secure rail network. In pursuing enhanced safety, the RSR facilitates the seamless

integration of innovations and infrastructure improvements (Hutchings & Thatcher, 2018; Mbombo, 2019).

It involves meticulously assessing new technologies and practices to ensure they align with the highest safety standards. The regulator's proactive measures extend to embracing advancements that contribute to the efficiency and safety of rail operations (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The RSR's commitment to safety excellence is not merely a regulatory obligation but a proactive and continuous pursuit. Through diligent monitoring, stringent regulations, and a forward-looking approach, the RSR actively shapes a railway landscape characterised by enhanced safety, operational resilience, and a steadfast dedication to preventing incidents.

The RSR's proactive measures encapsulate a commitment to continual improvement, vigilant monitoring, and anticipating challenges, all geared towards creating a railway environment where safety is paramount (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The organisation is a proactive guardian, working tirelessly to elevate safety standards and foster excellence within South Africa's dynamic rail industry.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the RSR provides the railway industry with safety oversight and assurance of monitoring, supported by and founded on a legislative mandate. The regulator serves as the safety beacon for the rail industry, providing the necessary tools and processes to create a conducive and safe rail ecosystem. The RSR, as the custodian of rail safety in the country, must proactively ensure that rail occurrences are reduced and do not recur by developing and enforcing applicable safety standards and regulations based on practical and technologically informed approaches.

The various rail players and operators, including TFR, PRASA, Rovos Rail, and Blue Train, significantly contribute to the functioning of the South African rail fraternity. They provide the required rail services and operations to improve economic activity and

serve as the most reliable and efficient transport system for passengers, the transportation of goods, and the provision of leisure.

3.7 Chapter Summary

In summary, the chapter outlined the history of the railway industry and provided background information and details on the various operators and key players in the South African railway sector. It examined the freight operator's TFR, genesis, and evolution. The chapter reviewed and articulated the role of TFR as the largest state-owned freight operator, its different operational objectives, and its business units.

The chapter also unpacked the different passenger rail operators within the borders of South Africa. It includes PRASA, the largest passenger operator across the country, and Gautrain, which currently operates within the Gauteng Province. The review of PRASA outlines how the operator became the largest passenger operator in the country and how it has evolved to adapt to the changes brought about by transformation within the country. The chapter also articulates the RSR's role as a safety custodian within the fraternity and describes how the RSR undertakes its legislated mandate.

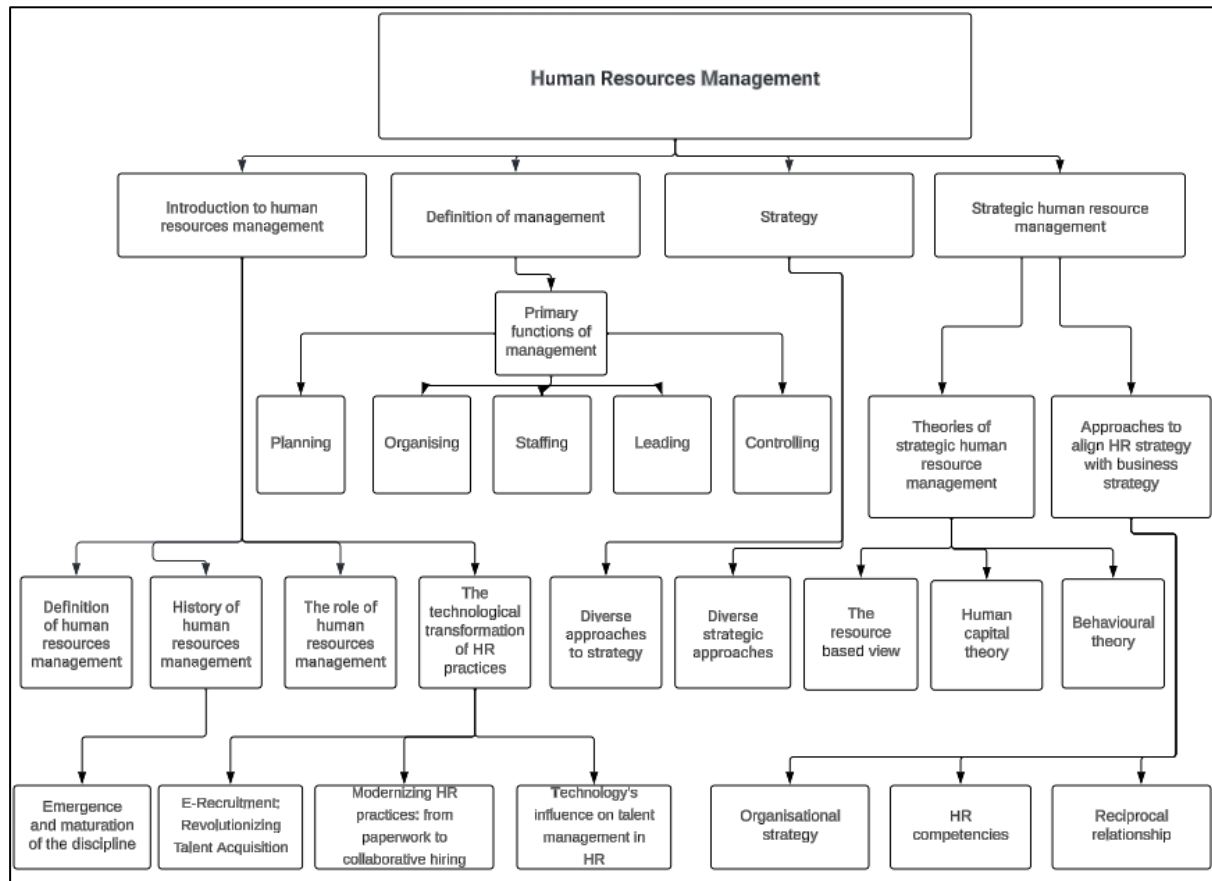
The chapter further articulated the role of the RSR in preventing rail incidents through its robust development of incident investigation protocols and the development and management of safety systems for rail operators. It also provided details on how the RSR implements its mandate as a capacitated inspectorate, equipped with the necessary skills and legal powers to ensure effective compliance and enforcement.

In this chapter, the research further focuses on the activities and actions undertaken by the RSR in its effort to improve rail safety, including its enforcement approach and compliance regime, as mandated by the RSR's legislated mandate.

4. CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW PART C: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

4.1 Introduction

Figure 4.1: Structure of Chapter 4



The previous chapter provided an introduction and background to the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in the South African railway sector. It highlighted the significance of the railway industry in South Africa's economic development and the pivotal role of the RSR in ensuring safety and compliance within the sector. The chapter discussed the historical legacy and current challenges facing the railway industry, emphasising the need for a proactive approach to HRM practices within the RSR.

This chapter defines human resource management, reviews its history, examines the various elements or functional areas, and explores both traditional and strategic approaches to human resource management.

This chapter will explore the history and evolution of HRM, its essential functions, and its role in today's organisations. This chapter will investigate how HRM has moved beyond administrative tasks to become a strategic force, shaping an organisation's success. The chapter will examine how HRM contributes to employee retention and commitment, recognising that a satisfied and engaged workforce is vital for an organisation's prosperity.

4.2 Introduction to Human Resource Management

As the world evolves, the work environment faces continuous transformation and innovation. The most constant yet evolving aspect is the workforce, which has taken centre stage at the heart of success. Human Resource Management (HRM) is the discipline responsible for strategically and efficiently managing these vital human assets to help organisations gain a competitive edge (Boon *et al.*, 2018; Saeed *et al.*, 2019).

HRM in the corporate setup is more than just another department; it is a dynamic and strategic field that influences every aspect of the modern workplace (Hecklau *et al.*, 2016; Stone *et al.*, 2015). It focuses on recruiting and developing talent, maintaining positive employee relations, designing fair compensation systems, and guiding organisational change (Tambe *et al.*, 2019).

4.2.1 Defining Human Resources

Human Resource Management, often abbreviated as HRM, constitutes a strategic and coherent approach to effectively and efficiently administering employees as resources within a company or organisation. The primary objective of HRM is to enable businesses to secure a competitive advantage by optimising the performance of their workforce and ensuring their availability at the right time and in the correct quantity to align with the employer's strategic objectives (Anbu, 2019; Tambe *et al.*, 2019).

HRM fundamentally focuses on the governance of individuals within the organisational framework, with a primary objective and emphasis on formulating and implementing policies and systems that facilitate this governance (Anbu, 2019; Lopez-Cabrales & Valle-Cabrera, 2020). The broader overview of this domain encompasses various critical responsibilities within HR departments, including the design of employee benefit packages, recruitment processes, training and development initiatives, performance management, and the management of employee relations and labour matters (Hee & Jing, 2018; Hongal & Kinange, 2020).

Furthermore, HR has the responsibility of dealing with organisational changes and navigating the complexities of employment relations, which involves striking a balance between organisational practices and regulatory requirements as prescribed by collective bargaining and governmental laws from a legislative perspective (Anbu, 2019; Lopez-Cabrales & Valle-Cabrera, 2020). Central to its mission, HR is mandated to ensure that organisations can succeed by effectively utilising their human resources.

The role of HR professionals within an organisation is that of a steward who guides and directs the organisation's human capital (Pattanayak, 2020). The direction set by HR professionals is through their commitment to implementing policies and standard operating procedural frameworks, which are put in place to optimise workforce performance and drive the organisation's bottom line (Elcourt *et al.*, 2022; Hee & Jing, 2018; Holbeche, 2022a).

The roles of HR professionals may constitute various specialised functions, including but not limited to talent acquisition, recruitment, selection, training, development, and the cultivation of positive employment relations and suitable employee benefit programs. The functional area of training and development undertakes the critical role of ensuring that employees within the organisation are developed and capacitated (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022).

The development of employees ensures that they receive essential skills enhancement and continuous growth opportunities, not only in the context of their work environment, but also with a projected focus on future endeavours and skills

requirements. Conversely, the employment relations functions are responsible for addressing concerns when policies are not being complied with, including cases involving harassment or unfair discrimination practices in the organisation (Holbeche, 2022; Pattanayak, 2020).

The employee benefits function administers benefits packages for employees. Benefits functions encompass compensation structures and various incentive schemes and processes, enabling quality and effective employee benefits regime (Ahmad, 2018). On a different front, HR generalists or business partners operate as versatile HR professionals who may engage in diverse areas of HR or specialise in employment relations, collaborating with unionised employees when applicable (Kinicki & Fugate, 2018).

As we recognise it today, HRM originates in the early 20th-century human relations movement. During this watershed period, we witnessed the emergence of theories highlighting the creation of business value through various management practices, including strategic management aimed at enhancing and supporting the workforce in achieving the business's bottom line. Initially, the function had a significant impact on transactional responsibilities, such as payroll and benefits management (Holbeche, 2022a). Over time, HR has undergone significant evolution and transformation (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022). Globalisation, corporate consolidation, technological advancements, and expanded research influence or necessitate the fraternity's evolution.

In the contemporary landscape, HR has become a strategic role player within the business and organisational setups. It has embedded itself in the overall business and organisational strategic setup with a niche focus on critical initiatives such as mergers and acquisitions, talent management, succession planning, employment and labour relations, and fostering diversity and inclusion within organisations (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Kinicki & Fugate, 2018; Pattanayak, 2020). as the global work environment evolves, organisations increasingly prioritise the reduction of employee turnover and the retention of institutional knowledge held within their workforce (Anbu, 2019).

Hiring new employees incurs significant costs and poses the risk of inadequate replacement for departing staff. HR departments intentionally develop approaches to address such challenges by offering enticing benefits to bolster employee commitment and nurture a sense of psychological ownership among their workforces (Saeed *et al.*, 2019; Tambe *et al.*, 2019). Addressing this becomes an employee value proposition presented by the organisation to its existing and prospective human resources.

Human Resource Management is further understood as a comprehensive process that involves the recruitment and employment of individuals, their training and development, the formulation of compensation policies, and the strategic establishment of retention strategies (Hecklau *et al.*, 2016; Stone *et al.*, 2015). The human resource management phenomenon is fundamentally regarded as a holistic approach to proficient personnel management within a company or organisation, aiming to enhance the organisation's competitive advantage. The spectrum of HR functions is substantial in terms of the amount of work required to undertake the respective functions successfully, as well as the numerous activities and high financial cost implications thereof (Hecklau *et al.*, 2016).

Such magnitude and work cost entail recruiting new personnel for the delicate employee termination process. Within these significant and cost-inclined processes, there exist the following pivotal functions or HR pillars that are deemed critical for the efficient undertaking and success of the HR department:

4.2.2 Functions performed by the HR department

Recruitment and Selection

This function is the cornerstone of building a capable workforce, involving the identification and hiring of suitable candidates who align with the organisation's goals and culture. The function is part of effective workforce planning (Kinicki & Fugate, 2018).

Employee Wellness (Health and Safety)

Ensuring the well-being and safety of employees is of paramount importance both physically and psychologically. HR plays a pivotal role in developing and implementing policies and procedures that safeguard employee health and safety. The role of employee wellness is to create a conducive working environment that enables productivity and the attainment of set objectives (Ahmad, 2018).

Learning and Development

Continuous learning and skill enhancement are central to employee growth and organisational success. HR is responsible for designing and executing training and development programmes that are streamlined and customised to capacitate human resources and enable them to attain the set business objectives (Ahmad, 2018; Belcourt *et al.*, 2022).

Remuneration (Compensation)

HR designs equitable compensation structures encompassing salaries, bonuses, and benefits to attract, retain, and motivate employees. The approach to remuneration and benefits is based on ensuring compliance with remuneration legislation, while also enhancing the human resources' ability to contribute to the organisation (Holbeche, 2022a; Pattanayak, 2020).

Performance Management

HR oversees performance appraisal systems and feedback mechanisms to monitor and enhance employee productivity and contribution. The role of performance management in an organisation is to ensure that the correct output and the required capacity and capabilities are available and managed effectively (Hongal & Kinange, 2020).

Labour Relations (Employment Relations):

Managing labour relations, including engagement with trade unions when applicable, is essential to foster a conducive work environment with minimal conflicts and disputes. HR is critical in negotiating and maintaining harmonious relations between employees and management (Klerck, 2018).

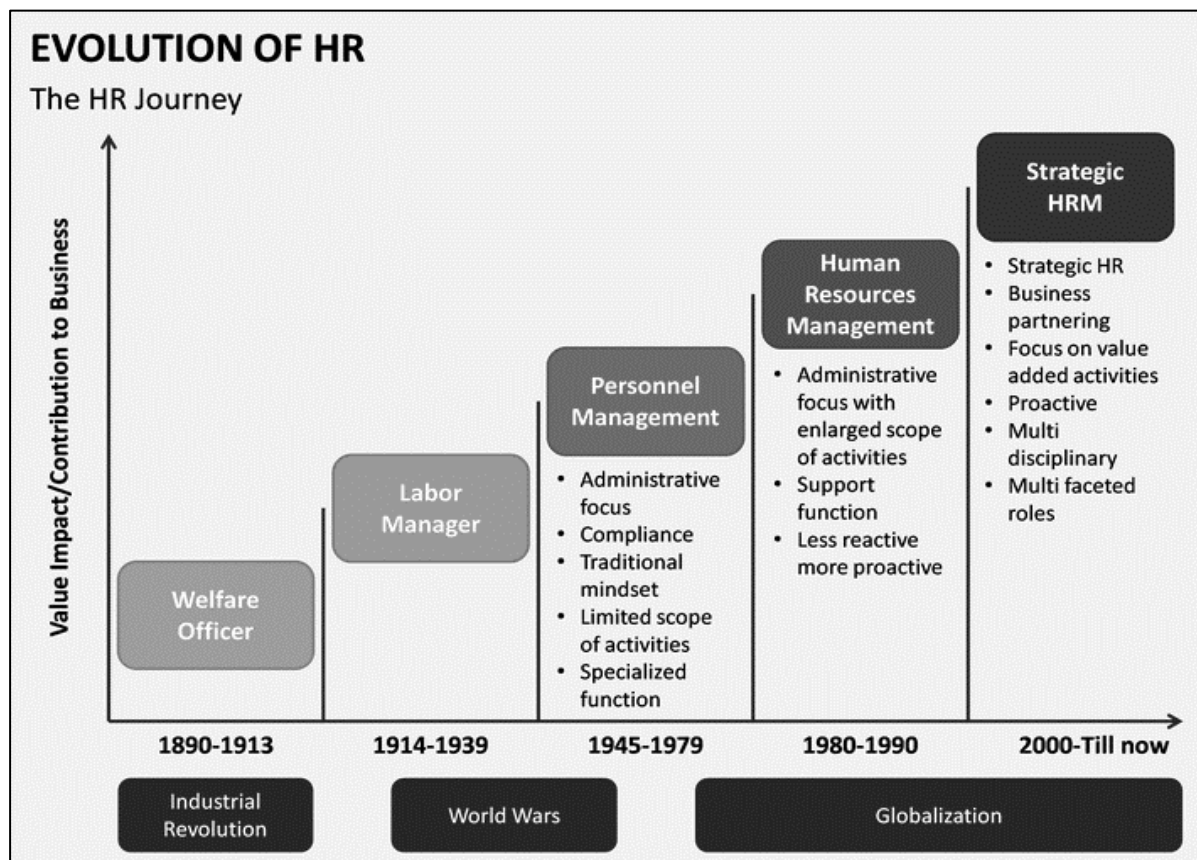
These six functions collectively form the bedrock of a practical HR function within an organisation. The HR mentioned above functions and their associated activities enable the organisation to establish and implement a robust human resource infrastructure, which is imperative and essential for the HR pillars to align with the defined overall organisational objectives. Each critical pillar serves a distinct purpose, seamlessly integrating into the broader role of the HR function as support (Warnich et al., 2014).

4.2.3 History of Human Resources Management

The foundation of the human resources field dates back to the 19th century in Europe, a period characterised by the Industrial Revolution's profound societal shifts. Two visionary thinkers, Robert Owen (1771–1858) and Charles Babbage (1791-1871), played instrumental roles in shaping the early notions of this emerging discipline (Manashree, 2021).

Owen and Babbage shared a conviction that was both elegantly simple and profoundly profound. They had the vision and conviction that the vitality of an organisation hinged upon its people. They proclaimed that employees' well-being is linked directly to perfection at work. In essence, without the vigour of a healthy workforce, an organisation's survival is at risk, considering the value and role of the human resource in the business or organisation (Manashree, 2021; Wren & Arthur, 2023).

Figure 4.2: The Evolution of Human Resources Management



Source: (Manashree, 2021)

In the 20th century, he brought about a revolution and transformation of the fraternity to a more formalised, distinct field driven by the influence of Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915). Taylor's pioneering work in what he termed "*scientific management*" or "*Taylorism*" was a quest to enhance economic efficiency in manufacturing. Taylor's scrutiny eventually focused more on the fundamental factors within the manufacturing process, with a specific focus on the labour element. This pivot sparked investigations into workforce productivity and set the stage for the emergence of HR as a specialised field of study and a critical role player in the organisational, business, and work environment (Manashree, 2021; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022).

On the other hand, in England, the aftermath of the unexpected challenges faced by soldiers during the First World War, between 1914 and 1918, sent ripples that would

resonate in the development of Human Resource management. Inspired by the concerns of generals and politicians, C.S. Myers took the initiative and co-founded the National Institute of Industrial Psychology (NIIP) in 1921. This establishment sowed the seeds for what would become known as the human relations movement. Operating on both sides of the Atlantic, this movement drew upon the research pioneered by Elton Mayo between 1880 and 1949, as well as that of others (Manashree, 2021; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022; Wren & Arthur, 2023).

Significantly, the Hawthorne studies, conducted between 1924 and 1932, and related research demonstrated that stimuli unrelated to financial compensation and working conditions could lead to increased worker productivity. This critical shift in perspective resonated with the groundbreaking work of scholars like Abraham Maslow, who was active between 1908 and 1970, and scholarly work from Kurt Lewin, active between 1890 and 47 (Manashree, 2021).

Other game-changing work from scholars such as Max Weber (1864-1920) and Frederick Herzberg (1923-2000) is also significant in establishing and developing the field of human resource management. Scholars such as David McClelland, who conducted research between 1917 and 1998, have also made significant contributions to the field of human resource management (Manashree, 2021; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022; Wren & Arthur, 2023). Their collective scholarly contributions have significantly developed and contributed to the field of industrial and organisational psychology, organisational behaviour, and organisational theory. The scholar has laid the foundation for formalising and scientifically structuring the human resource management fraternity as a science and an applied discipline.

4.2.4 Emergence and Maturation of the Discipline

Over the decades, we have witnessed the evolution that has culminated in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). The HRM journey has significantly shifted the business landscape and the evolution of employer-employee relationships through its notable metamorphosis. The HRM fraternity has influential figures and societal

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transformations that have yielded monumental developments in the management arena (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2020). By the early 20th century, significant theoretical groundwork served as an advocacy for the strategic management of the workforce.

This shift in mindset comes from profound changes in the business world, wherein businesses took on strategic directions and partnerships aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the work and improving the delivery and attainment of the bottom line as set out in the business objectives (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Kavanagh & Johnson, 2020). These changes fundamentally altered the dynamics between employers and employees, leading to the formalisation of HRM as "industrial and labour relations." In 1913, a pivotal moment in the history of HRM unfolded with the establishment of one of the oldest known professional HR associations, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in England (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Kaufman, 2019; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022).

Initially founded as the Welfare Workers' Association, it underwent several name changes before settling on its current name in 2000. Meanwhile, in the early Soviet state, distinct HRM ideologies emerged alongside technical management, first within the Red Army and later in various work sites. The development of human resource management further finds its foundation in activists such as James R. Angell, who have contributed to the need for research in personnel management. The contribution by such activists led to the formation of the Personnel Research Federation and the publication of the inaugural volume of *The Journal of Personnel Research* in 1922 (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Kavanagh & Johnson, 2020).

Cornell University established the School of Industrial and Labour Relations in the United States in 1945. The school became the world's first institution of higher education dedicated to workplace studies. In 1948, what would evolve into the most significant professional HR association, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), came into existence as the American Society for Personnel Administration (ASPA) (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Kaufman, 2019). The Soviet Union was also at the forefront of developing the field of human resource management. Stalin's strategic use of patronage through an "HR Department" equivalent within the Bolshevik Party

showcased the efficacy and impact of human resource policies and practices, demonstrating the administrative function.

Stalin acknowledged the significance of human resources, as evidenced by his widespread deployment of initiatives like the five-year plans and the Gulag system (Kaufman, 2019; Warner, 2020). Notably, the establishment and development of human resources management had an adverse impact, as union membership declined considerably throughout the latter half of the 20th century. The factual basis is that workforce management specialists continued to expand their influence within organisations. The transformation of the world of work and environment saw the term "industrial and labour relations" gaining prominence, explicitly addressing issues related to collective representation (Kaufman, 2019).

Managing employees throughout various organisations and businesses became known as "personnel administration". The metamorphosis from personnel administration came from numerous contemporary HR practices that companies and businesses require to develop and retain talent deemed critical for delivering. The late 20th century witnessed significant advancements in transportation and communication, facilitating increased mobility and collaboration among the workforce. Corporations started viewing employees as assets, leading to the widespread adoption of the term "Human Resource Management (Nankervis *et al.*, 2022; Wren & Arthur, 2023).

Progressively, the fraternity has evolved as it has gained its seat at the academic and scientific table. The fraternity today embodies a field of actual management science, as it is known or referred to, with various significant business value propositions and contributions that are used interchangeably (Klerck, 2018; Manashree, 2021; Wren & Arthur, 2023). These contributions typically refer to the knowledge and capabilities individuals possess and contribute to an organisation. Other descriptors for the HRM field include "organisational management," "manpower management," "talent management," "personnel management," "workforce management," and "people management which are interchangeable to reference human resource management.

4.2.5 The Roles of Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) is a dynamic discipline crucial to modern organisations. It encompasses many functions to align business strategies, foster employee engagement, and ensure compliance with applicable legislative prescripts. A plethora of authors outline the multifaceted function of HR, with its diverse responsibilities through the articulation of some of the processes deemed pivotal by outlining the various activities and responsibilities of HR as follows (Boxall & Purcell, 2022; Jackson *et al.*, 2018; Kaufman, 2019; Sang *et al.*, 2022):

Alignment with Business Strategy:

HR ensures that its strategies align harmoniously with the broader objectives of the organisation.

Organisational Process Enhancement:

HR plays a pivotal role in reengineering organisational processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Employee Engagement:

HR is the listening ear and responsive voice within an organisation, attending to employee concerns, feedback, and needs.

Change Management:

Managing transformation and change is another critical function of HR, facilitating smooth transitions during organisational evolution.

The above-mentioned critical responsibilities for HR encompass various activities and functions that HR undertakes to effectively deliver its obligations to the business or organisation from a management perspective. At a macro-level, HR oversees organisational leadership and nurtures a conducive organisational culture. It is

responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable employment and labour laws as a central element in effective human resource processes.

Central to the effective functioning of human resource management is the reliance on appropriate legislation, which is promulgated to ensure that the rights of employees and employers are adequately outlined and protected in any environment where the employer-employee relationship exists (Jackson *et al.*, 2018). For instance, countries like the United States have established laws, such as the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938, which was promulgated to guarantee minimum wage and overtime rights to the workforce.

The promulgation of legislation is also evident in the South African context, where certain pieces of legislation have been enacted to address issues of equity and fairness, aiming to redress historic inequalities. Following the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998:12, no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee in an employment policy or practice on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth (Jackson *et al.*, 2018; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022).

The act further states that it is not unfair discrimination to take affirmative measures consistent with the act's purpose or to exclude or prefer any person based on an inherent job requirement. The act provides an outline of what constitutes unfair discrimination and what it does not. Accordingly, implementing discrimination can also be fair depending on the requirements stipulated by the act. Such requirements must be outlined and understood before determining whether the discrimination is fair or unfair (Klerck, 2018; Manashree, 2021; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022).

The primary purpose of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 is to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementation of affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in the employment experience by designated groups to ensure their

equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace (Jackson *et al.*, 2018). The HR function serves as the interface between trade unions and the organisation on matters of mutual interest between the parties. This aspect of the HR function is provided from a legislative perspective by the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. This piece of legislation outlines changes to the law governing labour relations to give effect to section 27 of the South African Constitution. It further regulates the organisational rights of trade unions in the workplace and promotes and facilitates collective bargaining at both workplace and sectoral levels Jackson *et al.*, 2018; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022; Tanjung, 2020).

The HR function has the mandate under legislation to serve as the central point in regulating the right to strike and the recourse to lockout, in conformity with the Constitution, as well as to promote employee participation in decision-making through the establishment of workplace forums. It is also evident in the United States, wherein in cases where employees seek and are legally authorised to hold collective bargaining agreements, the HR function, as in the South African context, typically acts as the primary liaison between the company and the employees' representatives, which are often labour unions (Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

Consequently, HR, often through its seasoned representatives, engages with governmental agencies such as the United States Department of Labour and the National Labour Relations Board to advance its priorities and promote collaborations for the benefit of the workplace environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022).

Fundamentally, the human resource management process encompasses four foundational functions: staffing, training and development, motivation, and maintenance (Molina-Azorin *et al.*, 2021; Tanjung, 2020). The four functions form the basis of the overall HR management ecosystem, integrating and aligning with the effectiveness of one function, depending on the success of HR implementation.

Staffing involves the recruitment and selection of potential employees. From an ecosystem perspective, it relates to the workforce planning aspect of human

resources, which is typically concerned with ensuring that the right resources are available at the right time to contribute to maintaining the organisation's or business objectives (Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a). The HR functions achieve this process through interviews, applications, and networking.

The role of recruitment and selection in attaining workforce planning aims to attract talented recruits who meet the organisation's requirements. The role of HR management is to devise comprehensive recruitment strategies and have a well-defined plan of action in place for workforce planning and capacity building within the organisation (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a).

The training and development function in the ecosystem constitutes a continuous process aimed at equipping employees with the necessary skills and fostering adaptability by providing relevant and effective interventions. Training and development activities involve enhancing knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to a position, and they typically have a shorter-term impact (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020b).

Training and development may occur when an employee enters the organisation or is based on a training needs analysis and skills audits. Job-specific or technical skills may be emphasised at this stage, while developmental activities may include counselling, coaching, and management development programmes. Coaching aims to identify and facilitate the achievement of individual goals. Counselling typically assists individuals with personal problems, while management training and development aim to help employees develop the competencies necessary to perform better in positions of greater responsibility (Werner & DeSimone, 2012).

Motivation is paramount in maintaining high productivity levels, with employee benefits, performance appraisals, and rewards serving as catalysts. This function in the HR ecosystem involves assessing individuals' performance in relation to the organisation's objectives and developing the process of recognising and rewarding such performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Kavanagh & Johnson, 2020). This maintenance function revolves around securing employee commitment and loyalty to

the organisation. Strategies for employee retention are essential, ensuring that employees remain motivated and dedicated to the organisation's goals.

In an era of globalisation and diverse workforces, HR departments are responsible for fostering effective communication and collaboration across cultures and borders. Trained professionals may handle the role of HR in startup companies or organisations, whereas in larger organisations, a dedicated functional group manages various HR tasks (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Manashree, 2021). These specialists work with functional leadership to make strategic decisions that align with organisational objectives. Higher education institutions, professional associations, and companies have established specialised programs of study dedicated to HR functions to equip individuals for HR roles. Both academics and practitioners in organisations often produce publications that are specific to their field.

HR is also a popular area of research within management and industrial/organisational psychology, generating research articles in academic journals. A challenge in HRM is navigating the concept of unitarism, which envisions a company as a cohesive entity where employers and employees work together for the common good. HR aims to cultivate a lasting partnership between employees and employers, united by shared interests.

4.2.6 The Technological Transformation of HR Practices

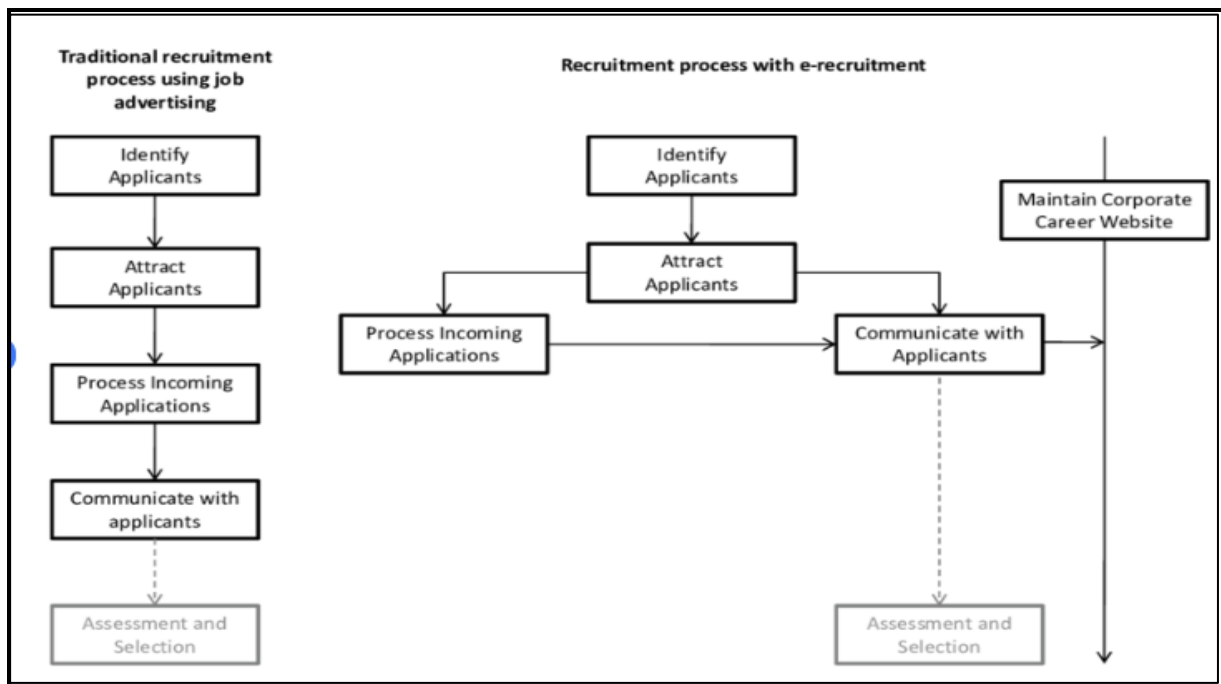
The impact of technology on HR practices is profound, revolutionising how organisations manage their workforce and the rendering of HR functions in general. Technology has streamlined HR processes, making information more accessible, reducing administrative burdens, enabling global operations, and driving cost-efficiency (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022). The introduction of technology in the HR environment has brought about efficiencies that enable the HR function to maximise resources and approaches. Key areas where information technology has transformed HR practices include:

4.2.6.1 E-Recruitment: Revolutionising Talent Acquisition

Recruitment, often described as the process of identifying, sourcing, and attracting exceptional talent possessing the requisite skills and experience, is a cornerstone of organisational success. This function is paramount, not merely for its role in effectively luring and sourcing the essential skills required for a given role but also for achieving the pivotal objective of securing the right candidate from the outset (Holbeche, 2022; Mahapatro, 2021; Pattanayak, 2020). The crucial role of recruitment and selection lies in its strategic dimension, encompassing the identification of job needs, the definition of role and candidate prerequisites, job advertising, and, ultimately, the selection of the most suitable individual for the position. Realising its potential hinges on applying strategic methodologies throughout the process. Typically, this multifaceted process unfolds in three strategic stages: defining requirements, attraction, and selection (Hongal & Kinange, 2020).

The recruitment and selection processes are integral components of strategic management in various organisations, both within the South African market and on a global scale. Over the years, these processes and associated trends have evolved and adapted in response to changing times, especially with the advent of technology in the HR space. This transformative shift has propelled the adoption of e-recruiting tools, reshaping the recruitment landscape and enabling HR professionals to effortlessly post and manage job openings across diverse locations while streamlining applicant tracking processes, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3 Traditional recruitment vs e-recruitment



Source: (Holm, 2015)

The move to online recruitment platforms, utilising web-based software and other technologies, has revolutionised the recruitment environment by attracting, assessing, and hiring suitable candidates. With the advancement of technology, the recruiting process has become simplified and easily accessible. This recruitment trend includes social media recruiting and software, such as Applicant Tracking and HRIS (SA Board for People Practices, 2014). The aforementioned recruitment trends are commonly employed in large businesses and organisations and have proven effective, as most organisations can attract and source suitable candidates to fill vacancies. Recruitment as a strategic aspect and role within HR serves as a partner to the business, providing the path for effective sourcing and strategic filling of positions and vacancies, thereby contributing to the organisation's or business's overall strategic objectives (Collings and Mellahi, 2009: 10).

As a prominent trend in the field, E-recruitment represents an online platform leveraging the web, software, and other technology-driven solutions to attract, assess, and hire suitable candidates. In an era of technological advancements, the recruitment

process has been significantly simplified and made more accessible. This trend encompasses social media recruiting and the use of software applications, such as Applicant Tracking Systems and Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) (Fachrizal *et al.*, 2019; Otoo *et al.*, 2018).

These recruitment trends have gained prominence, particularly among large businesses and organisations, due to their effectiveness in attracting and sourcing suitable candidates to fill vacancies. Recruitment, functioning as a strategic aspect and a pivotal role within HR, assumes the role of a strategic partner to the business. It paves the way for the effective sourcing and strategic placement of personnel to contribute to the organisation's or business's overarching strategic objective (Otoo *et al.*, 2018).

4.2.6.2 Modernising HR Practices: From Paperwork to Collaborative Hiring

In today's dynamic business landscape, Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) have revolutionised how HR teams manage documentation. Traditionally burdened by extensive paperwork, from transfer requests to confidential employee forms, HR departments have undergone a digital transformation. HRIS has emerged as the driving force behind this transformation, offering efficient solutions to streamline administrative tasks (Fachrizal *et al.*, 2019; Sang *et al.*, 2022; Tanjung, 2020). With the implementation of HRIS, the tedious and time-consuming process of managing physical documents has been replaced by a seamless digital experience. This transition has saved valuable office space and significantly reduced the risk of document loss or misplacement. Moreover, the swift accessibility of electronic files ensures that HR professionals can retrieve essential data within seconds.

One of the most notable advantages of HRIS is centralised data storage. This feature enables HR departments to analyse comprehensively across multiple locations, providing invaluable insights into workforce dynamics and trends. In turn, HR professionals can make informed decisions aligning with the organisation's strategic

goals. In addition to the transformation HRIS brings, there is a shift towards collaborative hiring practices (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020b).

Collaborative hiring involves active participation from the entire team in the recruitment process. This approach has gained prominence due to its ability to cultivate a robust pool of qualified candidates who tend to be more productive and loyal to the organisation. Collaborative hiring extends beyond traditional recruitment methods (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). It fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among team members as they contribute to the talent search. Furthermore, it incentivises employees to refer potential candidates, leveraging their networks to identify individuals who align with the organisation's culture and values.

In parallel, recruitment strategies are evolving to include innovative approaches such as recruitment marketing and employer branding (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2020; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022). Recruitment marketing utilises marketing strategies throughout the recruitment process to identify, attract, and nurture top talent candidates. This approach treats the business or job position as a product, effectively marketing it to potential candidates.

On the other hand, employer branding underlines the importance of maintaining a positive organisational reputation. Just as customers research products and services, potential applicants often investigate an organisation's reputation before considering employment. Organisations that are well-regarded in their industry tend to attract top talent more effectively (Fachrizal *et al.*, 2019; Otoo *et al.*, 2018).

In conclusion, integrating HRIS, adopting collaborative hiring practices, and implementing recruitment marketing and employer branding are collectively modernising HR practices. These strategies improve efficiency and enhance the quality of talent acquisition, positioning HR as a strategic driver of organisational success. As businesses continue to adapt to changing workforce dynamics, these innovative approaches will play an increasingly pivotal role in shaping the future of human resources.

Technology has significantly transformed various aspects of human resources (HR) practices. Technology has reshaped the way organisations manage their talent. This revolution extends to areas like employee training, the recognition of transferable skills, and the development of talent pools (Fachrizal *et al.*, 2019; Kaufman, 2019). One of the notable impacts of technology on HR is the enhancement of employee training and development. In the contemporary landscape, technology has introduced flexibility and accessibility into the learning process. New staff members can conveniently access onboarding and training programs virtually from anywhere.

This enhancement has helped eliminate the need for traditional in-person paperwork sessions or face-to-face training, which incurs additional costs such as travel and facility sourcing for training (Klerck, 2018; Manashree, 2021). The advent of virtual classrooms has further revolutionised the administration of training, enabling HR professionals to efficiently train a large number of employees from different locations without the need to gather in one central physical location. These virtual platforms often incorporate computerised testing programs for progress assessments, making the learning experience more dynamic and engaging.

Some organisations have adopted a hybrid approach, combining virtual training with instructor-led sessions to ensure comprehensive coverage of critical training components and to accommodate those training programs that are more practical and effective, as well as those employees who may be technologically challenged (Otoo *et al.*, 2018).

This flexible approach empowers employees to take charge of their learning and development, as they can decide when and where to engage in training. This approach further contributes to establishing a more effective work-life balance. Overall, from an organisation's effectiveness point of view, cost-effectiveness is realised in addressing changes that require employees to acquire skills or training to avoid or minimise redundancies that changes in the work environment could bring about (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2020; Otoo *et al.*, 2018).

The concept of transferable skills involves identifying skills that are in demand in the market and can be applied across diverse sectors. Transferable skills contribute towards addressing the challenge of skills shortages in specific industries. To further enhance the transferability of skills, recruiters have expanded their search for talent to diverse sectors (Molina-Azorin *et al.*, 2021; Otoo *et al.*, 2018; Tanjung, 2020).

This shift has led to a transition from experience-based hiring to a focus on transferable skills. Instead of emphasising relevant previous work experience, recruiters now look for skills available across different industries. Transferable skills, such as problem-solving, adaptability, communication, creativity, and financial literacy, have gained prominence in talent acquisition. This approach enables organisations to tap into a wider talent pool, resulting in a more dynamic workforce that is more adaptable and suitable for various roles (Jaroslav & Martin, 2018).

The influence on talent management further explores concepts such as building talent pools. The concept of talent pools refers to the process of systematically aggregating various skill sets into a collective and ensuring they are available when required in respective roles. Talent pools or databases have become increasingly advantageous in modern HR practices. Organisations are strategically developing and maintaining talent databases that serve as valuable resources for future hiring needs. Recruiters can draw from these talent pools when specific positions need to be filled, facilitating a quicker and more efficient hiring process. Talent pools save time and effort, enabling organisations to proactively plan for their human resource needs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

This transformation in HR practices reflects the profound impact of technology on various aspects of talent management, including training and skill assessment, as well as sourcing and strategic planning.

4.2.7 Employee Wellness (Health and Safety)

Employee wellness is a strategic approach adopted by management to ensure that a safe and healthy work and social environment is maintained, thereby enabling employees to perform at their best and comply with all health and safety legislative requirements. The environment exists to ensure the achievement of overall organisational objectives and goals through the available human resources. Aldana (2020) indicates that employee wellness is a process of caring for employees through various interventions and programs established by the organisation, enabling them to perform their duties effectively and ensuring a conducive work environment.

Employee wellness stems from the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, a legislation promulgated to ensure that organisations develop and maintain safe and healthy working environments. Various employee wellness trends are adopted by organisations and global institutions (Passey *et al.*, 2018). The benefits of such programs are that employees are supported and cared for, ensuring they can perform their duties effectively and deliver results. The following are the wellness trends in practice in various organisations:

4.2.7.1 The Shift of Employee Wellness Programs to Holistic Wellbeing

As the labour market transforms and faces challenges, and the workforce changes, employers are concerned with attracting and retaining younger talent by providing an attractive environment that appeals to all generations. This approach is beginning to make the employee wellness program more engaging for employees and entails including personalised wellness programmes developed and customised for the individual. To effectively implement this, organisations must offer a variety of paths for the employee to consider or be directed to (Moore & Piwek, 2017).

4.2.7.2 Modified Health Portals

Using web-based systems has become increasingly attractive to organisations, providing the support and efficiencies required to implement employee wellness effectively. A large number of organisations are shifting from point solutions and

considering modified platforms. Moore *et al.* (2017) note that such platforms can store employee data and provide access to various health solutions.

4.2.7.3 Social Enrichment Programme

The design of these programs provides employees with a sense of purpose and stimulates them to contribute to something meaningful. Prawitz and Cohart (2014) indicate that these programmes allow employees to participate in social uplift and change programs. Significant organisations have taken on social responsibilities through their Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives, and have employees participating in these programs to feel that they are doing more than their routine work.

4.2.7.4 Financial Employee Wellness Resources

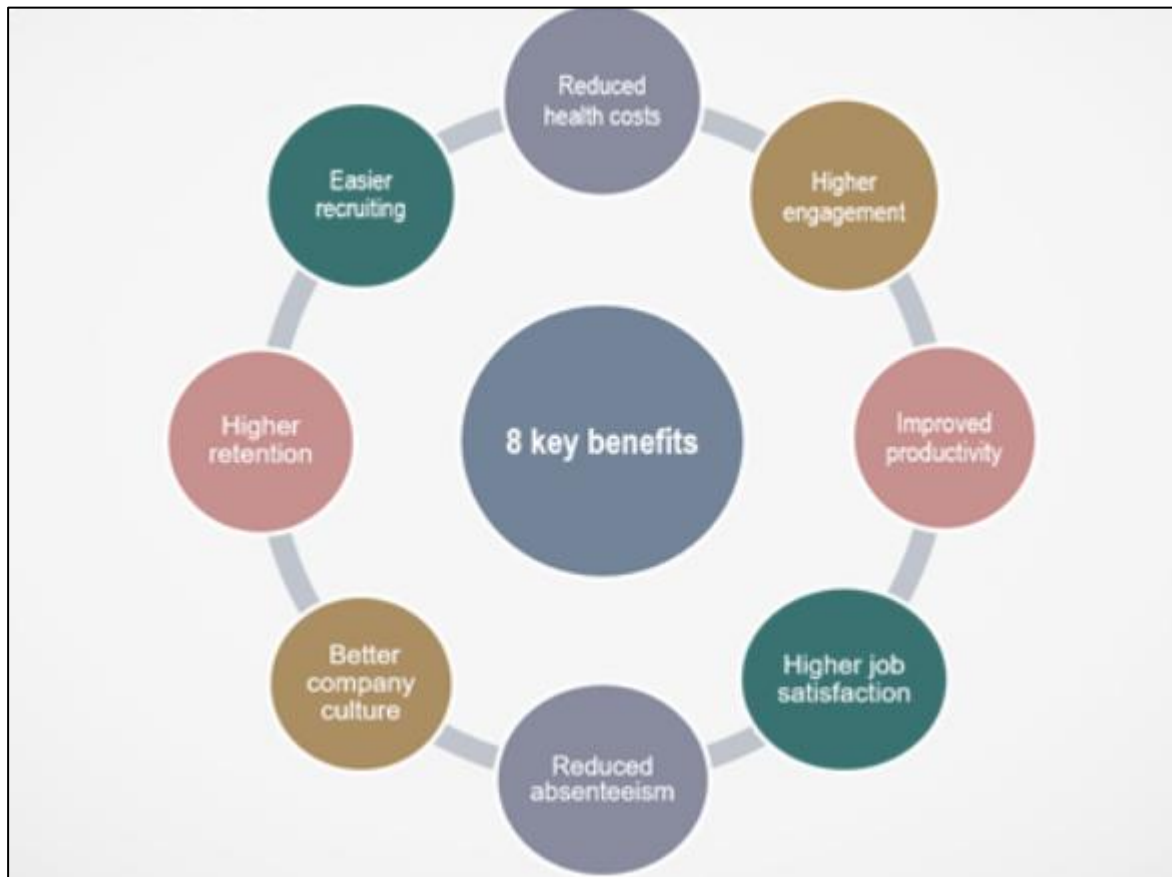
Organisations develop and implement such programs to assist different employees who face various challenges and circumstances, given that not everyone is the same and has the same financial circumstances. Such programmes vary in complexity but can include personal financial planning, tuition reimbursement, seminars, and payday loan assistance. The objective of such programs is to aid by offering sufficient services for anyone in your workforce to take advantage of, regardless of their financial situation (Prawitz & Cohart, 2014).

4.2.7.5 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) can help employees select the most suitable benefits plans based on their lifestyle and budget.

The trends mentioned above aim to provide wellness support and ensure employees are adequately supported to achieve optimal performance in the organisation. “The benefits of a well-structured wellness program are that employees will be taken care of and their psychosocial needs or issues” (Jatobáa, Santosa, Gutierrez, Moscon, Odete & Teixeiraa, 2019:139) will find a pace in the workplace and will be addressed accordingly. Figure 4.4 below depicts the benefits of a wellness programme:

Figure 4.4 Benefits of a wellness programme



Source: Jatobáa *et al.*, 2019

A structured wellness programme will improve productivity, ensure higher retention, provide a better company culture, and lead to high job satisfaction. The organisation will experience a reduction in absenteeism and promote higher employee engagement, as indicated by Zojceska (2019).

4.2.8 Learning and Development

Learning and development is a systematic process that enhances an employee's skills, knowledge, and competency, resulting in improved performance in a work setting. Learning and development aims to align employee goals and performance with the organisation (Radović-Marković, 2010; Fink *et al.*, 2020; Passey *et al.*, 2018). It is also

a process of identifying skill gaps among employees and teams and then developing and delivering training to address the identified gaps.

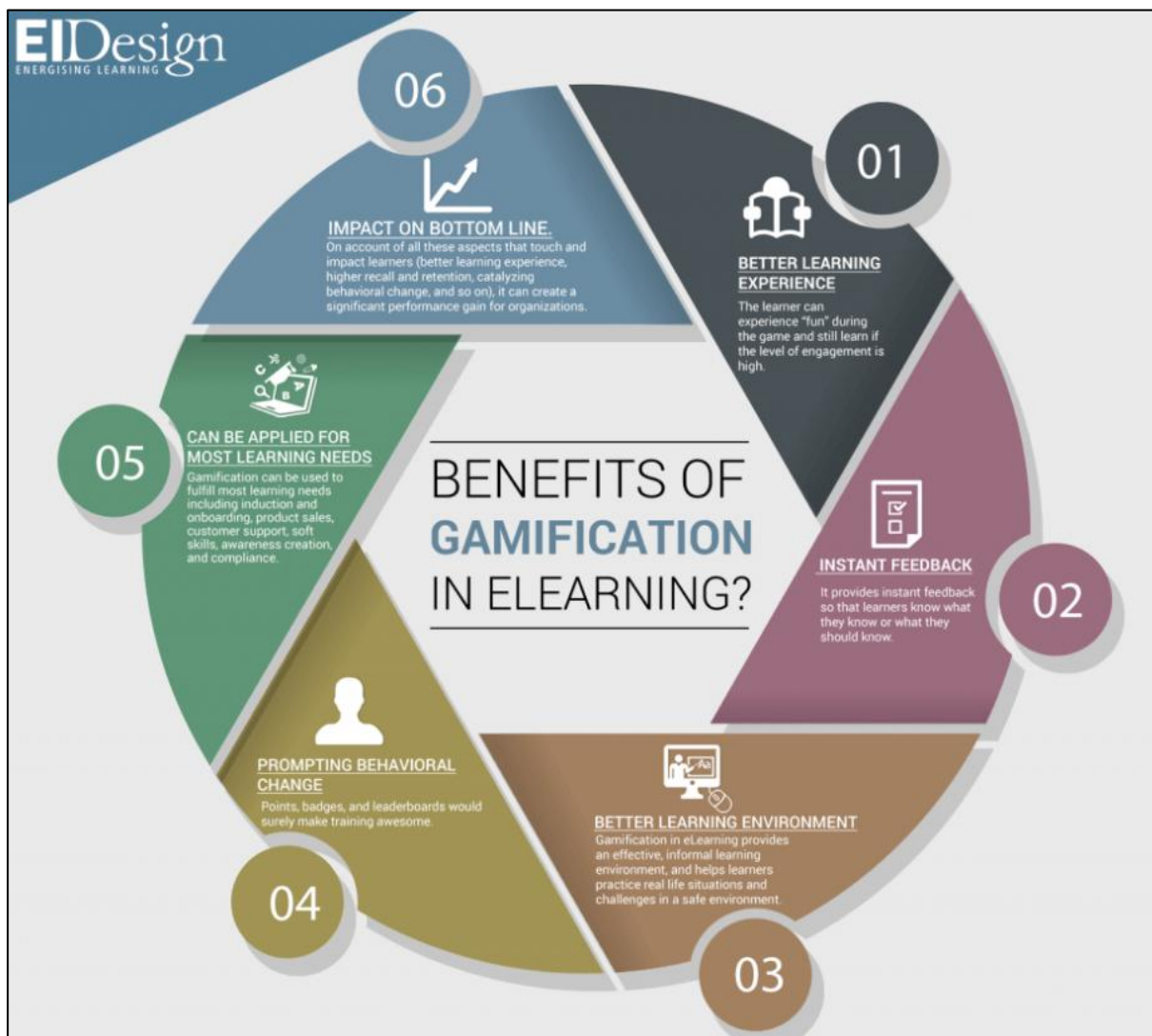
Several modern learning and development trends have developed over the years, contributing significantly to workforce development in various organisations. The learning and development process supports the Skills Development Act, which aims to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force to improve productivity and employment. The act seeks to improve workers' quality of life and their prospects of work and labour mobility, which entails a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to cultivating a workforce aligned with organisational goals. It is typically responsible for attracting, retaining, engaging, and motivating employees, as well as developing their capabilities. It often encompasses onboarding, training, education, certification, and other professional development activities (Radović-Marković, 2010). The following are new trends in Learning and development:

4.2.8.1 Augmented Reality (AR) /Virtual Reality (VR)

The learning and development process uses scenarios involving complicated, expensive machinery, equipment, or processes that enable progress from a virtual reality perspective. VR training programmes have a cost-efficiency aspect, as they are less cost-prohibitive than owning the machinery/equipment, or transporting a trainee to a different location to work on the machinery or equipment in person. A convenient example is the flight simulator, which has been used for pilot training. Sanal (2018) notes that this trend has also become common in the ICT sector, as most training is now offered remotely through web-based software and systems.

Gamification of learning is an educational approach that motivates students to learn by incorporating elements of video game design and gameplay into learning environments. The goal is to maximise enjoyment and engagement, as illustrated in Figure 4.5, by capturing learners' interest and inspiring them to continue learning. Gamification elements are increasingly used in E-learning as part of video content (Sanal, 2018). This approach is common and practical for younger learners. The diagram below (Figure 4.5) depicts the effective use of gamification in e-learning:

Figure 4.5 Benefits of gamification in e-learning



Source: Sanal, 2018

The effective utilisation of this training will benefit the organisation by ensuring the attainment of the desired or set objectives. Amongst the benefits of using such training, the organisation will be able to attain the following:

- Better learning experience
- Instant feedback
- Better learning environment
- Prompting behavioural change

- Applicable for most learning needs.
- Impact on the bottom line

Changes are influencing trends in the world's developing HR space. The HR space cannot operate in isolation from the rest of the workforce, given the impact of technological developments and globalisation in general. It is, therefore, essential for HR to continue improving and developing to meet business needs and provide support for the effective functioning of organisations.

In conclusion, human resources management, as a business-enabling process or support system, encompasses various aspects and functions that are integrated and interface to ensure that the overall management of the business's critical resources, human resources, is effectively managed. This section provides an overview of the various functions within human resources management and how they have evolved to deliver an advanced human resource management process.

4.3 Definition of management

Management as a scientific field of study is a systems approach to planning, organising, and regulating resources to attain a specific purpose or goal in an organised manner.

Management further creates and sustains an environment where people working in groups effectively achieve specific goals (Sethy, 2018). Another view of management is how a cooperative group directs activities toward shared goals (Sethy, 2018). Management as a systemic process aims to achieve specified objectives by utilising individuals and other resources. It entails organising issues, work, and activities in a more structured and coherent manner to facilitate the successful completion of those specified activities deemed significant and relevant to attaining the stated aim and objectives, and achieving the goals.

Many definitions of management, its aspects, and its principles have contributed to the knowledge in the management domain, as they clearly articulate what management entails. Amongst the well-articulated definitions of management that help to understand the notion of management are those that entail the following:

A management process or activity consists of cooperating with people, physical resources, and financial resources to achieve organisational objectives through the planning, organising, leading, and controlling functions. Management can also be understood as a process or task that includes working with human, physical, and financial resources to attain organisational objectives through implementing policies and procedures (Megginson *et al.*, 1997).

Management also creates and sustains an environment where people operating in groups can effectively achieve specific goals (Koontz & Weihrich, 2006). According to Kreitner (2009), the management process entails collaborating with and through others to accomplish organisational goals while using limited resources in a changing environment.

It is evident, as per the views above and definitions of management, that the concept of management is a structured approach that deals with the manner of doing things through the five primary or general functions of management, which consist of planning, organising, staffing, directing, and controlling the set resources available directed towards the set objectives and goals through effective and efficient implementation of applicable processes required.

4.3.1 Five primary functions of management

Planning is one of the primary management functions, as it entails forward-thinking or future-based activity that sets the organisation's general direction. The process of planning as a management function requires the management undertaking this function to have an organised foresight of the organisation and a corrective hindsight process to guide the organisation in its future direction (Pettinger, 2020; Schermerhorn

Jr & Bachrach, 2023). The primary objective of the planning process as a management function is to identify suitable goals and activities that are key to pursuing, determining what tactics should be adopted and employed, and determining what actions to take, as well as what resources are required to attain the goals. The planning process requires the integration of internal and external variables into management throughout the successful planning program, which is essential to the process.

Several external factors significantly impact the planning process. These factors also include, amongst others, shortages of resources, both capital and material, general economic trends in interest rates and inflation, dynamic technological advancements, increased governmental regulation regarding community interests, and unstable international political environments (Kukreja, 2018). The planning process entails establishing worker relationships that enable workers to collaborate toward achieving their organisational goals (Davis, 2019). It further entails providing tools, capital, raw materials, and personnel for the organisation to function optimally and achieve its strategic goals.

Organising as a management process includes identifying the necessary actions and classifying those required to achieve the desired results. Assigning obligations to employees while clarifying responsibilities and power is critical to organising as a management process. It provides the required authority and obligations available to employees, creating a link between their responsibilities and authority (Passey et al., 2018; Pettinger, 2020; Schermerhorn Jr.& Bachrach, 2023). Organising as a management process is essential as it sets the foundation for a game plan that enables the process to formulate and structure more coherently and intentionally.

The other critical aspect of management is staffing. This function is critical to every organisation's success, including attracting, training, developing, assessing, rewarding, and retaining the best-qualified employees or resources for the organisation's benefit. As a process and function of management, it must ensure that employees in an organisation, both managerial and non-managerial, are motivated by providing incentives or incentive programmes designed specifically for the organisation. Through the process of staffing as a management activity, it enables the

identification and recruitment of the most suitable, qualified, and experienced candidates (Klerck, 2018; Pettinger, 2020; Schermerhorn Jr.& Bachrach, 2023; Wren & Arthur, 2023). This process significantly affects and influences the entire management function, as it determines the resources available to achieve the objectives and goals.

It is imperative during the staffing process to identify, recruit, and select human resources that are suitable, competent, capable, and possess the required capacity to form part of the workforce that will drive the organisation's agenda and objectives (Anbu, 2019). Taking into consideration that the managerial function of staffing is concerned with proper and effective workforce planning for an organisation's organisational structure, it is imperative that the process also includes the correct and effective selection and development of individuals to fill the roles defined in the structure to better capacitate the organisation towards the attainment of the objectives and goals.

The other critical component in the management process is directing or leading. This management aspect is primarily concerned with providing leadership, motivation, supervision, and regular communication from management to ensure that human resources can effectively undertake the duties and responsibilities delegated to them. It requires human resources to be efficient and prudent in undertaking tasks or duties most efficiently and cost-effectively, while prioritising the attainment of the organisation's goals and objectives (Egginson *et al.*, 1997).

As part of the leading or directing aspect of management, the role of managers and their responsibility is to articulate a vision, energise staff, and inspire and motivate individuals by sharing the vision, influence, persuasion, and practical communication skills (Davis, 2019). The role of leadership in the leading and directing aspect of management serves as a critical function in the process. It continues to provide the workforce and others with the commands, instructions, and directions necessary to attain the organisational objectives. Furthermore, this process entails guiding subordinates on methods and techniques relevant and imperative to the functions.

Effective communication is essential in leading and directing, and should always be a two-way process in any organisation. The communication process should encompass the exchange of expertise and information provided to subordinates, as well as the feedback they receive from their superiors. Leading not only focuses on communication but also encompasses the process of motivation, which is essential based on the view that a highly motivated workforce performs effectively, even when given minimal direction from their superiors (Hecklau *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, those undertaking management's leading and directing aspects must initiate and inculcate the process of regular progress reports with subordinates and reassure them that they are on the right track.

The last aspect of management entails the process of monitoring and controlling as a managerial function. The process of monitoring and controlling aims to evaluate the accomplishment of the set objectives and goals. It aims to provide a conducive environment and process for evaluating, reviewing, and improving the solutions' goals, performance, and implementation (Picciotto, 2020). Controlling, as a management process and function, entails developing systems and processes to assist in establishing guidelines and standards for measuring, analysing, and making decisions on the organisation's goals and objectives.

This process also includes taking corrective actions as necessary to address any deviations from the organisation's goals and objectives. Controlling as a management process is focused on the measurement and adjustment of the performance activities of the workforce to ensure that the corporate goals and strategies intended to achieve them are being achieved (Kukreja, 2018)

In conclusion, management has evolved significantly, reflecting the dynamic nature of organisations and their human resources. The concept of management and its elements, such as planning, leading, controlling, and monitoring, have become systematic and scientific. It integrates approaches, empirical data, and information for effective undertaking and implementation. Historically, management was only looking at maximising worker potential and well-being. Management has become a multifaceted discipline encompassing various functions critical to organisational

success. As organisations adapt to changing workplace dynamics and technological advancements, effective management has emerged as vital to attaining and driving organisational objectives and goals. This approach of management and the alignment of its various aspects with human resources has become vital for enhancing effective management and sourcing the best out of the workforce for the benefit of the organisation and businesses in general.

The roles that planning, leading, controlling, and monitoring play in managing the workforce are imperative, as they outline how resources are to be organised and utilised. They further provide the approach towards sourcing or obtaining the relevant, suitable, and competent resources to achieve organisational objectives and goals.

4.4 Strategy

Historically, the concept of tactics and approach dates back to ancient times, when scholars developed methods to undertake activities in a structured and systematic manner. Over the years, tactics have evolved, and a formal coining of the process has become known as strategy. The term "*Strategy*" consists of a multifaceted concept deemed crucial for organisations aiming to achieve their long-term objectives.

Strategy is a method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as achieving a specific goal or resolving a particular problem. It is the art and science of planning and marshalling resources for their most efficient and effective use. Conceptually, strategy is a plan developed and executed with the set objectives and goals embedded and tactically outlines the approach and resources to be used to attain the embedded goals and objectives. The concept of tactics has led to the study of the phenomenon that is now known as strategy management, which incorporates tactics and management processes.

However, over the years and through empirical data, strategic management scholars have emphasised that strategy extends far beyond a mere plan; it is about charting the course and direction of an organisation, often in the face of uncertainty and

complexity. Millmore *et al.* (2007) describe it as a focused effort to navigate the ever-changing business landscape.

According to Dessler (2011), strategy is viewed as a course of action that entails an organisation's blueprint for aligning its internal strengths and weaknesses with external opportunities and threats, all in pursuit of maintaining a competitive advantage and sustaining its operational edge. According to Belcourt and McBey (2016), strategy is "the formulation of organisational objectives, competitive scopes, and action plans for gaining an advantage." They further articulate strategy as the roadmap detailing how an organisation intends to achieve its goals, encompassing the means it will employ, the courses of action it will undertake, and the overarching operational and competitive framework it will adopt.

The views mentioned above on strategy share common aspects, or a golden thread, which is the view that strategy is a course of action or a roadmap. These definitions show that strategy is a dynamic and adaptive concept shaped by an organisation's evolving needs and influenced by external factors. Strategy is a critical tool for organisations that are intentional about gaining a competitive edge and owning a market share in their respective sector or environment in today's ever-changing business landscape. It is imperative to understand that the intricacies of strategy are essential for organisations striving to navigate the complex and dynamic business world effectively, considering the internal and external environmental factors impacting organisations and businesses at large.

4.4.1 Exploring diverse approaches to strategy

Notwithstanding the consensus in defining strategy, there are various approaches or methods to strategy or its undertaking. The approaches, methods, or perspectives need to be understood to have a clear view of the most suitable and adaptable one for each organisation's unique environment.

The various approaches or methods and perspectives include the classic approach, the evolutionary perspective, the processual approach, the systemic perspective, and

the diverse strategic approaches, which entail corporate restructuring, growth, stability, and business strategies.

The Classical Approach: Rationality meets Limitations

The classical approach to strategy theory highlights a methodical, deliberate, linear, and top-down process. This approach envisions strategy conception as separate from its execution, often involving plans devised by one group and later handed down to others for implementation.

In essence, this approach segments concepts from implementation. It heavily relies on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis as one of its foundational tools. However, this approach is not without challenges or limitations; one notable limitation is its failure to acknowledge the presence of political perspectives in strategy formulation fully.

In practice, decision-makers and often powerholders may infuse their political views into strategic decision-making, adding an undesired perspective to the strategy process. While managers may exercise some degree of personal discretion and act proactively, industry or organisational norms and perspectives can significantly influence their strategic choices (Millmore *et al.*, 2007).

According to Mintzberg *et al.* (1998), as cited in Millmore *et al.* (2007), the other challenge or drawback associated with the classical approach is that it overlooks the distinction between realised and unrealised strategies. A deliberate strategy implies that strategic planning leads to fully realised intended outcomes. However, planned outcomes may remain unrealised in the dynamic business world due to organisational responses to uncertainty. Organisations often struggle to anticipate future conditions and, as a result, may fail to design effective strategies accordingly.

The Evolutionary Perspectives: Adapting to Environmental Forces

Compared to the classical approach, the evolutionary perspective places greater emphasis on the influence of environmental forces. This approach places greater

emphasis on the role of management in responding to external factors that impact or affect the organisation. Following this approach, market competition becomes the primary determinant of success or failure.

Instead of concentrating on proactive strategic interventions by managers, the approach emphasises achieving environmental fit or specialisation for the organisation. However, other scholars such as Whittington (2001) and Penrose (1952) argue that many large companies or organisations actively select and dominate markets rather than merely reacting to market selection.

Therefore, the prevailing argument is that most organisations should prioritise efficient operations over reactive responses to environmental changes (Millmore *et al.*, 2007).

The Processual Approach: Strategy as Adaptive Learning

The processual approach, as a strategic process, perceives strategy as an adaptive and emergent process primarily driven by organisational learning. This approach focuses on integrating the formulation and implementation of strategy into a more dynamic and interconnected process. This process or approach allows strategies to take shape through actions. Based on its elements, this approach has become the "learning school" primarily because it finds utility in unstable and unpredictable environments (Millmore *et al.*, 2007).

This approach is also not without challenges or issues of complexity, given that even in situations marked by uncertainty, some form of control in strategy formulation remains necessary, reminiscent of the classical approach. It is, therefore, prudent for the optimal strategic approach to blend deliberate control with emergent learning, allowing new strategies to evolve as original circumstances dictate (Millmore, 2007).

The Systemic Perspectives: Cultural Influences on Strategy

The systemic approach posits that strategy formulation and execution have a significant influence on the social and cultural systems within which they unfold. It

implies that companies or organisations in different countries adopt distinct approaches to strategy, influenced by their unique cultural and social contexts.

For instance, countries with substantial state intervention in corporate affairs are more likely to prioritise long-term strategic interventions, with an emphasis on national interest and social responsibility. Contrary to those nations that emphasise individualism, they tend to focus on free enterprise and profit maximisation as the key strategic goals for their organisations. These broad generalisations may not apply uniformly to every organisation within a specific country or environment (Millmore, 2007).

4.4.2 Diverse Strategic Approaches

These strategic approaches are multifaceted and interfacing in nature from a general perspective of the development and implementation of the processes. These are more integrated and incorporated to allow for other aspects that include the process, rather than being specific and one-dimensional. This approach includes corporate, restructuring, growth, and stability strategies. It is essentially a sub-approach to various strategic approaches.

4.4.2.1 Corporate Strategies: Navigating the Business Landscape

Through corporate strategies, the organisation or business can encapsulate the overarching vision for an entire organisation, encompassing all its businesses or interests (Belcourt & McBey, 2016). At this strategic level, there is the capability to identify the composition of businesses that collectively form the company and the interrelationships among them (Dessler, 2011).

The process or approach to corporate strategy aims to address fundamental questions, such as "Should we be in business?" and "What type of business should we engage in?" (Belcourt & McBey, 2016). Taking into consideration the type of

matters this approach deals with, organisations can employ a plethora of aspects and methods to the strategic approach, which can include the following:

- Restructuring Strategies
- Growth Strategies
- Stability Strategies

4.4.2.2 Restructuring Strategies: Paving the Path to Achievement

Restructuring strategies aim to guide organisations towards realising their goals. They realign the organisation to be fit for purpose and effective. This strategy aims to rejuvenate profitability by implementing staff layoffs, eliminating unprofitable product lines, enhancing operational efficiency, and repositioning the company with new offerings in emerging markets.

It involves selling off a division or segment of the organisation to rejuvenate its effectiveness or to improve profitability. This approach may sometimes involve terminating a business and selling its assets. The final aspect of this approach involves appointing a trustee or a business rescue practitioner to oversee operations, as the business or organisation has either declared bankruptcy or is unable to meet its creditors' obligations (Belcourt & McBey, 2016).

4.4.2.3 Growth Strategies: Pioneering the Path Forward

Growth strategies emerge as a central focus for many private-sector companies and organisations. It is a critical strategic approach or process for most businesses and organisations, as they aim to grow and obtain a sizable share of the market or environment in which they operate. Growth strategies have a substantial impact on HR processes. In a growth-centric environment, the impact on HR processes primarily emanates from the fact that companies or organisations are engaged in job creation,

aggressive talent recruitment and selection, wage increases, and expanded training budgets, depending on the business's chosen growth strategy.

Growth avenues are explorable through several aspects, which include incremental growth wherein companies expand their client base, diversify product offerings, modify distribution networks, and employ technology for efficient just-in-time customer interactions or through international growth, which entails venturing into foreign markets that necessitate adapting domestic strategies to align with the unique demands of new countries.

This aspect has significant elements aligned with HR processes. The last aspect or element is the focus on mergers and acquisitions, wherein the acquisitions of another company or business involve one company purchasing another. In contrast, mergers entail two organisations uniting to achieve economies of scale.

4.4.2.4 Stability Strategies: Embracing the Status Quo

Organisations opting for stability strategies indicate their contentment with not pursuing further growth. Most adopters of this approach operate in relatively stable markets and prioritise maintaining the existing status quo. Adopting this approach tends to have a consistent impact on HR processes, consistent with HRM's role in exploring aspects of retaining and sustaining human resources (Belcourt & McBey, 2016).

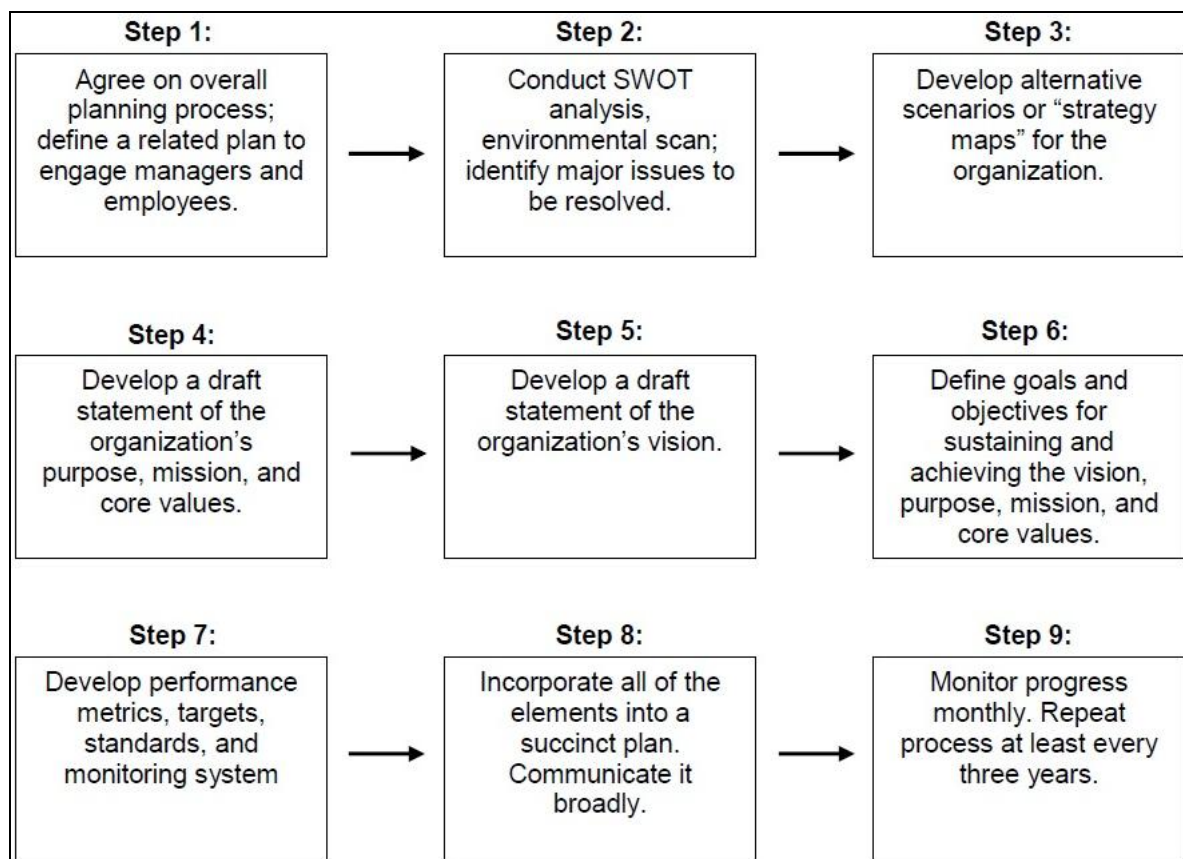
4.4.2.5 Business Strategies: Forging a Competitive Edge

The approach of business strategies is, by design, narrow in scope, as they concentrate more on a single line of business and devising methods to cultivate a robust competitive position. These strategies address questions like "How should we compete primarily?". Addressing such questions, they also evaluate whether offering

lower-priced products or delivering superior service quality is a more practical approach for the business's bottom line (Belcourt & McBey, 2016).

The strategic planning process requires the most appropriate approach. The diagram below outlines the steps for determining the most suitable approach and the strategic planning process that is critical for this purpose.

Figure 4.6 The Strategic Planning Process



Source: Belcourt & McBey, 2007

Figure 4.6 presents a comprehensive framework outlining the sequential steps integral to the strategic planning process. Below is the outline of each step:

Step 1: Establish the Mission, Vision, and Values

The inception step of a strategic process defines its core purpose through a mission statement. This mission statement succinctly articulates the organisation's identity by answering fundamental questions such as "*Who are we?*" and "*What do we do?*" (Belcourt & McBey, 2016). Concurrently, a vision statement outlines the long-term aspirations of the organisation, answering the question, "*Where are we going?*".

Adequately addressing these statements are the organisational values, which encapsulate the fundamental belief system, and the guiding behaviours of individuals and the organisation, answering the question, "How must we behave?".

Step 2: Develop Objectives

This secondary step involves formulating specific objectives that align with the overarching mission, vision, and values. Short-term objectives bridge the gap between these high-level ideals and tangible outcomes (Barney & Hesterly, 2019; Dess *et al.*, 2021). The various objectives of the vision and mission include understanding the challenging goals to achieve performance targets or maintain a competitive edge, as well as the softer goals linked to the values, which define targets for the organisation's social conduct, often characterised by intangibility.

Step 3: Analyse the External Environment

As part of the process of understanding their environment, organisations engage in robust external environment analysis. These forms of analysis entail effective and vigilant scanning and monitoring of various factors, including technology, laws, regulations, economic trends, sociocultural influences, and shifting demographics (Ansoff *et al.*, 2018; Barney & Hesterly, 2019). The insights gained from this analysis enable organisations to make informed, strategic decisions, respond effectively to emerging threats and opportunities, and broaden their business in general.

Step 4: Identify the Competitive Advantage

The fourth step in the strategic planning process entails recognising and harnessing the competitive advantages that set the organisation apart from others within the market or the environment in which it operates. Such advantages comprise the attributes and resources that enable the organisation to achieve higher profit margins than its competitors in the respective market or environment (Ansoff *et al.*, 2018; Barney & Hesterly, 2019; Dess *et al.*, 2021). Acquired assets, including fixed property, inventory of tools and equipment, technology, and financial resources, contribute significantly to the overall competitive advantage. More critical are the intangible assets, such as high-quality human capital, reputation, goodwill, trust, and intellectual property rights, that serve as strategic leverage over competitors. The organisation's capabilities, including managerial expertise, innovation, and marketing prowess, along with a desired organisational culture, further contribute to achieving the organisation's strategic goals and objectives.

These capabilities are nurtured through investments in human capital, the allocation of adequate budgets for training and expertise, enabling the organisation to adapt and renew competencies in response to evolving business requirements.

Step 5: Determine the competitive position

This step aims to enable the organisation to define its competitive position by identifying its target customers, their locations, and the specific product or service attributes that hold value for these customers (Dess *et al.*, 2021; Lynch, 2018). The outcome of this process is formulating a value proposition, which articulates the fundamental benefits the organisation offers in the marketplace to its customers and may also include the benefits offered to its other stakeholders, such as employees and shareholders.

Step 6: Implement the Strategy

The sixth step in the strategic planning process, often referred to as operational planning, involves the practical implementation of the formulated strategy (Barney & Hesterly, 2019; Dess *et al.*, 2021). It refers to developing programs, budgets, and procedures, which further outline the steps and associated costs required to achieve the strategic goals and objectives.

Step 7: Evaluate the Performance

The final step involves evaluating and monitoring the strategy's success in terms of its performance and implementation. Organisations assess their ability to meet financial targets, such as profitability, and gauge their efficiency and effectiveness against benchmarked ratios, including research and development expenses as a percentage of sales or sales as a percentage of assets. They may also assess the growth margins of the overall business, taking into account market share and value.

These chronological steps underpin organisations' delicate and vigorous journey to map their strategic course, align their actions with their mission and values, and ultimately achieve their vision and grow their market share (Belcourt & McBey, 2016).

In conclusion, several strategic developments and undertaking approaches are available for organisations and businesses. However, it is imperative to explore the correct and most suitable approach based on the factors that impact or affect the business. This also includes internal and external factors, the environment, and critical elements such as the human resource implications that must be taken into consideration when considering a strategic approach. For the strategic process to be selected, the strategic planning process must be employed and used to determine the appropriate strategic approach or process effectively.

This section articulated the multifaceted concept of strategy by exploring the various approaches to strategy-making, including classical, evolutionary, processual, and

systemic perspectives. The section further outlined the various strategic types, including corporate and business strategies, as well as the strategic planning process. The section further outlined that in the strategic planning process, it is essential to recognise that human resources represent one of the most vital assets in driving an organisation's strategy. Human resources management becomes imperative for effective strategic management, making it prudent to review phenomena such as strategic human resources management and incorporate them into overall organisational strategic management.

The following section examines the phenomenon of strategic human resources management, unpacking its key aspects and articulating its role in overall strategic management. It further investigates the transition to strategic human resource management, focusing on the relationship between an organisation's strategic management and its management of employees, which is human resources management. It includes the formulation and execution of HR policies and procedures that cultivate the competencies and behaviours necessary for organisations and businesses to attain their strategic objectives and goals.

4.5 Strategic Human Resources Management

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is a pivotal dimension in modern organisational management practices. This phenomenon integrates two critical concepts: human resource management and strategic management. It directs human resources to become a strategic element or process within the strategic landscape of any business or organisation. It further outlines a dynamic approach that emphasises the critical interface between an organisation's strategic objectives and human capital (Bailey *et al.*, 2018; Greer, 2021; Hamadamin & Atan, 2019; Steiss, 2019).

SHRM, as a management science, encompasses a deliberate and integrated set of HR policies and practices designed to harness the competencies and behaviours deemed critical to achieving organisational strategic goals and objectives (Boon *et al.*, 2019; Greer, 2021). From a pivotal point of view, SHRM recognises that human capital

is the most valuable resource for the organisation and further seeks to align HR strategies and practices with broader organisational strategic imperatives.

This section of the research sets the tone for exploring the multifaceted aspects of SHRM, wherein human resources become a driving force in shaping an organisation's future and success.

4.5.1 Definition of Strategic Human Resources Management

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) orchestrates HR principles, policies, and procedures to realise organisational strategies. Practically, these principles, policies, and practices should work interfacing as an interconnected system, with the overarching goal of attracting, nurturing, motivating, and training the human capital that is central to the organisation's continued viability and optimal functioning (Belcourt & McBey, 2016; Boon *et al.*, 2019; Hamadamin & Atan, 2019).

SHRM is also viewed as a bridge between conventional human resource management and strategic management, as it acts as the interface that aligns human resources with the strategic objectives of the organisation from a strategic process perspective (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019; Cooke, 2018). It is accustomed to blending HR practices with the business's strategic goals and objectives, facilitating and enhancing business performance while fostering an organisational culture that is conducive to innovation, adaptability, and a competitive edge.

From a professional and practical point of view, the overall strategic blueprint of any organisation or business becomes the guiding and true north for daily operations in human resource management. Like the other strategic partners to the business, HR managers have their own set of goals and strategic objectives to achieve (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019; Eneh & Awara, 2017; Mahinda *et al.*, 2023). In turn, it makes personnel decisions connected with these overall objectives more crucial and critical for the organisation. This set of goals and objectives also entails selecting the right quality and quantity of employees, their training and skill development, individual

performance management systems, and reward and recognition structures critical for a practical management approach (Cooke, 2018).

It is the bedrock of SHRM that underpins the organisation's strategic management processes, which, in essence, stems from forging a strong connection between HRM practices and the organisation's strategic management processes while striving for seamless integration across various HRM functions such as recruitment, performance management, employee relations, training and development, rewards and recognition, talent management, and succession and retention management (Millmore *et al.*; 2007).

Fundamentally, SHRM's objective is to effectively integrate the organisation's HR strategy seamlessly with the broader framework of business objectives. SHRM emphasises the need for alignment between HR practices and the organisation's strategic mission, which is a primary point of departure, as it speaks to the fact that the business's mission must be practical or driven by the human resource function of the business.

In this instance, organisations are aware of the intrinsic value of their human capital and, therefore, invest in HR departments and specialised people managers to address employee-related matters effectively (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019; Cooke, 2018). By design, it culminates in the elevation of HRM from the transactional routine operational functions to a more strategic role player.

4.5.2 Theories of Strategic Human Resource Management

The Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) theories consist of a plethora of approaches and perspectives that illuminate the strategic role of human capital within organisations and the effective undertaking or management of this area of business as a business management science aspect (Eneh & Awara, 2017; Holbeche, 2022b; Mahinda *et al.*, 2023). The section below outlines the theories:

The Resource-Based View

The resource-based view theory outlines and emphasises that the significance of valuable skills and organisational culture serves as a competitive advantage or resource for the organisation (Boon *et al.*, 2019). This theory further emphasises that human resources can contribute to sustained competitive advantage based on the following, taking into consideration:

- Employees who are superior performers, due to the significantly high quality of their skills, commitment, or flexibility, bring added value by providing better service, unique products, or cost reductions to the organisation.
- Quality human capital as a resource is challenging for competitors to imitate, giving the organisations a competitive edge.
- High-quality human capital is a rare resource, making the value of human resources challenging to substitute.
- Dynamic capabilities, driven by high-quality human capital, enable businesses to be the first to identify new opportunities and swiftly develop internal processes to capitalise on them.

Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory suggests that employees represent a valuable resource of capital for organisations. According to this perspective, the costs incurred in training, motivating, compensating, and monitoring employees are valuable investments in the organisation's human capital in the long run (Boon *et al.*, 2019; Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). Through this theory, the concept of recognising that having a stock of human capital is imperative and of great value is established. The theory is similar to having a team of talented players in any team sport situation. With the said quality of human capital, organisations can effectively leverage their talents, necessitating skilled management, coaching, and efficient HR systems to be on deck. It is paramount to note that without these elements, human capital may not be as adequate a resource as it should be for the organisation.

Behavioural Theory

The behavioural theory indicates that different types of human capital, represented by various behaviours, are required to support different organisational strategies. For practicality, the HR system must identify, develop, and effectively implement the behaviours required to implement a specific strategy (Cooke, 2018; Holbeche, 2022b). This approach would practically involve deep and systematic analysis. Subsequently, the HR department must define and develop the behaviours necessary to attain the desired organisational capabilities and objectives.

These theories collectively illuminate the multifaceted and dynamic role of human resources in strategic management, highlighting the need for HR systems and practices that align with organisational goals and foster sustained competitive advantage from an organisational perspective.

4.5.3 Approaches to align HR strategy with business strategy

For the effectiveness of the HR strategy role in the corporate context, several approaches are used to align the HR strategy with the overall organisational strategy. This process requires understanding the strategic dynamics and requirements from an HR perspective, as well as the overall organisation's strategic imperatives, and what the organisation expects from HR in terms of strategic inputs (Holbeche, 2022b). The following approaches outline what needs to be used and how it should be integrated or aligned to affect the alignment of the HR strategy with the organisational strategy.

Organisational Strategy

This approach involves initiating the alignment process by defining the broader organisational strategy. Once the overall strategic objectives are clear, HR strategies are developed to support these goals (Holbeche, 2022b; Mahinda *et al.*, 2023). HR becomes an enabler of the organisational strategy, ensuring the right talent and resources are in place to achieve it.

Begin with HR Competencies

Alternatively, organisations may assess their existing HR competencies, capabilities, and workforce strengths. Based on this assessment, corporate strategies are developed to leverage these HR strengths for competitive advantage (Eneh & Awara, 2017; Holbeche, 2022b; Mahinda *et al.*, 2023). This approach focuses on HR as a strategic driver, guiding overall business strategies.

Reciprocal Relationship

A more integrated approach involves a reciprocal relationship between the overall organisational departments and functions and the development of the HR strategy. In this model, the two strategies inform and shape each other in an ongoing feedback loop. Organisational and HR strategies continuously evolve, ensuring alignment at all levels (Boon *et al.*, 2019; Holbeche, 2022b).

The choice of approach depends on the organisation's specific context, culture, and strategic priorities. Regardless of the approach, successful alignment requires ongoing monitoring and adjustments to ensure that HR processes remain synchronised with the ever-changing demands of the business landscape.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) serves as the vital bridge between traditional HR practices and an organisation's overarching strategic goals. It encompasses integrating HR policies, practices, and philosophies with core business strategies to enhance overall performance. SHRM outlines the importance of recognising human resources as a strategic asset that can drive competitive advantage, innovation, and organisational success (par 4.5).

By aligning HR functions with the corporate mission, vision, and values, organisations can cultivate a culture that fosters adaptability, flexibility, and a commitment to achieving strategic objectives (par 4.3). The principles, theories, and practices of

SHRM (par 4.5.2) form a framework for optimising the value of human capital, enabling companies to thrive in a dynamic and competitive business landscape.

4.7 Chapter Summary

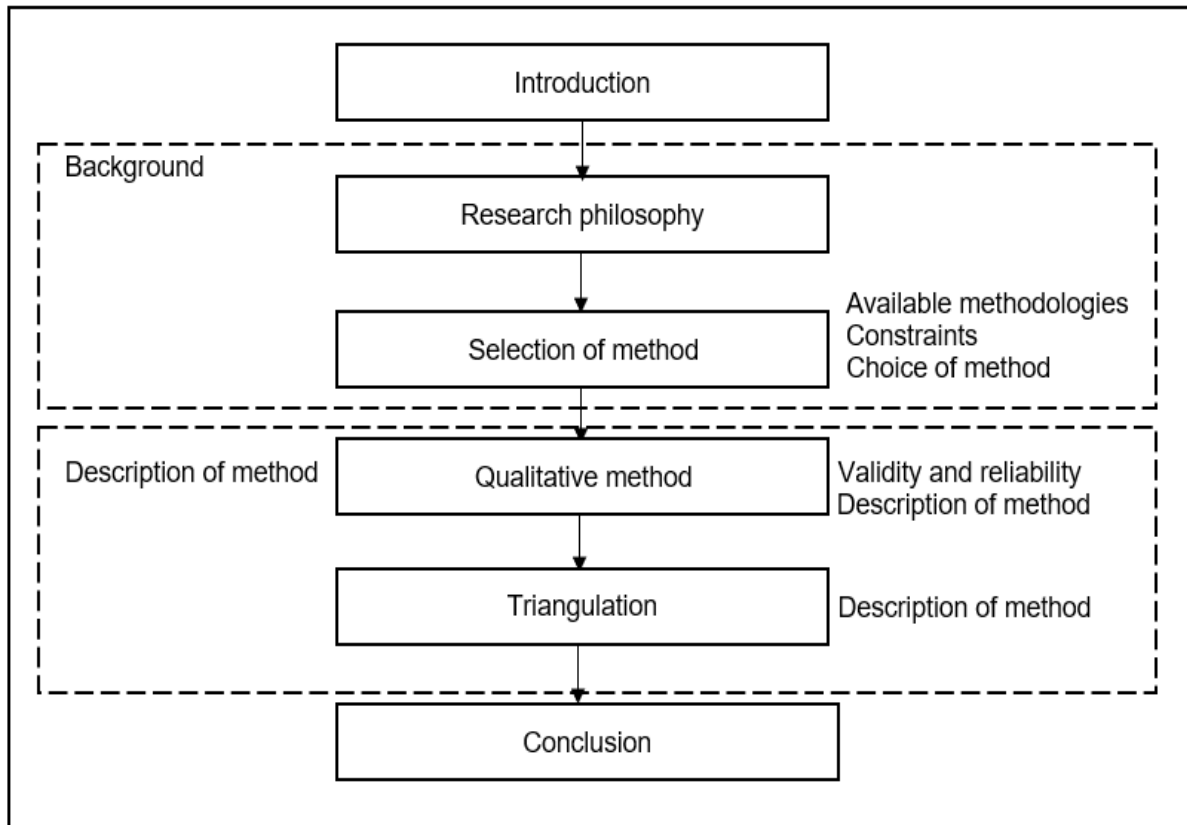
This chapter reviews human resource management and the various pillars or functional areas deemed critical (par 4.2). It then provides an overview of the differences between traditional human resource management (Section 4.2.1) and strategic human resource management (Section 4.2.3) by unpacking the various elements, approaches, and practices.

The chapter further articulated the introduction to the phenomenon, understood as human resources management. It also provided a comprehensive definition of human resource management and its history (par 4.2.2). The chapter outlines the management concept and articulates the definition and primary functions. This chapter also outlines the field of strategy (par 4.5.3) and unpacks the various elements and aspects of strategy. The chapter further articulates the strategic human resource management concept, defines it, and provides theories for it.

5. CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

Figure 5.2: Structure of Chapter 5



Chapter Two analysed operations management principles and various methodologies. It also discussed the importance of operations management, which involves designing and controlling production processes and optimising business operations to produce goods and services efficiently and meet customer needs. Operations management involves managing the entire production or service system, including transforming inputs (such as labour, raw materials, energy, and consumers) into outputs (goods and services).

Chapter Three outlined the history of the railway industry, providing the background and details of the various operators and key players in the South African railway fraternity. The chapter examined the freight operator's TFR, its genesis, and evolution.

The role of TFR as the largest state-owned freight operator, its different operational objectives, and its business units are reviewed and articulated in the chapter. The chapter also unpacked the different passenger rail operators within the borders of South Africa. It includes PRASA, the largest passenger operator across the country, and Gautrain, which currently operates within the Gauteng Province. The review of PRASA outlines how the operator became the largest passenger operator in the country and how it has evolved to adapt to the changes brought about by transformation within the country.

Chapter Four analysed the human resources value chain by investigating the various pillars within the human resources value chain, which includes strategic human resource management, talent management, human resource risk management, workforce planning, learning and development, performance management, reward and recognition, employee wellness, employment relations, organisation development, human resource service delivery, and human resource technology.

This chapter discusses the research approach, methodology, and data collection methods employed in this study. The research is within South Africa's borders, a diverse country with nine demarcated provinces. South Africa is a multi-ethnic society with a strong and developing economy. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, focusing on a population of 148 employees from the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in South Africa. The RSR has offices in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape. The RSR manages safety within the rail space while ensuring improved safety performance of the railway system. This is achieved by continuously ensuring compliance through proactive inspections, audits, and ongoing investigations. The RSR is a statutory organisation established in terms of the National Railway Safety Regulator Act (16/2002) as amended to oversee safety within the railways in South Africa (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023).

Qualitative data collection in this study contained a primary method: semi-structured interviews (Mezmir, 2020). The semi-structured interviews included interview guides to collect important demographic information from the participants. The design of the interview questions guides towards open-ended questions. This approach enabled

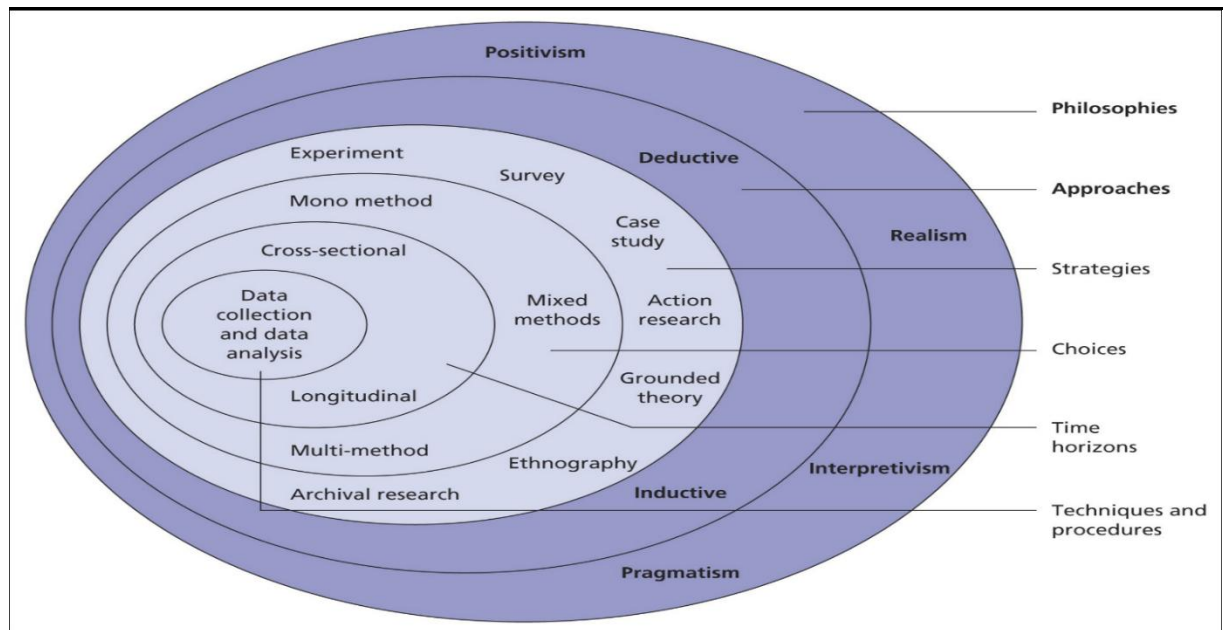
participants to provide detailed responses, giving them the freedom to express their points of view thoroughly and clarify them without limitation.

The decision to use semi-structured interviews is due to their adaptability (Busetto *et al.*), which enabled the researcher to seek further explanations when participants' answers were unclear or ambiguous. Throughout the research process, strict adherence to ethical principles was observed. This included a commitment to safeguarding the confidentiality of participants. Assuring participants that their responses and personal information would remain confidential is paramount. Participants also have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point.

5.2 The philosophical basis for the study

The primary objective of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of operations management and human resources management within the railway sector. This understanding is attained through an assessment and theoretical review of existing methodologies and knowledge within the disciplines. The research is rooted in the epistemological framework of constructivism, which seeks to understand specific situations or phenomena by gathering rich data to formulate ideas and explore the interactions among various individuals (Hyde, 2020), as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. This approach primarily serves to address social issues within the target group (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Constructivism acknowledges that knowledge is not a fixed or absolute entity but is actively constructed by individuals as they engage with their environment and interact with others (Hyde, 2020). In this research, this viewpoint acknowledges the subjective nature of human experiences and perspectives. It further seeks to capture the complex aspects of operations management and human resources management within the context of the railway sector.

Figure 5.2: Sanders Research Onion



Source: Saliya, 2023

Given the nature of the research and the availability of relevant knowledge from prior studies, a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate. This qualitative methodology facilitates the collection of in-depth data and information concerning operations management and human resources management within the railway sector. This will contribute towards a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Multiple methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, are employed to gather a broad understanding of data that reflects the nature of this context. Imperatively, it is crucial to emphasise that this data is not regarded as an objective and absolute representation of reality. Still, rather, it is perceived as a compilation of how individuals who have participated in the research have interpreted it (Saliya, 2023).

Constructivism, as illustrated in Figure 5.2 above, further highlights the social nature of knowledge through its emphasis on and understanding of knowledge influenced by social interactions and dialogues (Hyde, 2020; Saliya, 2023). In this research, more attention was required to interactions among different individuals in the sample who participated. The research engagements have been conducted with employees, as the

population was identified to gain insights into their perspectives, experiences, and the social dynamics that shape operational human resources practices.

Additionally, the research aligns with post-positivism as a research paradigm. Post-positivists acknowledge that a researcher's perspective and identity can influence their observations and conclusions (Erciyas, 2020). In the context of this study, as articulated in Figure 5.1 above, the post-positivist paradigm complements the constructivist approach by striving to attain as far as possible objective answers while acknowledging and addressing potential biases in the theories and knowledge developed by theorists (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Prayag, 2023).

This study will not only integrate seamlessly with the existing body of knowledge but also significantly enhance it. It will contribute to a deeper understanding of the various elements of operations management and human resources management in the railway sector. The objective of the study is to formulate an integrated operations human resources management framework that can effectively respond to the organisation's needs. This framework is designed with the vision of ensuring safe, reliable, and sustainable railway operations. It emphasises the importance of competent and skilled personnel within a globally recognised organisation with a mission to oversee and promote safe railway operations through appropriate support, monitoring, and enforcement, guided by a supportive regulatory framework.

The proposed integrated operations human resources management framework aligns operations management elements deemed critical to the organisation's operations with the strategic human resources pillars and factors, as well as business objectives. It also highlights the potential contributions of human resources business partnering in areas such as talent acquisition, retention, employee engagement, productivity improvement, performance management, support for change initiatives, and data-driven decision-making, all geared towards ensuring long-term success, while identifying and integrating those operations management elements.

This study adopts a post-positivist approach, as shown in Figure 5.2 above, because it culminates in the development of an integrated operations and human resources

management framework. This framework is a scientific outcome that results from the integration and enhancement of existing knowledge and research findings. It holds the promise of significantly improving the approach to operations management and human resources management in the railway sector (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and across railway sector projects. Initially conceived as an investigation into the impact of service delivery models within railway organisations, the study evolves scientifically to present a model that can be effectively adopted and utilised by human resources departments in the railway sector. This research aims to enhance human resources management within the railway industry by providing guidelines and application processes for adoption and implementation.

The primary objective of the research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of operations management and human resources management within the railway sector. This understanding is achieved through assessing and theoretically reviewing existing methodologies and knowledge within the disciplines. The research is rooted in the epistemological framework of constructivism, which seeks to understand specific situations or phenomena by gathering rich data to formulate ideas and explore the interactions among various individuals.

This approach primarily addresses social issues within the target group (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Constructivism acknowledges that knowledge is not a fixed or absolute entity but is actively constructed by individuals as they engage with their environment and interact with others. In this research, this viewpoint acknowledges the subjective nature of human experiences and perspectives. It further seeks to capture the complex aspects of operations management and human resources management within the railway sector.

Given the nature of the research and the availability of relevant knowledge from prior studies (Allen, 1994; Baker *et al.*, 2008; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000), a qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate. This qualitative methodology facilitates the collection of in-depth data and information concerning operations management and human resources management within the railway sector. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Multiple methods,

including interviews, observations, and document analysis, are employed to gather a broad understanding of data that reflects the nature of this context. It is crucial to emphasise that this data is not only an objective and absolute representation of reality; rather, it is perceived as a compilation of how individuals who have participated in the research have interpreted it.

Constructivism further illuminates the social nature of knowledge, emphasising understanding as influenced by social interactions and dialogues (Busetto *et al.*, 2022; Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). Therefore, this research required more attention to interactions among different individuals in the sample who participated. Research engagements have been conducted with employees identified in the population to gain insights into their perspectives, experiences, and the social dynamics that shape operational human resources practices.

Additionally, the research aligns with post-positivism as a research paradigm. Post-positivists consider that a researcher's perspective and identity can influence their observations and conclusions (Hurd, 2009). In the context of this study, the post-positivist paradigm complements the constructivist approach by striving to attain, as far as possible, objective answers while acknowledging and addressing potential biases in the theories and knowledge developed by theorists (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

This study integrates seamlessly with the existing body of knowledge and significantly enhances it. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the various operations and human resources management elements in the railway sector. The study aims to formulate an integrated operations human resources management framework that can effectively respond to the organisation's needs. This framework aims to ensure safe, reliable, and sustainable railway operations. It emphasises the importance of competent and skilled personnel within a globally recognised organisation with a mission to oversee and promote safe railway operations through appropriate support, monitoring, and enforcement, guided by a supportive regulatory framework.

The proposed integrated operations human resources management framework aligns elements critical to the organisation's operations with strategic human resources pillars and factors, as well as business objectives. It highlights the potential contributions of human resources business partnering in areas such as talent acquisition, retention, employee engagement, productivity improvement, performance management, support for change initiatives, and data-driven decision-making, all geared towards ensuring long-term success while identifying and integrating key operations management elements.

This study adopts a post-positivist approach because it culminates in the development of an integrated operations human resources management framework. This framework is a scientific outcome resulting from integrating and enhancing existing knowledge and research findings. It promises to significantly improve the approach to operations management and human resources management in the railway sector (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and across railway sector projects. Initially conceived as an investigation into the impact of service delivery models within railway organisations, the study has evolved into a scientific framework that can be effectively adopted and utilised by human resources departments in the railway sector. This research aims to enhance human resources management within the railway industry by providing guidelines and application processes for adoption and implementation.

5.2.1 Research approach

The research methodology employed in this study aligns with a qualitative approach, as it aligns with the interpretative techniques described by Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2012). A qualitative research methodology aims to describe, interpret, translate, and make sense of naturally occurring phenomena within the social world.

This research focuses on the integrated operations human resources management framework within the railway sector. Therefore, choosing a qualitative research methodology is intentional, as it enables a detailed exploration of this model within the railway sector. Qualitative research methods are well-suited for studying individuals or

small groups, whereas quantitative research is typically used for hypothesis testing (Welman *et al.*, 2012). This study employs a qualitative research approach, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding and insight.

Within qualitative research, it is essential to note that meaning is constructed through individual interactions with their surroundings, as highlighted by Streefkerk (2019). Consequently, the researcher sought knowledge from both selected participants and existing literature. The insights gathered from participants' perspectives were crucial for this research, as they provided valuable insights into the practicalities of using the integrated operations human resources management framework in the railway sector. The qualitative methodology also allowed for probing participants' responses, enabling a deeper understanding of their viewpoints. This methodological approach facilitated the acquisition of an in-depth understanding, which played a pivotal role in gathering a wealth of information about applying the integrated operations human resources management model in the railway sector (Streefkerk, 2019).

5.2.2 Research design

The research design is crucial in any study, as it helps determine the plan and strategy. It acts as a blueprint for logically and coherently integrating various components of the study, including data collection, measurement, and analysis (Sacred Heart University, 2016). Abowitz and Toole (2015) suggested that no perfect data collection method exists for a research study, as each method has strengths and weaknesses.

The choice of data collection methods depends on the study's aims, objectives, and research questions. Therefore, it is essential to explore various data collection techniques in this study to align with the specific needs of the study. It all culminated in a qualitative research approach as the most suitable, as qualitative methodology enables in-depth probing, asking questions, and gaining a comprehensive understanding. As described by Bhandari (2020), qualitative research revolves around capturing descriptions that emerge within a specific time and context.

The sequential context of the research is of utmost importance, as experiences and perspectives can vary over time. This study focuses on understanding the meanings and experiences within a specific period, acknowledging that the context might evolve in the future. Qualitative research proved invaluable in understanding participants' responses and experiences from their perspective, facilitating the acquisition of valuable insights (Bhandari, 2020).

Grounded theory was deemed an appropriate approach to further substantiate the chosen research design. Grounded theory, an inductive methodology, systematically analyses qualitative data to develop theories. This method aligns with the study's objectives, as it often relies on data from interviews, participant observations, various documentary materials, and prior research to construct theories (McCombes, 2021). Therefore, selecting the qualitative research methodology with an interpretative social science approach is well-justified and aligns with the study's objectives.

5.2.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy plays a vital role in shaping research methodology, encompassing three key dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology, as outlined by Thakurta and Chetty (2015). These philosophical dimensions guide the researcher in deciding the overall approach for the study. They are rooted in certain assumptions that reflect the researcher's perspective on how the world operates, ultimately influencing the research strategy and methods employed (Thakurta & Chetty, 2015).

The first philosophical dimension, epistemology, pertains to understanding what constitutes valid knowledge within a specific field of study (Thakurta & Chetty, 2015). Epistemology comprises three primary paradigms: realism, positivism, and interpretivism. The second philosophical dimension discussed is ontology, which explores the nature of reality itself (Thakurta & Chetty, 2015).

Ontology entails two fundamental perspectives: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism suggests that social entities exist independently of individuals and their perceptions, while subjectivism focuses on how social phenomena are influenced by the perceptions and actions of the individuals involved (Thakurta & Chetty, 2015). The third philosophical dimension is axiology, which stems from the philosophical exploration of values (Thakurta & Chetty, 2015). It encompasses inquiries into the nature, classification, and determination of what is considered valuable.

In the context of this study, which aims to explore the alignment of operations management elements and strategic human resources with business objectives which relays on post-positivism , with a specific focus on strategic human resources and operations management practices, the researcher sought to gain a thorough understanding of how aligning HR strategies with business goals, mainly through human resource business partners, can enhance the RSR effectiveness in various aspects. These include talent acquisition, retention, employee engagement, productivity improvement, performance management, support for change initiatives, and data-driven decision-making, all of which contribute to ensuring long-term success in the railway sector. To achieve this comprehensive understanding, the researcher opted for an interpretivist approach. This choice aligns with the study's objective of exploring and interpreting employees' perceptions, attitudes, and temperaments towards human resource management professionals within the railway sector, specifically within the context of aligning human resource strategies with broader business objectives.

5.2.4 Research setting

This study ends in South Africa, a nation characterised by its rich cultural diversity and unique governance structure. South Africa's governance system comprises three distinct spheres: national, provincial, and local, each with specific responsibilities, emphasising the nation's commitment to decentralised governance and cooperative collaboration (Katzenellenbogen, 1982; Parida, 2014; Zavyalova *et al.*, 2020).

South Africa has nine provinces marked by distinct cultural and geographical characteristics. The country is renowned for being a multi-ethnic society, embracing a diverse array of cultures, religions, and languages. Economically, South Africa is one of Africa's most technologically advanced and industrialised countries, boasting an upper-middle-income status. Central to South Africa's transportation infrastructure is its railway industry, a critical sector in the country's economic and social landscape. The South African railway network is comprehensive, encompassing three primary sectors: freight transport, passenger transport, and tourism (Mitchell, 2014; Read *et al.*, 2019). Each segment serves distinct purposes and makes a significant contribution to the nation's socio-economic fabric.

- **Freight Transport:** The freight transport segment of South Africa's railway system plays a pivotal role in efficiently moving goods within the country. It plays a crucial role in facilitating trade, supporting industries, and driving economic growth. The railway's capacity to efficiently transport large volumes of freight is a crucial asset.
- **Passenger Transport:** South Africa's railway network also serves as a vital mode of passenger transport, offering millions of commuters a cost-effective and convenient means of travel. Passenger trains connect urban and rural areas as a crucial transportation lifeline.
- **Tourism:** In addition to their utilitarian functions, South Africa's railways contribute to tourism. Scenic train routes, such as the renowned Blue Train and Rovos Rail, allow travellers to explore the nation's diverse landscapes and cultures. These railway-based tourism experiences enhance South Africa's thriving tourism industry.

Within the landscape of these railway segments, the RSR is a pivotal regulatory authority. Established under the National Railway Safety Regulator Act (16/2002), with subsequent amendments, the RSR ensures safety across the South African railway network, encompassing freight, passenger transport, and tourism (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). The RSR's commitment to safety aligns with the broader goal of maintaining secure, reliable, and sustainable railway operations across South Africa.

The central focus of this study is the proposed integrated operations human resources management framework, which seeks to align operations management elements and strategic human resources management. Within this framework, internal stakeholder engagement emerges as a pivotal transversal activity, as the human resource function cuts across all functions at the RSR. This strategic alignment and stakeholder engagement are integral components of the model, designed to enhance the effectiveness of RSR's human resources functions.

5.3 Population and sampling techniques

5.3.1 Population

The RSR holds a crucial role in the South African railway sector. Established under the National Railway Safety Regulator Act (No. 16 of 02) and subsequent amendments, the RSR oversees safety within the extensive South African railway network (Railway Safety Regulator, 2023). This responsibility encompasses activities, including proactive inspections, audits, and ongoing investigations, all aimed at enforcing and upholding rigorous safety compliance standards. Engaging with internal stakeholders is pivotal within the proposed integrated operations human resources management framework. These stakeholders include executives, line managers, and employees within the RSR. The human resource function, guided by its core values, strongly emphasises actively engaging with and effectively responding to the diverse needs of these internal stakeholders.

Internal stakeholder engagement is woven throughout all human resource functions at the RSR, serving as a strategic approach to foster collaboration and open communication channels. The goal is to align human resources processes with the organisation's objectives. The model emphasises the integration of operations management elements and strategic human resources, aiming to enhance human resources as a strategic player in operations management practices. In this study, the population refers to a well-defined collection of individuals or entities who share common and binding characteristics, traits, interests, or experiences.

These characteristics, particularly homogeneity in purpose, objectives, and engagement, are crucial for classifying a population. This classification enables a more targeted and practical approach to engaging with internal stakeholders, aligning with the principles of the integrated operations human resources management model.

They are identifying individuals for the sample within this population, specifically targeting three key groups: executives, line managers, and employees spanning various departments. This selection aims to achieve a comprehensive representation of the internal stakeholders within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). The interviews will continue until the point of saturation plus one. In qualitative research, saturation refers to the point at which no new information or insights emerge from the data.

Beyond this point, additional interviews may yield redundant information. However, an additional interviewee from the identified population would be included in the interview process to ensure thoroughness and saturation, meeting one additional criterion. This meticulous approach ensures a comprehensive examination of the perspectives and experiences of internal stakeholders within the RSR.

5.3.2 Sampling Criteria

In this study, the researcher determined the criteria for selecting the sample population. The choice of the sample population is based on the perception that these participants hold a crucial role as critical informants for the research. Their unique qualifications and practical experience made them better equipped to provide insightful responses to the research questions, particularly when compared to individuals from the public sector who lacked experience in human resources management or operations management implementation within their organisations.

Furthermore, this data collection method is a result of the study's specific needs. It requires a smaller subset of a larger population, a subgroup that can be readily identified or readily available. However, as Babbie (1990) noted, attempting to

enumerate all possible subgroup members within the larger population exhaustively would prove exceedingly challenging.

5.3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study consisted of executives, line managers, and employees from various departments within the RSR, which operates across three provinces in South Africa: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape. The selection aimed to provide a broad representation of the internal stakeholders at the RSR, ensuring insights from diverse departments.

Human resource management plays a strategic role in effectively managing people within an organisation, ultimately contributing to the organisation's competitive advantage and strategic objectives (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Jackson *et al.*, 2018). Human resource management focuses on formulating and implementing policies and systems related to human resources, including employee benefits design, recruitment, training, development, performance appraisal, and reward management.

Additionally, human resource management addresses organisational change and employment relations, aiming to harmonise organisational practices with collective bargaining and governmental regulations (Anbu, 2019; Holbeche, 2022b). A human resource management function that aligns with best practices, acts as a strategic advisor, and leverages data-driven approaches can significantly contribute to organisational excellence and goal achievement.

Sampling is a pivotal aspect of research, involving the selection of a population from which information will be extracted (Mezmir, 2020). This process ensures that the chosen population is willing to participate in the study. Sampling methods encompass probability and non-probability approaches, each serving distinct research objectives. Probability sampling involves the random selection of individuals, facilitating statistical inferences about the entire population. In contrast, non-probability sampling relies on non-random criteria, often as an initial method for data collection.

Probability sampling ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. The primary types of probability sampling include simple random, systematic, stratified, and cluster sampling (Busetto *et al.*, 2022; Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). Non-probability sampling, more suited for qualitative research, involves selecting individuals based on non-random criteria. Not all individuals within the population have an equal chance of inclusion, making it ideal for gaining initial insights into smaller or under-researched populations (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004). Standard non-probability sampling methods include convenience sampling, voluntary response sampling, purposeful sampling, and snowball sampling.

In this study, the initial sampling technique was purposive, intentionally selecting executives, line managers, and employees from various departments within the RSR. It aligns with the qualitative nature of the research, ensuring that participants possess the relevant insights to effectively address the research questions. The interviews continued until the point of saturation was reached, ensuring the reliability and validity of the collected data. In instances where the saturation plus one criterion is not immediately apparent, additional interviews with individuals from the various departments within the identified population will be conducted to maintain comprehensiveness.

5.4 Methods of Data Collection

5.4.1 Data collection instruments

Semi-structured interviews, facilitated using semi-structured interview guides, served as the primary method for gathering data in this study. This method is selected based on the research's central aim, which is to thoroughly comprehend the experiences and viewpoints held by executives, line managers, and employees within the RSR. According to Welman *et al.* (2017), semi-structured interviews employ guides containing a list of topics for exploration during the interview, with the flexibility to adjust the sequence of questions, as Babbie (1990) emphasised.

Semi-structured interviews were well-suited for this research due to their adaptability. They enable the researcher to examine ambiguous responses and request further clarification when questions lack clarity (Welman *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, to accommodate participants' preferences and accessibility, some interviews were conducted in person, while others will occur through MS Teams.

The interview guides utilised in this study featured open-ended questions. This intentional choice allowed participants to respond in their own words and provide additional context to their answers. The sequence of questions encompassed a range of topics, beginning with the collection of demographic information from the participants. Subsequent inquiries explored areas such as RSR strategy, values, operating model, core human resource management systems and processes, and identifying distinct stakeholder segments. The dialogue also investigates service delivery mechanisms and governance within the RSR.

As each interview concluded, participants could offer recommendations for enhancing high-level functional structure options. This inquiry aligns with the objective of the integrated operations human resources management framework, which is to align operations management and strategic human resources with business objectives, emphasising strategic human resources and operations management practices. This comprehensive approach to data collection ensured the incorporation of a wide array of insights and perspectives from the participants.

5.4.2 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure for this study adhered to a systematic and ethical approach (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004; Busetto *et al.*, 2022; Easton *et al.*, 2000), ensuring the participation of executives, line managers, and employees while maintaining their informed consent. The following steps outline the process:

1. Permission and Consent: The study commences by obtaining permission from the executive, line manager, and employee participants and contacting potential

interviewees to request their participation agreement. They can choose between an interview via MS Teams or a face-to-face meeting. An internet link was sent to the participants along with the invitation and interview appointment times at their convenience. Attached to this link is an informed consent form, which participants must complete before or during the interview.

2. **Secondary Data:** The research incorporated secondary data from relevant literature sources. These sources informed the formulation of and interview guides, ensuring alignment with established knowledge and best practices in the field.
3. **Pilot Study:** A pilot study assesses the comprehensibility of the interview guide. This preliminary investigation aimed to identify any ambiguities or issues with the questions, allowing for necessary adjustments and refinements.
4. **Informed Consent:** During the interviews, participants were provided with the informed consent form. The study's purpose and participation expectations were transparent to the participants. Additionally, participants were informed about the ethical considerations, including their right to withdraw from the study at any point without prejudice.
5. **Data Collection:** Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews, chosen for their flexibility in allowing the researcher to probe deeper into participants' responses. An interview guide, prepared in English, was employed to facilitate the interviews. While the primary language of interaction was English, accommodations were provided for interviews conducted in other languages, ensuring that both the researcher and interviewee were comfortable with the chosen language. All interview transcription processing is in English, with a notation indicating instances where interviews are in a different language.

By following this comprehensive data collection procedure, the study ensured ethical compliance and robust engagement with participants while incorporating a systematic approach to qualitative data collection.

5.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The researcher employed a thematic analysis method to analyse the collected data effectively, a qualitative approach well-suited for dissecting textual data, such as interview transcripts (Caulfield, 2019). This method offers the advantage of closely scrutinising the data to discern recurring themes, commonly expressed responses, and information. The data collection involved entering the collected data into a database and transcribing the interviews verbatim. Subsequently, the data underwent abstraction and assessment through a descriptive data analysis approach, which aimed to characterise the features of the collected data. The Atlas.ti version 22 software, which manages and analyses qualitative data, is part of the process. There is the conceptualising of data and organising it thematically to identify common patterns. The process involved coding and thematising the data, facilitating a qualitative assessment of the data's variability, and coding to break down and categorise the data, thereby selecting relevant elements for the research (Wilson, 2020).

Each participant's data was assigned a unique identifier code to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The data underwent scrutiny for issues such as duplicate records, missing or out-of-range values, or incorrectly coded data. The data were systematically categorised and labelled, with particular attention paid to overlapping or uncategorised text segments.

A thorough review of Incomplete data records helps gather missing information, ensuring a comprehensive dataset. The researcher refined and revised the categories by identifying subtopics, unexpected insights, and novel findings. This process facilitated the establishment of connections among related categories, and meaningful quotes were selected to encapsulate the essence of each category.

The findings were interpreted and transformed into meaningful concepts addressing the research question. The data is safe through multiple encrypted flash drives in secure onsite and offsite locations. The analysis included univariate and bivariate analyses, with participants identified solely by unique identifier letters or numbers,

ensuring the confidentiality of their identities and personal information throughout the study.

5.5.1 Trustworthiness of the data

McNair, Taft, and Hegarty (2008) define reflexivity as the researcher's conscious effort to contemplate their positioning within a specific political, social, cultural, and linguistic context. In essence, reflexivity encompasses research conducted within the field, presenting various challenges that may affect the research process. These challenges include how interviewees react to the researcher and the strategies to prevent distractions during data collection.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was intentional, allowing the researcher to investigate ambiguous responses more deeply and seek clarifications (Welman et al., 2012). While participants were initially requested to respond in English during interviews, provisions were made for translation into their preferred vernacular if needed. This approach aimed to ensure that participants fully comprehended the questions and could provide accurate responses without unnecessary repetition.

Member checks were employed to enhance the credibility of the study's results, a technique recommended by Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016). These member checks validated emerging theories that had evolved during dialogues (Shenton, 2004). For instance, specific participants could provide rationales for the theories observed during the data analysis phase.

This process was crucial in ensuring that the researcher's interpretation remained consistent with the participants' insights. Additionally, the researcher scrutinised previous research findings to assess how the project's results aligned with those of prior studies (Shenton, 2004).

This comparison established the data's credibility by identifying similarities with other reviewed literature, even in different contextual settings. Existing themes from the

literature are incorporated into the research. During interviews, a strong emphasis was placed on achieving a high level of transferability, signifying that the findings should be applicable in various scenarios (Shenton, 2004). The review of relevant literature suggested that this research has the potential to yield similar results in different study contexts.

5.6 Research Ethics: key considerations

Conducting research with integrity and ethical responsibility is of paramount importance. Ethical conduct is a fundamental cornerstone in research, providing researchers with essential guidelines for their study endeavours. This ethical imperative holds in research and various other significant domains of human activity (Welman, 2012).

Its importance is particularly pronounced when dealing with human subjects, encompassing the biological and social sciences (Welman, 2012). In this research, attention plays a crucial role in upholding ethical principles. Participants were consistently informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, thereby safeguarding their autonomy and ensuring that their decision would not result in any adverse treatment or consequences that could compromise the research's integrity.

The research remained resolute in adhering to ethical norms by refraining from deceptive practices. Participants were neither guided nor coerced, and transparency permeates the study. The participants were selected meticulously, with a stringent focus on their genuine willingness to engage in the research. Careful measures form part of the study to prevent any financial or other inducements that might potentially sway participants' involvement and, in turn, compromise the study's ethical standards.

5.6.1 Informed Consent

Before the research commenced, rigorous efforts were made to secure informed consent from all participants. Participants were accorded comprehensive information about the research's purpose, objectives, and procedures. An informed consent form was presented, clearly stating their voluntary participation, the option to withdraw at any stage, and the measures to safeguard their data's confidentiality.

5.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, the researcher adhered to a strict policy of not collecting any identifying information such as names or personal details. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier or code, ensuring their anonymity throughout the study. All collected data were stored securely, with access limited to authorised personnel only.

Respect for participants' autonomy, dignity, and rights is a foundational ethical principle. Participants' perspectives and experiences were highly valued, and their feedback and opinions were meaningful and treated with utmost respect and sensitivity throughout the research process.

Care to minimise potential harm or discomfort to participants forms part of the process. Researchers were diligent in framing questions and inquiries in a non-intrusive and non-sensitive manner. Moreover, the study's findings were reported objectively, without any intention to harm or misrepresent participants. Transparency was paramount at every stage of the research. Participants were provided with clear and understandable information about their involvement, the nature of data collection, and how their data would be used and reported. Stringent measures form part of the process to ensure the security and confidentiality of research data. Data safekeeping and devices and platforms were paramount, with access restricted to authorised individuals only. These measures were meticulously maintained to safeguard the participants' sensitive information.

Researchers upheld the highest data handling standards, including accurate transcription, analysis, and reporting. Data management was objective and without manipulation or distortion. Any potential conflicts of interest or biases form part of the ethical research management process.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examines the research approach, methodology, and data collection methods employed in this study. Our research is in South Africa, a nation characterised by diversity with nine provinces, a multi-ethnic society, and a strong economy. We adopted a qualitative research methodology, focusing on a population of executives, line managers, and employees working for the RSR in South Africa. The RSR operates in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape. Its primary mission is to oversee railway safety, ensuring compliance through proactive inspections, audits, and investigations. The RSR is a statutory organisation established under the National Railway Safety Regulator Act (16/2002) to regulate railway safety in South Africa.

Our data collection process primarily relied on semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were guided by interview guides that contained open-ended questions, allowing participants to provide detailed and expressive responses. This approach allowed participants to clarify their viewpoints and offer thorough explanations when necessary. Semi-structured interviews are part of the process due to their flexibility, which allows for further clarification when responses are unclear or ambiguous. Our commitment to ethical principles remained unwavering throughout the research, ensuring the confidentiality of participant information. Participants' responses and personal data would be kept confidential, and they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

5.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five provided a detailed exploration of the research methodology employed in this study. It included an in-depth discussion of the data collection and analysis

methods, as well as the sampling techniques utilised. Furthermore, it provided insights into the geographical context of the study, the chosen research design, and the steps taken to ensure research rigour and reflexivity.

Chapter six discusses the Integrated Operations Human Resources Management framework in detail. This framework ensures the safety, reliability, and sustainability of railway operations. It outlines the significance of having competent and skilled personnel within a globally recognised organisation. Their mission is to oversee and promote the safety of railway operations through appropriate support, diligent monitoring, and effective enforcement, all guided by a supportive regulatory framework.

The proposed Integrated Operations Human Resources Management framework is a forward-looking approach that harmonises operations management and strategic human resources management with the overarching support and attainment of the objectives of businesses. It strongly emphasises the strategic alignment of human resources and operations management practices. Furthermore, it deliberates on the potential contributions of Human Resources Business Partnering, particularly in critical areas like talent acquisition, retention, employee engagement, productivity enhancement, performance management, support for change initiatives, and data-driven decision-making, while aligning the operations management elements deemed critical. These strategic endeavours aim to ensure the railway sector's sustained success and longevity.

Chapter Seven will offer a comprehensive report on the qualitative analysis conducted in this study. The qualitative analysis serves as a model that scrutinises the relationships between the research theory and the model proposed in Chapter Six. This chapter offers valuable insights into the various conceptual frameworks and practical applications within the research context, providing a holistic perspective on the study's findings and implications.

6. CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

6.1 Introduction

Chapter One of the research articulates the background of the study, and the problem statement (par. 1.3) provides the rationale for conducting this research. In Chapter Two, the research outlines the concept of operations management and its various elements and aspects (par 2.1). The chapter provides an overview by articulating the definitions of operations management and common trends and practices in operations management (par 2.3). This section outlines other aspects of operations management, including its history (par 2.2), various concepts within operations management, and their impact (par 2.5).

Chapter Three of the research outlined the concept of the railway (par 3.1). This section shows the history (par. 3.2) and the various rail operations applicable and available within the South African borders (par. 3.43.4). This research section overview of the railway network, the network's formation, and the railways' evolution (par. 3.3). In this section, the research outlined the different rail operators within the country and the regulator responsible for ensuring safe operations within the railways (par. 3.5). This research section details different safety tools and regimes in the efforts to clarify the importance of safe rail operations as prescribed by legislation and promoted by the government (par. 3.5.5).

Chapter Four of the research provides an overview of human resource management (par. 4.1). This chapter outlines the historical foundation of human resource management (par. 4.2) and the various theoretical views and elements that comprise human resource management. The definitions and characteristics of human resource management form part of Chapter Four.

Chapter Four further highlighted the different approaches prevalent in human resources management and their application by various organisations and institutions (par. 4.2.1). A brief overview of human resource management's technological transformation and modernisation followed this (par. 4.2.6). The chapter further provided an overview of the various human resource management competencies and

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their impact on organisations. This chapter discusses the elements and factors of strategic human resource management, as well as the elements of strategy and human resource management (par. 4.5).

Chapter Five describes the research methodology adopted for this study (par. 5.1). The methodology entails identifying a research population and sample (par.) on which the research is based.

Chapter Six of the research outlines the integrated operations management and human resource framework. This framework outlines the various elements and aspects, providing a detailed articulation of the development and integration framework. This chapter proposes a conceptual framework integrating operations management and human resource management. Considering the internal and external environment, the conceptual framework strives to be adaptive and comprehensive to internal and external factors that influence and enhance the successful management of organisational objectives and outcomes. The proposed human resource and operations management integrated framework comprises crucial operational and human resource factors and elements, as well as internal and external environmental factors central to the functioning of organisations. The framework aims to further increase the effectiveness and efficiency of operations through the robust integration and alignment of vital human resources processes and elements, thereby enhancing the operations management outlook of organisations.

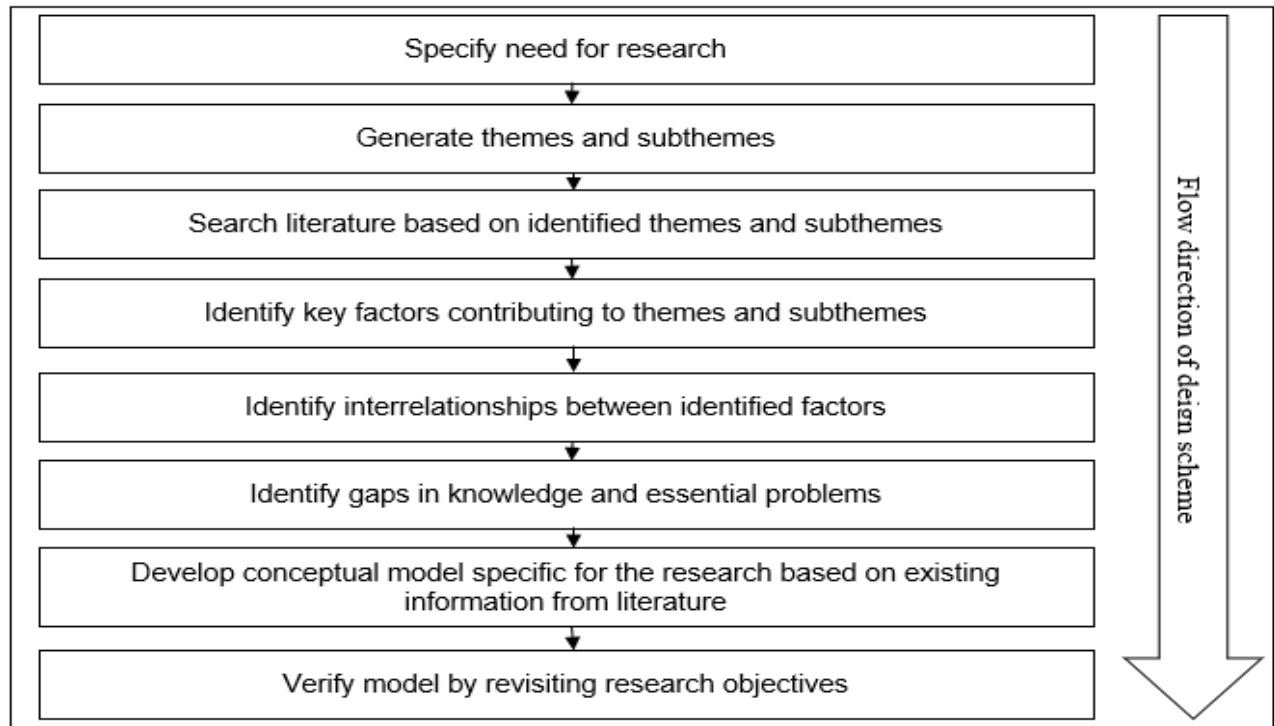
6.2 Methodology for the development of a conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in this research outlines the possible courses of action or presents an idea or thought. The development of a conceptual framework will provide rigour to the research process (Elangovan & Rajendram, 2015). Regarding this study, the conceptual framework can be viewed as a schematic representation, a diagram, or a map that depicts the researcher's current understanding of the problem (Yap *et al.*, 2016). Figure 6.1 illustrates the methodology for designing and developing a conceptual framework for human resources operations. It is essential to establish the

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study limits and boundaries, which serve as the foundation for the research design approach and indicate the direction for fieldwork.

Figure 6.1: Flow chart showing steps for designing a conceptual framework



Source: Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2013

The identified themes, issues, and knowledge gaps inform the development of a human resources management operations conceptual framework that integrates operational factors with human resource management processes, taking into consideration internal and external factors that influence and enhance the organisational objectives and outcomes.

The preliminary phase in the design process involved identifying knowledge gaps within the research area by critically evaluating the literature to clarify the study's themes and subthemes. This phase is critical for determining the scope of the research (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2013). The conceptual framework comes through the utilisation of information from the literature. The conceptual framework undergoes a validation

process, examining the research parameters and verifying that the developed framework accurately articulates the research objectives.

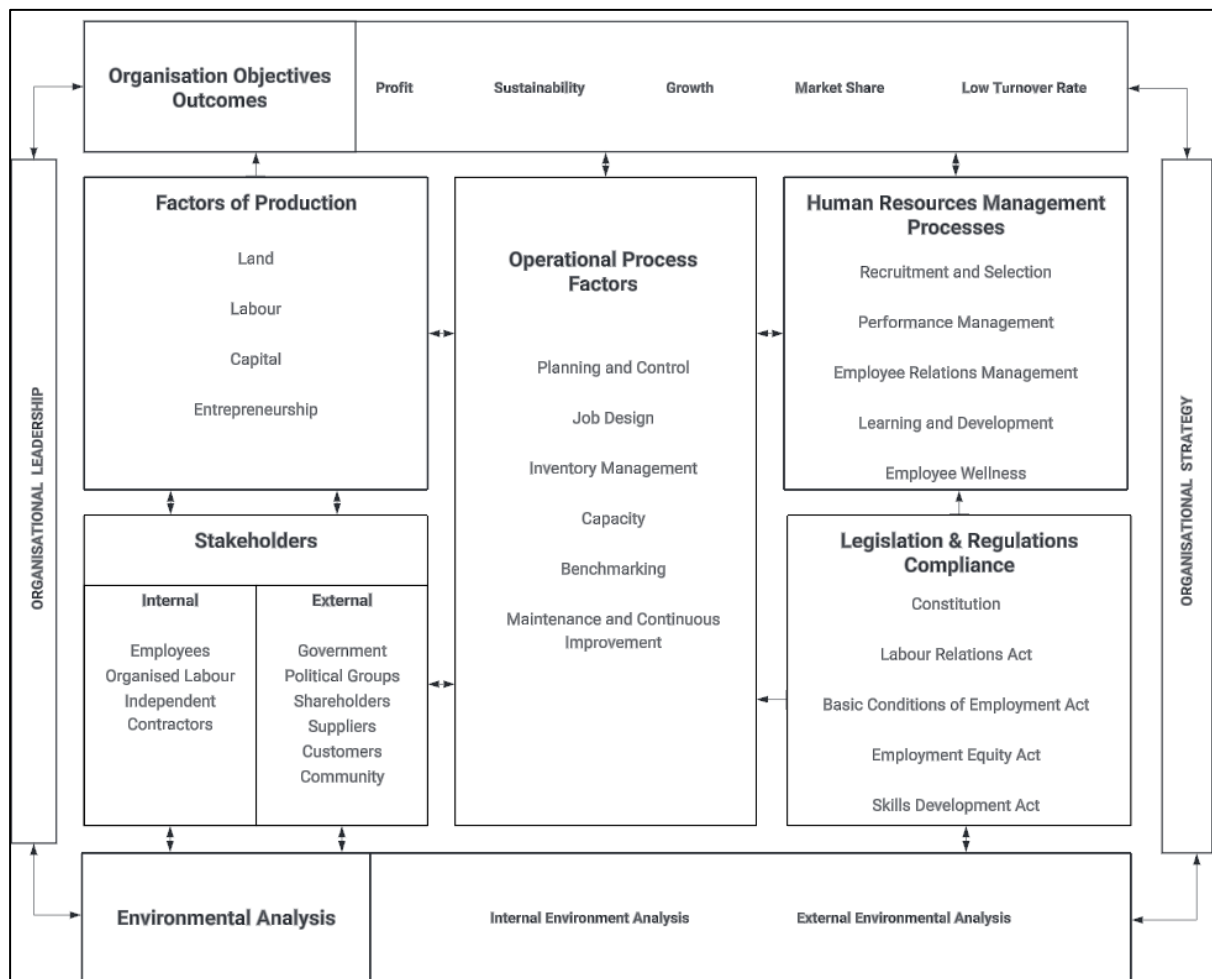
6.3 Selection of a framework

The review of existing literature provides the foundation and basis for a conceptual integrated framework of human resources management operations. The creation of an integrated human resources management operations framework for improving or enhancing organisational objectives and outcomes is facilitated by a knowledge of internal and external environmental factors, as well as an understanding of the organisation's various stakeholders. The framework is as comprehensive as possible, considering both internal and external factors, the review and integration of operational factors with human resource management processes (par. 4.5), and the contributions of stakeholders from both internal and external perspectives.

The above comprehensive conceptual integration of the human resources management operations framework has critical elements, including integrated dependency and interoperability, which provide the framework with its functionality. The key elements include environmental analysis, compliance with legislation and regulations, human resource management processes, operational process factors, stakeholders, production factors, and organisational objectives and outcomes.

Each key element will be articulated and expanded upon in this chapter to provide interoperability and interdependencies with the other vital elements. Further expansion on the aspects that form the basis of each essential element, including details and the framework's purpose, is provided in detail in this chapter. The value or contribution of each essential element, with its sub-elements or factors, will be more apparent in terms of its chronological contribution to the framework. It will provide a detailed interpretation and articulation of the framework and its associated key and sub-elements.

Figure 6.2: Conceptual integrated human resources management operations framework



6.3.1 Environmental Analysis

Figure 6.3: Environmental Analysis

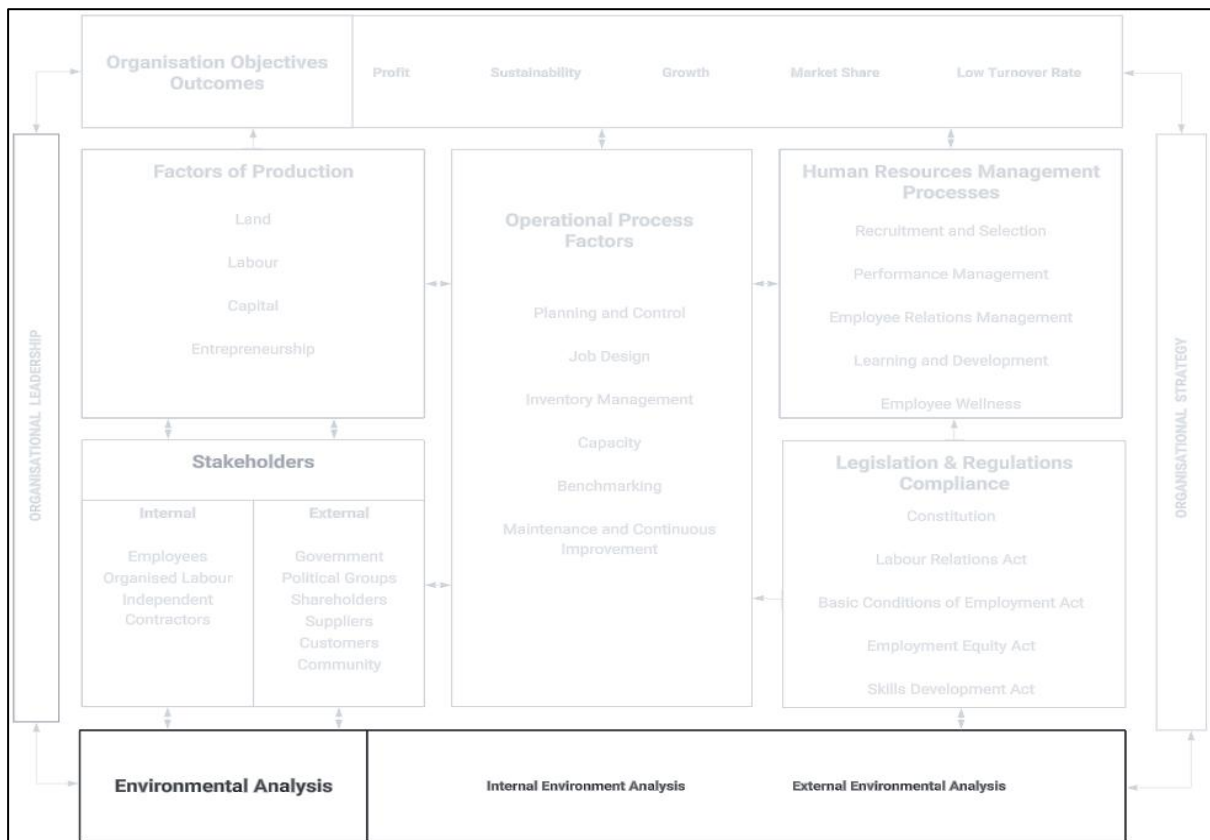


Figure 6.3, which has the environmental analysis as the highlighted element of the framework, serves as the initial element of the theoretical integrated human resources management operations framework. Environmental analysis contains two sub-elements: internal and external. Environmental analysis is a process undertaken by the organisation's leadership to understand the factors or elements that impact the organisation and how these factors impact the organisation.

Generally, environmental analysis refers to the systematic process of scanning, observing, forecasting, and assessing the environment. This implies that for both internal and external environments, there must be a process of systematic scanning, observation, forecasting, and interpretation of the respective environmental area (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017). The scanning process entails systematically checking for signals or changes through the utilisation of applicable tools or processes.

HR professionals are progressive leaders of transformation and innovation (par. 4.2.1). They should possess the capacity and capabilities to conduct regular analyses of both the external and internal environments within their scope of operation. These environmental assessments also capacitate and direct HR to position the organisation for success within that context.

It involves HR effectively monitoring industry trends, regulatory changes, demographic shifts, and other factors that may impact the organisation's workforce and competitive position (Engert *et al.*, 2016). Becoming an effective strategic partner requires HR to evolve from a primarily transactional role to a strategic one (par. 4.4). Therefore, the ability to undertake strategic aspects such as environmental analysis, alignment to business objectives, and being technologically inclined aids HR a great deal in becoming the strategic partner to business; through such strategic efforts and interventions, HR develops the capacity and capability to proactively contribute to organisational success, foster innovation, and adapt to the ever-changing business landscape (par. 4.2).

6.3.1.1 Internal Environmental Analysis

The internal environment refers to the inward-looking environment wherein the organisation is in control of or has a significant influence and appreciation. It is commonly referred to as the microenvironment, as it examines the aspect that the organisation is undertaking or has significant direct control and influence over (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021). The micro-environment is analysed using tools that scan, observe, forecast, and assess the internal environment. The key aspects to analyse are the internal environment, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

In this instance, the strengths will refer to what the organisation perceives or believes it is doing well or is on a good trajectory. The weakness would refer to what they believe are their areas of challenge or problematic areas in their operations and processes. The opportunities refer to areas they believe, from an organisational point of view,

could be explored and cultivated for the organisation's benefit. The threats could be areas of serious opposition or potential detriment to the organisation (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021; Gürel, 2017).

From a framework perspective, internal environmental analysis refers to the organisation undertaking scanning, observation, forecasting, and assessment of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from an internal perspective, thereby determining these aspects for detailed documentation and future intervention.

6.3.1.2 External Environmental Analysis

External environmental analysis refers to scanning, observing, forecasting, and analysing the external environment and its impact on the organisation. The external environment is commonly referred to as the macro-environment, as it comprises the factors outside the organisation over which the organisation has no direct control or influence. The macro-environment comprises sub-elements, including political impact, economic factors, social issues, environmental factors, technological factors, legal factors, and global factors, all of which influence or impact the organisation from an external perspective (Engert *et al.*, 2016; Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017).

In the external environmental analysis process, the organisation's leadership needs to use the environmental scanning, observation, and forecasting process to identify the effects or impacts of external environmental elements on the business. It enables the organisation to develop strategies and implement plans and processes to proactively and effectively respond to or prepare for the effects and impact of the external environment on the organisation (Fuertes *et al.*, 2020). To prepare and respond accordingly, the organisation must understand each element of the external environment.

6.3.1.3 Political Environmental Analysis

The political environmental analysis requires organisations to have the capacity and capability to scan, observe, and process information in both local and international political contexts. The organisation must be able to monitor prevailing political decisions and situations in the local and international environment, considering that in modern society, the world has become a global village, and what happens in one area politically can potentially impact other areas (Fuertes *et al.*, 2020).

It refers to political conflicts or decisions, such as those between Russia and Ukraine and those between Israel and Palestine. Considering that such conflicts impact the supply of goods, an organisation must appreciate how this affects its business and operations to develop mechanisms to address the impact on its organisation (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017). For instance, the organisation should also have the capacity to understand what the country's internal politics mean and their impact on the organisation.

For instance, the country will be undertaking general elections. The changes or impact of the elections have a significant political impact on the organisation, and this requires practical understanding and development of interventions or mechanisms to address the impact or effect. Therefore, the role of political and environmental analysis is imperative for the organisation to position itself to effectively and adequately deal with the impact of the political environment as it relates to the organisation.

6.3.1.4 Economic Environmental Analysis

Organisations operating in the economy or within a country must have an appreciation and the capacity to understand what the economic system entails and how it impacts their operations. It requires the organisation to understand the country's economy and that of the global economic sphere, considering that its operations and business are not isolated from the entire world.

The economic and environmental analysis requires the organisation to be able to scan and forecast what growth or factors will be prevalent in the economies and how this will impact or affect their organisations (Fuertes *et al.*, 2020). Once they have successfully analysed and interpreted the prevailing environment, they need to have the capacity and capability to develop interventions and processes that effectively position the organisation to withstand or navigate the impact of the economic environment.

In essence, the organisation needs to be able to scan, observe, forecast, and analyse the economic climate and its effective impact on its business and operations. It should be undertaken from an external organisation's perspective, enabling the organisation to assess its position, the impact of the economic environment on its operations, and the most suitable approach and interaction the organisation will develop to address the economic environment.

6.3.1.5 Social Environmental Analysis

As a socially responsible corporate citizen, the organisation must effectively navigate and address socially related matters that could impact or affect its operations and progress. The organisation must be aware of the societal matters and issues surrounding it. It cannot operate unconsciously in the society in which it operates. It applies both domestically and internationally, as the organisation, by its nature, has a domestic and global reach. For instance, if an organisation operates within an underdeveloped society, this could potentially affect operations and sustainability (Fuertes *et al.*, 2020; Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017).

Therefore, the organisation must develop mechanisms and strategies to assess the societal environment and understand the issues and matters prevalent in the society in which it operates, in order to address these matters proactively or efficiently for the benefit of its long-term operations. The economic and environmental analysis is critical for the organisation to enable it to make strategic decisions and interventions that position the organisation in a manner beneficial to its goals and that address societal

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matters or pertinent issues for the benefit of the organisation. It should be achieved through effective scanning, observation, and analysis of the societal environment.

6.3.1.6 Technological Environmental Analysis

Evolution and transformation contribute significantly to the effectiveness of organisations, as they provide new ways and approaches for undertaking operations. Therefore, organisations must understand the technological changes and developments, as this could significantly affect and impact the organisation's effectiveness. They need to be able to scan, observe, and forecast the technological changes or developments that are brought about and how these will impact or affect the organisation (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021).

This approach requires the organisation to be technologically inclined and aware to develop and position itself positively to benefit from technological innovations or developments. Organisations must be able to scan, observe, and forecast what technological changes and developments, both locally and internationally, will persist or emerge, positioning the organisation in a better light regarding technological environmental developments.

Technological and environmental analysis are crucial processes for organisations to understand external environmental factors that impact or influence them. As these are external factors over which the organisation does not have control or influence, the organisation must develop processes and interventions that enable it to respond or position itself in a positive manner.

6.3.1.7 Legislation Environmental Analysis

As organisations are juristic persons and assume status, they must understand the implications of legalisation and the laws applicable to them in their environment. The organisation needs to be able to scan, observe, and understand the implications of

legislation and the laws prevalent in the land, as this will impact their operations and business (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017).

The applicability of laws and legislation is an external factor that impacts any organisation's operations, internal processes, or approaches. Therefore, organisations must have the capacity and capability to scan and observe the legislation and laws prevalent to position the organisation in a better standing insofar as it relates to legislation and laws. It ensures that organisations can comply with and conform to laws and legislation without adversely affecting their business or operations, or their legal standing as juristic persons (Engert *et al.*, 2016; Fuertes *et al.*, 2020). The capacity and capability to conduct legislative environmental analysis will benefit the organisation by providing it with a clear understanding of the laws that apply to it and their potential impact or effect.

The effective undertaking of internal and external environmental analysis is critical for the organisation's effectiveness, as it enables them to better understand factors that would impact or affect the organisation from both internal and external points of view. Considering the importance of internal and external environmental analysis, the organisation should develop the capacity and capability to undertake environmental analysis as a critical framework element effectively.

6.3.1.8 Assessment of the Applicable Sector

Environmental analysis is a critical element of the framework. It requires that organisations have a structured approach to scanning and analysing how changes or environmental situations impact them. Considering that an organisation's operations could rely on or depend on the natural environment, the organisation must be aware of any changes or new aspects that could occur from an environmental perspective.

It means that the natural environment as an external factor should be understood. Measures put in place to ensure that whatever circumstance the natural environment presents, the organisation has developed measures and initiatives to ensure that this

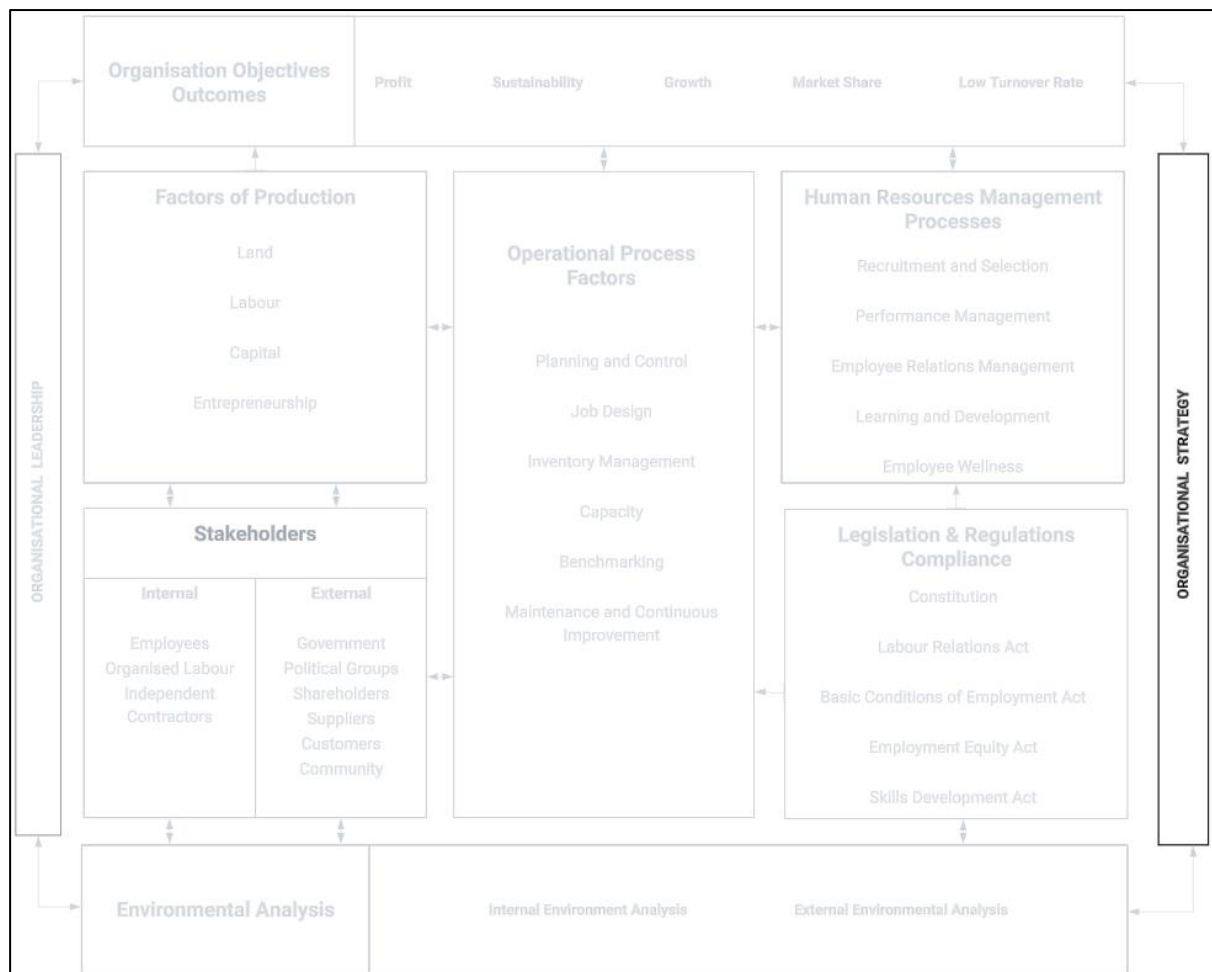
does not affect the organisation adversely, so the organisations are required to develop measures and initiatives to ensure that it does not affect or impact the natural environment adversely (Busetto *et al.*, 2022; Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023).

Overall, the capacity and capability to conduct environmental analysis serve as critical aspects for the organisation, as they provide insight into how the environment, as an external factor, could impact the organisation and how it should organise itself to avoid adversely affecting the environment. It requires an understanding and knowledge of the environment in which the organisation operates and undertakes its business activities.

Internal and external environments are critical for an organisation's effectiveness. It is paramount that the organisation develops processes and approaches to effectively scan, observe, forecast, and assess its environment, thereby gaining better strategic leverage on how to handle it.

6.3.2 Organisational Strategy

Figure 6.4: Organisational Strategy



The framework articulates the organisational strategy in Figure 6.4, which is the process of developing tactics or initiatives deemed suitable for addressing or approaching matters. Organisational strategy refers to the tactics or plans conceptualised and executed to deal with specific matters or issues within the organisation. Organisations must have an approach or process to develop strategies to address matters that could impact or affect the organisation (par 4.7).

The organisational strategy element in the framework articulates the process the leadership will adopt and use to develop tactical plans and initiatives in response to or in pre-empting factors that could impact or affect the organisation (Boon *et al.*, 2018; Lynch, 2018). The role of organisational strategy is a process that proactively and futuristically reviews factors to place an organisation in a better position to achieve its objectives and activities (par 4.7). As part of the organisational strategy, the organisation's leadership must be able to assess and conduct an environmental

analysis to determine the effects of internal and external factors on the organisation (Brown *et al.*, 2018; Holbeche, 2022b).

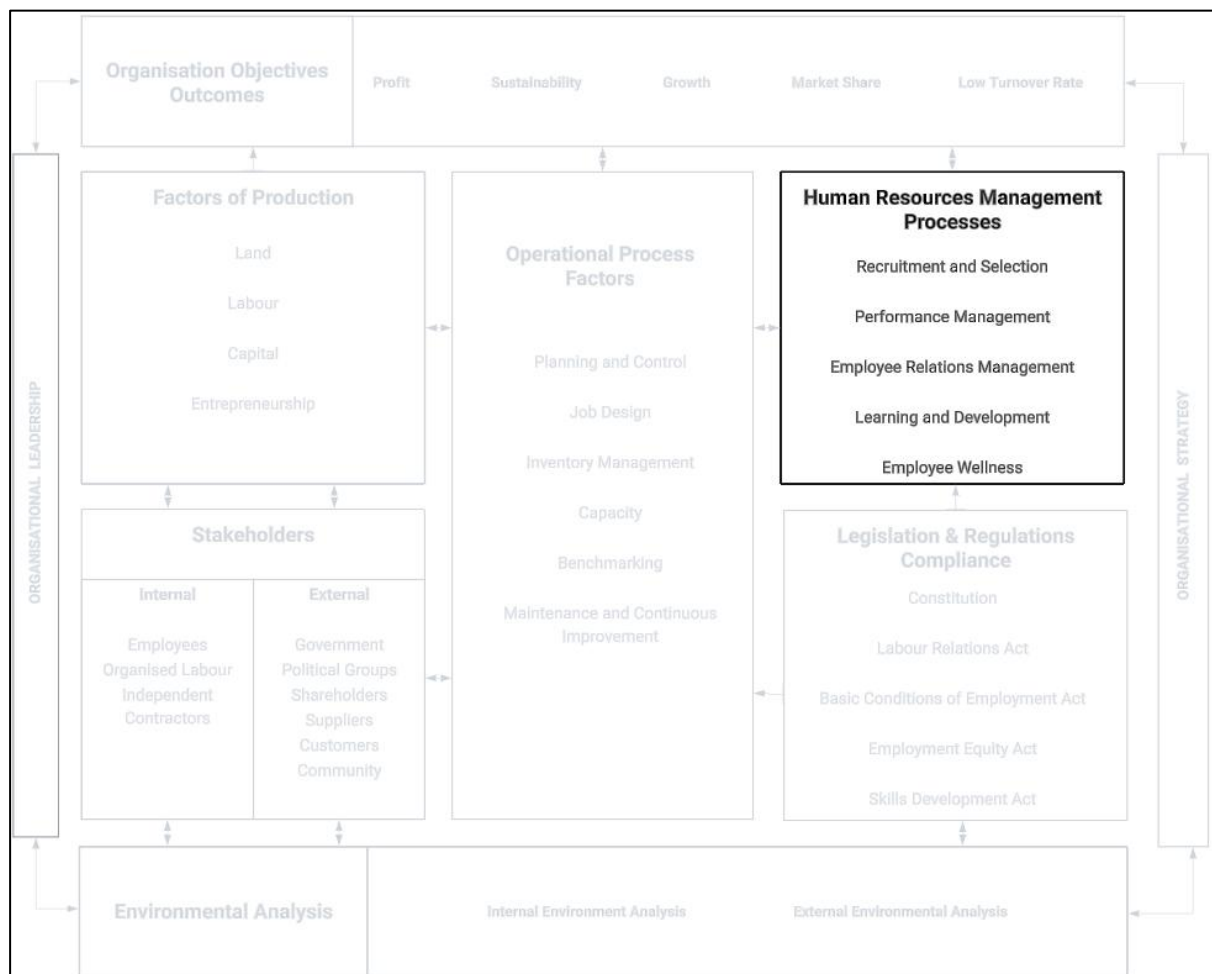
The environmental analysis's outcome should enable leadership to align strategies in response and effectively contribute positively to the organisation's objectives and outcomes. Therefore, the organisation's strategy serves as the bridge or road map to address matters identified by the organisation's leadership to improve or enhance the organisation's objectives and outcomes.

6.3.3 Human Resources Management Processes

The human resources management processes (par 4.2.2) are a critical and integral element of the framework, as they provide information on human resources management, guiding the framework's effectiveness. The human resources management process is a critical element that encompasses essential human resources functions, including recruitment and selection, performance management, employment relations, learning and development, and employee wellness (Holbeche, 2022a).

These essential human resources sub-elements or processes are central to the framework as they articulate how the process contributes to the effectiveness of the framework and the integration of operations management with adequate human resources management. To give effect to the framework, the organisation must have the capacity and capabilities to undertake various human resources processes, enabling the organisation to function effectively (Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a).

Figure 6.5: Human Resources Management Processes



6.3.3.1 Recruitment and Selection

The organisation needs to attract and select the most suitable, capable resources (par 4.2.1) to be available at the right time and place to contribute to the organisation's overall objectives. The organisation's leadership must identify suitable resources through effective recruitment mechanisms, such as advertising the position or sourcing candidates through legitimate job boards interview platforms, to assess their suitability (Holm, 2015).

It is paramount that the organisation can streamline its methods and approaches for identifying and attracting the required human capital that will effectively contribute to its organisational objectives (par. 4.5). This process, in practice, is the recruitment and

selection process, one of the fundamental elements of human resources management. It enables organisations to have a systematic and structured approach to identifying, attracting, and selecting suitable human resources (Fachrizal *et al.*, 2019).

In this structured and systematic approach, the organisation should develop policies, procedures, and guiding principles for conducting recruitment within the organisation. Developing and implementing the set policies, procedures, and guiding principles are critical, as they establish standards and ensure consistency in the process. The successful undertaking of this process requires leadership to set the desired objectives and goals for the approach, as well as the requirements for the process (Otoo *et al.*, 2018). HR professionals must have the human resources acumen and capabilities to undertake the recruitment and selection process effectively.

Furthermore, HR professionals must possess good business acumen and a thorough understanding of the various functions within the organisation to effectively identify, attract, and select the required resources for the organisation (Otoo *et al.*, 2018). Within the framework, the recruitment and selection process outlines how the organisation will be equipped to identify, attract, and select the most suitable human resources to contribute to the overall organisational objectives and outcomes. The developed policies, procedures, and guiding principles will standardise the approach, ensure that the methods used are consistent, and provide quality assurance from a process perspective.

6.3.3.2 Performance Management

Performance management is a quality assurance and measurement process developed and implemented to ensure the organisation's performance is measured, monitored, and improved (par 0). As a human resource management process, the performance agreement process enables the organisation to set individual performance goals, targets, and requirements, generally articulated in performance agreements or contracts (par 4.5.3). It requires individual employees and their

supervisors to identify performance objectives, provide achievable targets, and agree on them (Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a).

Once the targets are in place, the process stipulates regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure they are set targets or objectives. The necessary intervention and support are in place.

The process further requires supervisors and employees to appreciate their roles and responsibilities in relation to their contributions to the overall organisational objectives, as per their specific roles and functions (Maury, 2022; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a). It means that everyone concluding a performance agreement should understand how their respective performance agreement and its delivery contribute to the overall organisation's performance.

The process requires unambiguously identifying and articulating key performance areas that provide a general performance requirement. In the process, they will still need to identify key performance indicators (KPIs), which generally provide tangible confirmation that the required performance has been achieved (Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a). The performance contracting process is practically undertaken at the commencement of the performance period, allowing individuals and supervisors to identify areas of performance aligned with the overall organisation performance objectives (par. 2.7.6). For effectiveness, regular engagement and assessments of progress are deemed prudent.

An essential assessment should be undertaken halfway through the performance period, and a final assessment should be undertaken at the end. This ensures that the performance management process is effective in measuring, managing, and maintaining individual performance that contributes to the organisation's overall performance objectives and outcomes.

6.3.3.3 Employee Relations Management

The relationship between the employer and the employee is the cornerstone of any organisation, as it establishes the legal and binding relationship (par 4.2) where the other party offers their service/labour in return for the other party providing remuneration for the service/labour rendered (Hee & Jing, 2018; Wach *et al.*, 2022b).

Considering the various legal prescripts and legislation that govern this relationship, the organisation needs to comply with the applicable prescripts by developing governance mechanisms, such as policies and procedures, that ensure the effective, standardised, and consistent management of employment relations within the organisation (par 0).

Employee relations management ensures effective relations with stakeholders beyond the employer and employee. It also encompasses the process and approach of the relationship between other stakeholders, such as organised labour, employer associations (par. 7.1), the state, and job seekers (Fink *et al.*, 2020; Saeed *et al.*, 2019). This human resource management element is critical for ensuring that the relations are conducive and well-managed to deliver the organisation's objectives and outcomes effectively.

The role of employment relations in the framework articulates how the relationship between various stakeholders, with a specific focus on the employer and employee (par. 4.2.1), will be managed and what policies and procedures will standardise and ensure compliance and consistency in managing these relationships (Ahmad, 2018). It provides a straightforward approach and process for governing employment relationships in accordance with applicable legislation and legal prescripts to create a conducive organisational environment geared towards attaining the objectives and outcomes.

6.3.3.4 Learning and Development

As the world continues to develop and improve, it is also critical for human resources within the organisation to develop and acclimatise to the changes (par. 4.2.1). The learning and development element in human resources sets out the concept of continuous development and learning for employees (par. 0) so that they can develop towards the delivery of their set performance targets and outputs.

The learning and development process should outline the policies and procedures for identifying skills and capacity gaps, and provide mechanisms and approaches for addressing these gaps (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2020). Identifying gaps by the organisation aligns with the process in place to conduct skills gap analysis and develop procedures to assess capacity and competency, which may include aspects such as competency assessments (par. 4.2.5.4.6).

Competency assessments are critical for the organisation to understand the levels of competency within various functions. It enables the organisation to identify the level of competencies available and determine which areas require effective learning and development to address competency gaps (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022). It further assists the organisation as it strives for excellence and effective attainment of organisational objectives and outcomes. They can also predict areas of high capacity and competency and leverage this aspect.

Learning and development enable the organisation to structurally position itself to address skills development and capacity building that are critical and relevant to the organisation's performance and the delivery of its set objectives and outcomes (Holbeche, 2022b; Tanjung, 2020). Through these critical human resources management processes, the organisation can ensure its effectiveness, as it has structures and processes in place to continuously develop and capacitate its human resources. This enables human resources to develop the necessary capacity to support the delivery of overall organisational objectives (par. 4.5).

6.3.3.5 Employee Wellness

A health workforce is essential for the success of any organisation. Employee wellness management (par 0) is crucial to organisations as it supports employees both proactively and reactively to promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure access to health services. The provision of employee wellness support, as articulated through the framework, necessitates the development of policies and procedures that enable the effective implementation of the wellness function for all employees at all levels (Anbu, 2019; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a).

With employee wellness, the organisation can have a healthy workforce and perform at the required levels without compromising quality and the bottom line (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019). The wellness process has specific aspects, including proactive, reactive, and preventative wellness (par 0). As part of promoting employee wellness, the organisation will need a process to assess the state of wellness within the organisation effectively. They should use the state of wellness report to develop interventions that could be proactive, reactive, or preventive.

Employee wellness structured in the framework provides promising prospects for human resources management in the organisation as it enables the organisation to assess the health and welfare of its essential resources, which is the human resources, and also provides an approach and procedures on how to equitable and fairly implement the wellness process (par 0) to ensure that the key elements and factors are considered, the success of the organisation will be dependent on a health workforce (Shrouf *et al.*, 2020b).

One of the most effective approaches to employee wellness is to develop a comprehensive wellness program based on the pillars of proactive, reactive, and preventive measures. This program will serve as the roadmap for successfully implementing employee wellness initiatives. It leads to increased profitability, market share, or achievement of set performance targets without compromising the welfare and health of their employees (par 0).

In essence, the role of human resource management within the framework provides for effective, best-practice, and legislation-aligned approaches and processes to assist in managing the organisation's essential resources, which include both available and potential human resources. This element of the framework articulates how sub-elements of the human resources process can be utilised to promote effectiveness and ensure the organisation is capable of achieving set objectives and outcomes.

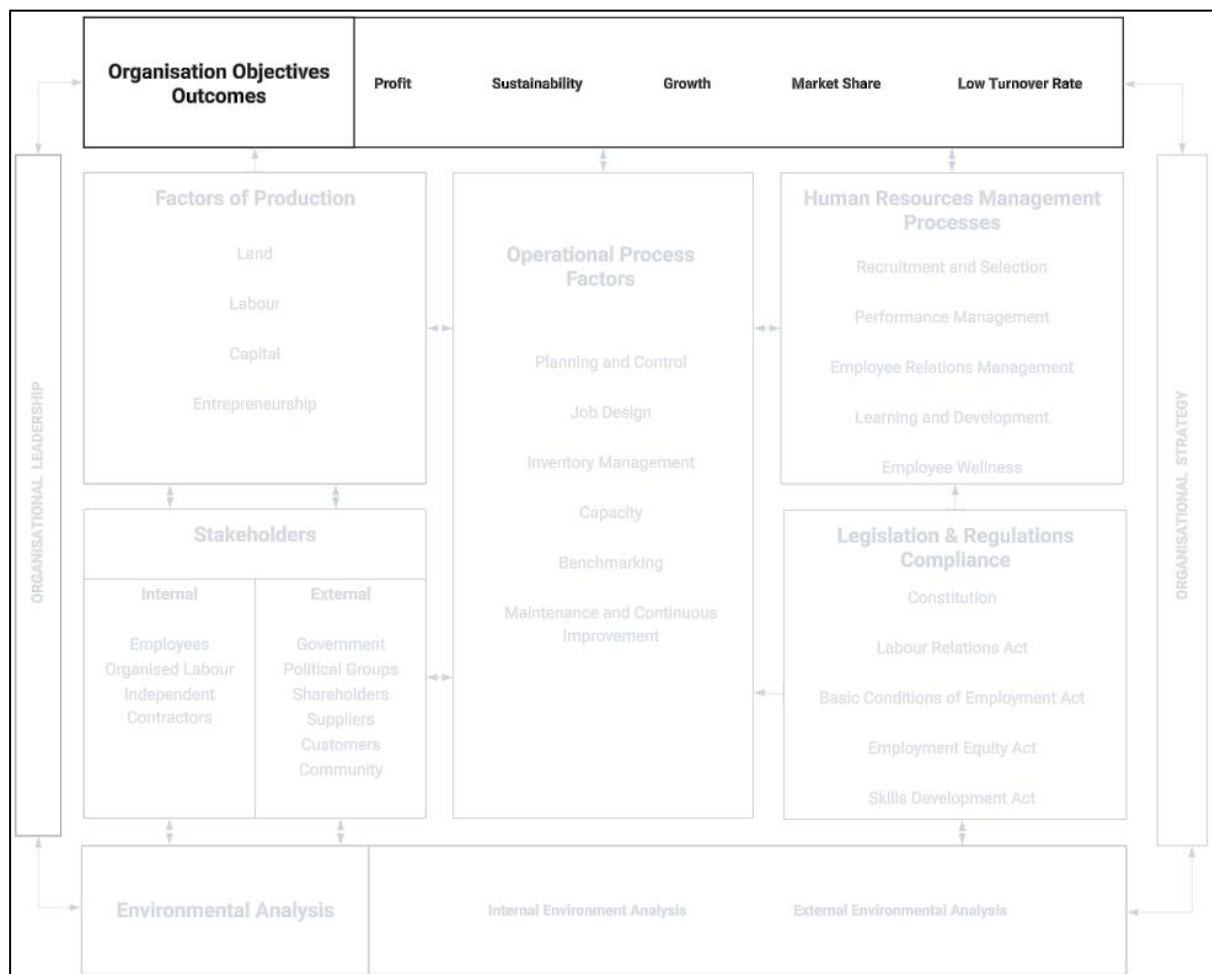
6.3.4 Organisational Objectives and Outcomes

6.3.4.1 Organisational Objectives

The framework's organisational objective articulates the aspects that guide the organisational direction and aspirations (par 4.4.2.1). It outlines the overall goals and purpose of the organisation, setting out its intentions for existence and undertakings. It includes the vision, mission, sustainability, and market share (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021). These objectives set the roadmap or blueprint and outline why the organisation exists and what it endeavours to achieve. The framework's elements ensure the organisation's objectives are attained or supported (par. 4.2.5.4).

The sub-elements of organisational objectives have a significant impact or value on the overall organisation, and they must be adequate to ensure that the organisation is performing and undertaking activities that are aligned with the set objectives (par. 4.4.2.1) as articulated (Gurel, 2017; Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017). It requires the organisation's leadership to have the capacity to align objectives through strategic analysis, integrate human resources management processes, and conduct practical environmental analysis to provide direction and set objectives accordingly.

Figure 6.6: Organisational Objectives and Outcomes



6.3.4.2 Organisational Vision and Mission

The organisation's vision and mission statements provide the perspectives that set the founding purpose and direction the organisation aims to achieve (par 4.4). In essence, the organisation captures the purpose and reason for existence, guiding them on how to move and why they should move in a specific manner. By setting or identifying the organisation's vision and mission, they can assess their internal and external environment and articulate how they would navigate them (GÜREL, 2017).

The vision and mission sub-element of the organisational objectives, concerning the framework, enables the organisation to develop a position and approach, and articulate how and why it should be implemented. In essence, through the vision and

mission assessment and setting process, the organisation can ask itself fundamental and philosophical questions about why it exists and what it intends to achieve. It further assists the organisation in continuously evaluating its progress towards attaining its mission and assessing how close it is to achieving its philosophical and futuristic vision (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021).

Answering these questions from a framework point of view provides future assessment and direction while guiding the organisation in the current (par. 4.6.5). To develop and set a vision and mission effectively, the organisation must also integrate the other key framework elements, such as strategy, leadership, human resources management process, and understanding of its overall objectives and outcomes.

6.3.4.3 Organisational Growth and Sustainability

The key objective of an organisation is to grow in various aspects effectively, but critically in the market share, the profit, and sustain itself in this regard (par 4.4.2.3). The organisation needs the acumen and capacity to assess, measure, and understand its growth and aspects of sustainability (par. 4.6.3). This means developing formulas to calculate how growth and profit will be measured. It requires a clear understanding and knowledge of the organisation's market, as well as continuous monitoring of these aspects. The process of measuring growth and sustainability must align with the other elements and sub-elements of the framework (Benzaghta *et al.*, 2021).

For instance, when measuring growth, the organisation needs to be able to clearly articulate which environmental factors affect them (par. 6.3.1). When conducting that analysis, they must be able to assess if aspects such as recruitment and selection, wherein the attraction of critical resources contributes to the growth and sustainability, are affected. (Fuentes *et al.*, 2020; Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017). However, it also assesses whether the wellness of their employees will be a variable in the calculation, as the health of employees determines the trajectory and growth of the business, whether human resources are the critical resources for undertaking the organisation's activities (par. 4.2.7).

6.3.4.4 Organisational Outcomes

Organisational outcomes are practically the desired state the organisation prefers and intends to be at any given point in assessing its health. They include the organisation's profitability position, low staff turnover, and obtaining a significant market share within the environment in which it operates. The role of organisational outcomes, like the objectives, guides the organisation towards a specific trajectory.

In this instance, the organisation evaluates its outcomes based on the other elements of the framework. The other elements, such as the strategy, environmental analysis, human resources management process, factors of production, and operations management processes, are aligned and undertaken with the sole purpose of yielding the desired organisational outcomes (Engert *et al.*, 2016; Fuertes *et al.*, 2020).

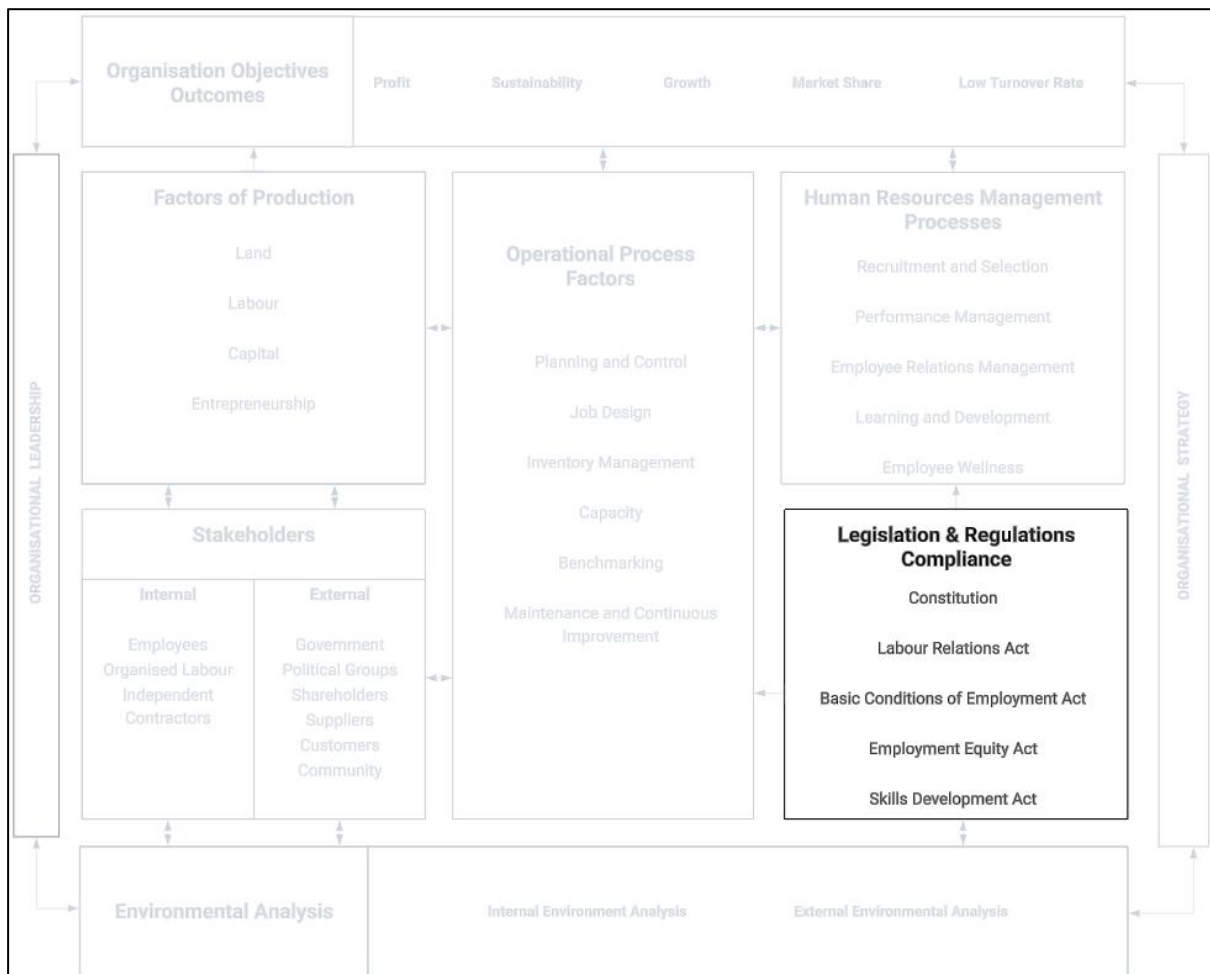
The organisation must have a mechanism to assess and measure the outcomes and create the required processes. For instance, the organisation must develop formulas and processes for measuring profitability. In this regard, the organisation needs to be able to measure its assets, liabilities, and cost of production against the amounts it generates from selling its goods or services. It clearly articulates the profit mechanisms. It needs to be a process that they can undertake at regular intervals to regroup and reset, where required, to ensure they are still on track to achieve their set organisational outcomes.

6.3.5 Legislation and Regulations Compliance

In general, the South African economy and the market are a highly regulated and compliance-driven environment that requires participants to comply with the applicable laws and regulations promulgated by the government (par. 4.2.2). To promote equity, fairness, and a conducive economic environment, the government has promulgated several pieces of legislation to regulate the environment. As the framework articulates, the specific focus relates to the regulations within the employment and labour relations space (par. 0). To give effect to the applicable legislation as per the framework, areas

of labour legislation deemed critical include the Labour Relations Act, Essential Conditions of Employment Act, and Skills Development Act, which give effect to the human resource management processes (Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

Figure 6.7: Legislation and Regulations Compliance



6.3.5.1 Labour Relations Act (LRA)

The Labour Relations Act (LRA), a critical legislation promulgated by the government, governs the relationship between employers and employees, trade unions, and employers' organisations (par. 0). The LRA sets out the framework for collective

bargaining, dispute resolution, and promoting fair labour practices as part of effective collective bargaining and employment relationship management (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

As the LRA sets the tone for governing the employment relationship, the organisation must further develop mechanisms, policies, and procedures to effect the legislation and its intended purpose. From a framework point of view, the LRA contributes to the human resources management process by promoting fairness and equity in the workplace through the embedded legislative requirements as well as by ensuring that both employers and employees adhere to agreed-upon terms and conditions of employment (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Holbeche, 2022b). The LRA further provides mechanisms for resolving disputes fairly and efficiently, which helps maintain positive labour relations and fosters a conducive work environment, as articulated in the human resources management processes concerning employment relations. Some critical aspects that the LRA addresses as part of employment relations include collective bargaining, which facilitates collaboration and engagement on matters of mutual interest between employers, trade unions, or employee representatives.

The process of collective bargaining, as an embedded human resource management process, allows employees to collectively negotiate with employers on matters of mutual interest, such as wages, working conditions, and benefits. The involvement of employees or their representatives in the bargaining processes promotes transparency and fairness in employment negotiations. Further, it strengthens the employment relationship, positively affects the overall human resource management process, and contributes to practical organisational objectives and outcomes (Holbeche, 2022a; Tanjung, 2020). Participation in collective bargaining and decision-making empowers the workforce, creating increased job satisfaction, stronger management-employee relationships, and ultimately, improved organisational performance.

Another critical aspect of the LRA concerning the effective human resource management process is that it provides a pivotal aspect in relationship management, specifically in dispute resolution. Comprehensively so, the LRA provides a range of

mechanisms for resolving disputes between employers and employees. The process entails conciliation, mediation, and arbitration (Anbu, 2019; Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020). The dispute resolution mechanisms outlined in the LRA address conflicts reasonably and efficiently by minimising disruptions in the workplace. It is beneficial to the overall organisation's objectives and outcomes as it reduces the turnover rate and ensures that the resources are focused on the organisation's growth and sustainability.

The other critical impact of the LRA on the effective human resource management process is promoting fair labour practices by eradicating unfair labour practices, such as discrimination, unfair dismissal, and victimisation of employees for engaging in lawful union activities. The LRA effectively sets the tone for establishing guidelines for fair disciplinary procedures and promotes equal treatment of all employees (Jackson *et al.*, 2018; Shrouf *et al.*, 2020a, b). Promoting fair labour practices creates an environment of equity, respect, and dignity. The role of an equitable and fair working environment is to foster a positive organisational culture and boost employee morale and loyalty.

The role of the LRA in the human resource management process is essential, as it contributes to shaping the employment relationship environment from an organisational perspective. It is significant in effective human resources management and contributes to the organisation's objectives and outcomes. By providing legally sound collective bargaining processes, effective dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting fair labour practices, the LRA contributes to and assists organisations in establishing and maintaining a conducive work environment where both employers and employees can engage meaningfully.

6.3.5.2 Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)

One of the critical legislations on the human resource management processes is the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA). This significant legislation is essential as it sets out the minimum employment standards related to working hours, leave, remuneration, and other primary conditions of employment. As a contributing element

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to human resource management, the legislation protects vulnerable workers and promotes decent work practices (Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

The BCEA effectively contributes to human resources management by establishing minimum standards for employment conditions applicable to all organisations, irrespective of their size and nature. The legislation's fundamental role is to ensure that employees are treated fairly and equitably and that all organisations set minimum employment standards and conditions. The organisation must establish a mechanism to embed the BCEA and its associated mechanisms, promoting and creating a positive work environment that culminates in increased employee satisfaction and reduced risk of labour disputes and legal liabilities (Holbeche, 2022b). Through the provision of the BCEA, which articulates aspects such as working hours, remuneration, leave, and other primary conditions of employment, the organisation must set parameters, policies, and practices that are in line with the legislation to bolster the human resource management processes and protect the human resources rendering their service to the organisation to ensure that a conducive working environment is created and maintained.

The provision of clearly articulated mechanisms, policies, and guidelines that govern working hours, overtime, rest periods, and annual leave entitlements for employees will contribute to preventing overwork and ensure that employees have sufficient time for rest as well as promote a work-life balance, through decreasing employee burnout, and enhance overall job satisfaction. It effectively culminates in increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and lower turnover rates (Tanjung, 2020). The setting of minimum wages, as articulated in the BCEA, contributes to solidifying an equitable and competitive remuneration package for the organisation. It further ensures fairness and equality within the workplace, which benefits the organisation's objectives and outcomes more.

The employment conditions outlined in the legislation, as part of effective human resource management, also address various other facets of employment conditions, including employment contracts, termination procedures, and workplace policies, which are crucial in overall employment relationship management (Holbeche, 2022a).

The provision enhances uniformity and equity in employment practices by regulating and implementing the minimum standards outlined in the legislation, while promoting effective human resource management.

Essentially, the BCEA's role is to promote equitable standards and ensure fairness by establishing minimum employment standards and advocating for decent work practices in South Africa. Furthermore, the BCEA ensures that employees are treated fairly and justly by regulating working hours, leave entitlements, remuneration structures, and other fundamental employment conditions.

6.3.5.3 Skills Development Act (SDA)

The concept of continuous development and learning is founded in the Skills Development Act (SDA), as its primary purpose is to develop skills in the human resources that are available and willing to be developed (par 0). To give effect to the fundamental objective of the Act, organisations must develop mechanisms to align with the objectives of the Act and its purpose. The act has characteristics of various mechanisms, including skills development levies, leadership, and training programs; therefore, the organisation must align its approach and processes accordingly (Tanjung, 2020).

Mechanisms that the organisation needs to develop and implement address the aspect of developing the capacity required to deliver the objectives and outcomes of the organisation (par. 4.5). This involves identifying skills gaps, developing mitigation plans, and monitoring the effectiveness of these plans in terms of skills development. The process is further enhanced to identify skills shortages and directly address the challenge to prevent it from spilling over (Boon *et al.*, 2018; Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

As part of the improved efficiencies, the SDA promotes continuous learning and development within the organisations to maintain a skilled and competitive workforce. By investing in skills development initiatives, employers can enhance employee performance, boost retention rates, and better adapt to changing market demands.

Other critical aspects of the skills development regime include the provision of leadership, training programs commissioned by sectoral training authorities, and specified training providers. It is beneficial as organisations can access such programs as part of their organisational skills development process to ensure that their human resources have access to quality and practical training and development programmes.

As leadership programs blend theoretical learning with practical work experience, it becomes crucial for organisations to develop mechanisms and processes to manage the delivery of such programs, ensuring effectiveness and desired outcomes. The leadership programs allow individuals to acquire new skills and qualifications while gaining valuable on-the-job training (Jackson *et al.*, 2018). These processes enable organisations to nurture talent internally and create a pool of skilled workers to contribute to the overall organisation. Organisations' provision and participation in leadership addresses specific skills shortages within their industry, leading to a highly skilled and motivated workforce ready and available to serve the organisation and contribute to its objectives and outcomes.

The role of SDA for the organisation is critical, as this aspect plays a pivotal role in fostering continuous learning and development within the organisation, and contributes significantly to the advancement of overall capacity provision for the organisation in line with the delivery and attainment of its objectives and outcomes.

6.3.5.4 Employment Equity Act (EEA)

Naturally, the Employment Equity Act promotes workplace equity and diversity by eradicating unfair discrimination and advancing equal opportunities for all employees. Organisations can address historical disparities and inequalities in the work environment that were instituted and perpetuated by a non-democratic government through the act and its provisions (par. 0).

The EEA makes provisions, and in fact, it mandates organisations to implement employment equity measures to ensure equitable representation of designated groups

in their workforce (Jackson *et al.*, 2018). The designated groups must be represented at all levels of the organisation and must find expression within their organisations regarding their gender, race, and age. Organisations are further mandated to develop mechanisms, policies, and processes that prohibit unfair discrimination based on various factors such as race, gender, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation across all facets of employment (par. 0).

The redressal of injustices by non-democratic governments is achieved through provisions in the act, such as affirmative action initiatives to rectify past inequalities and promote equitable representation of designated groups in the workplace (Nankervis *et al.*, 2022). Organisations must ensure that their policies, processes, and practices are aligned with the Act's objectives to implement the redress progressively and ensure that the redress contributes to the overall organisational objectives and outcomes. The organisation can utilise certain human resources management processes to meet the act's requirements, such as targeted recruitment and training programs, preferential treatment in recruitment and promotion processes, and establishing mentorship and skills development schemes.

The act is deemed essential for the human resources management processes. The attainment of the overall organisational objectives and outcomes, as it sets the basis of the equitable conducted organisation, must be adhered to to ensure that the organisations are operating under a conducive environment as a non-racial, non-sexist, and non-discriminatory environment based on age (Greer, 2021; Nankervis *et al.*, 2022; Pattanayak, 2020). The mandate placed on designated employers to implement measures for the equitable representation of designated groups is of paramount importance. The organisation should ensure compliance while focusing on its objectives and outcomes.

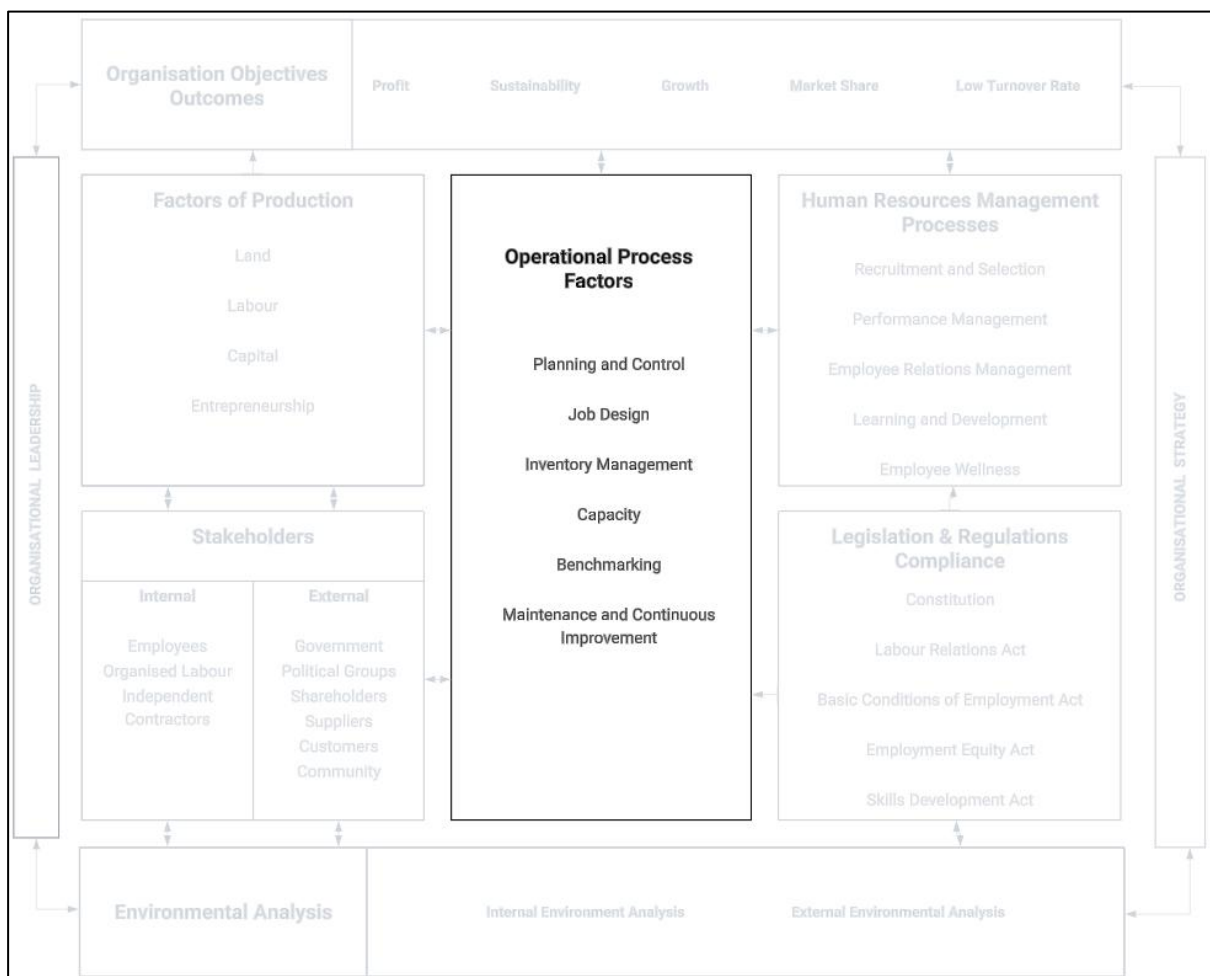
All the legislation identified and articulated as part of the framework collectively contributes to effective human resources management. This is evident as they are all aligned to ensure that the organisational process and approaches promote fairness, equity, and productivity in the workplace. They facilitate dispute resolution and foster continuous learning and development among employees. This is all in line with the

Constitution's provision for fair labour practice and an equitable and conducive environment.

6.3.6 Operational Process Factors

The theoretical and practical concept of operational process factors is crucial in driving organisational success by aligning activities with strategic objectives and ensuring efficient resource utilisation. The key sub-elements of operational processes include planning and control, job design, inventory management, capacity, benchmarking, and maintenance.

Figure 6.8: Operational Process Factors



6.3.6.1 Planning and Control

Planning entails setting clear objectives, identifying the necessary resources, and devising strategies to achieve organisational goals as part of the operational process. Organisations must consider certain factors when planning operational activities, including economic conditions, regulatory environment, and market dynamics, as articulated in the framework's environmental analysis (Jeon & Kim, 2016). This approach enables organisations to effectively structure themselves in a manner that allows them to attain their objectives through operational effectiveness and efficient processes.

The sub-element of effective control refers to mechanisms that enable the organisation to ensure the execution of those plans efficiently and the correction of deviations without delay. Organisations need to have the capacity to robustly monitor performance, compare actual results to planned objectives, and take corrective actions, when necessary, to ensure that the sub-element for operational factors is under effective control.

Effective planning and control form a fundamental basis for organisations to navigate the unique economic, regulatory, and market dynamics that directly and indirectly impact their operations. Organisations must develop mechanisms and processes to establish clear, measurable, and achievable objectives that are aligned with their mission and vision, ensuring effective planning and control of operations. Their approach should be cognisant of the economic disparities, political dynamics, and social issues, which are the environmental analysis factors (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016). Another critical aspect of planning and controlling is the process and capacity to identify and mobilise financial resources, human capital, technology, and infrastructure.

The organisation must also have the capacity and capabilities to develop effective strategies that include analyses of the competitive landscape, market trends, and relevant regulatory frameworks. This aligns with the other elements within the framework, making the integrated approach more effective and worthwhile. It

effectively achieves this through developing and monitoring metrics that provide live updates and information as required.

Overall, the planning and control process requires organisations and leadership to have the capacity and be agile when dealing with the planning and control operational process factors (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Engert *et al.*, 2016). They should be able to measure, develop, and maintain an approach that yields the desired outcomes, aligning with the set objectives.

6.3.6.2 Job Design

The job design process within the operational process factor focuses on structuring roles and tasks within the organisation to optimise efficiencies, improve productivity, and contribute towards increased employee satisfaction. When organisations develop mechanisms to address job design, factors such as cultural diversity, labour laws, and the socioeconomic context must be considered; they significantly hinder the process.

The organisation and its leadership must create roles that provide fair compensation and opportunities for growth, enhance employee morale, and contribute positively to the overall organisational performance, objectives, and outcomes (Belcourt *et al.*, 2022; Jackson *et al.*, 2018). The job design element must comply with applicable legislation and frameworks that cover the nature of the work and how it is performed. As part of continuous improvement and development, the job design approach should address socioeconomic challenges, such as high unemployment rates and income inequality, by creating opportunities for economic empowerment and social mobility (Anbu, 2019).

Through the job design process, the organisation can consider those who have been developed and trained through the skills development process and utilise their skills in other areas, further promoting the value of integrated human resources management and operations management.

6.3.6.3 Inventory Management and Capacity

In organisations, inventory management involves overseeing the flow of goods while minimising costs and maximising efficiency (par. 2.5.3.3). This process requires consideration of factors such as transportation infrastructure, supply chain disruptions, and currency fluctuations. The organisation can consider tools such as just-in-time inventory, demand forecasting, and supplier relationship management to optimise inventory levels and improve customer satisfaction. In this process, the organisation must have a capacity management focus, which involves assessing and optimising its ability to meet the demand for its products or services (Holbeche, 2022b; Tanjung, 2020).

Disregarding external factors is impossible when conducting an inventory management approach, as this also considers other factors that impair or impact operations (par. 2.5.3.3). These factors include power supply reliability, the availability of skilled labour, and infrastructure development. One of the key ways the organisation can effectively undertake inventory management is to invest in the training and development of technology and systems, as well as technology-inclined mechanisms for collaboration with various stakeholders. The critical aspect is ensuring that inventory is controlled and effective.

6.3.6.4 Benchmarking

The organisation should have the capacity and capabilities to conduct benchmarking, which involves comparing processes and practices against industry standards or competitors (par. 2.5.3.5). This requires a robust identification of areas for improvement, as it enables the organisation to maintain its competitiveness in a diverse market. The organisation must analyse best practices, adopt innovative technologies, and foster a culture of continuous learning. It will benefit the organisation significantly as it would have taken into account industry standards and competitors, and averaged operational efficiency (Pattanayak, 2020).

The benchmarking process enables the identification and adoption of best practices from industry leaders and top-performing competitors. Once this information is analysed, benchmarking partners' processes, strategies, and technologies provide valuable insights into innovative approaches and successful tactics (par. 2.5.3.5). This knowledge and new information from the benchmarking process can leverage streamlining operations, enhance efficiency, and drive continuous improvement initiatives within the organisation and the overall objectives and outcomes (Bailey *et al.*, 2018; Mahapatro, 2021). Naturally, benchmarking promotes the identification and adoption of innovative technologies and practices that help organisations maintain competitiveness and foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

The benchmarking process is critical for the organisation as it is a valuable tool to enhance competitiveness, drive innovation, and achieve operational excellence in a diverse environment (Mahinda *et al.*, 2023). By analysing industry standards, adopting best practices, embracing innovative technologies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing, organisations can significantly enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance through benchmarking.

6.3.6.5 Maintenance and Continuous Improvement

The process factor of maintenance includes preserving equipment functionality to ensure smooth operations when required and for an extended period (par. 2.5.3.2). Organisations sometimes face challenges, such as infrastructure maintenance issues, that may impact their maintenance practices. The organisation must be able to develop and undertake preventive maintenance by implementing asset management systems and empowering employees to address inefficiencies (Bruno *et al.*, 2018c).

The organisation can develop and implement such efficiencies by engaging with various stakeholders for effective capacity management. These engagements include engaging with customers to understand their needs and preferences through soliciting

feedback, conducting surveys, and analysing the data to gain further insights into demand patterns and behaviour (par. 2.5.3.1).

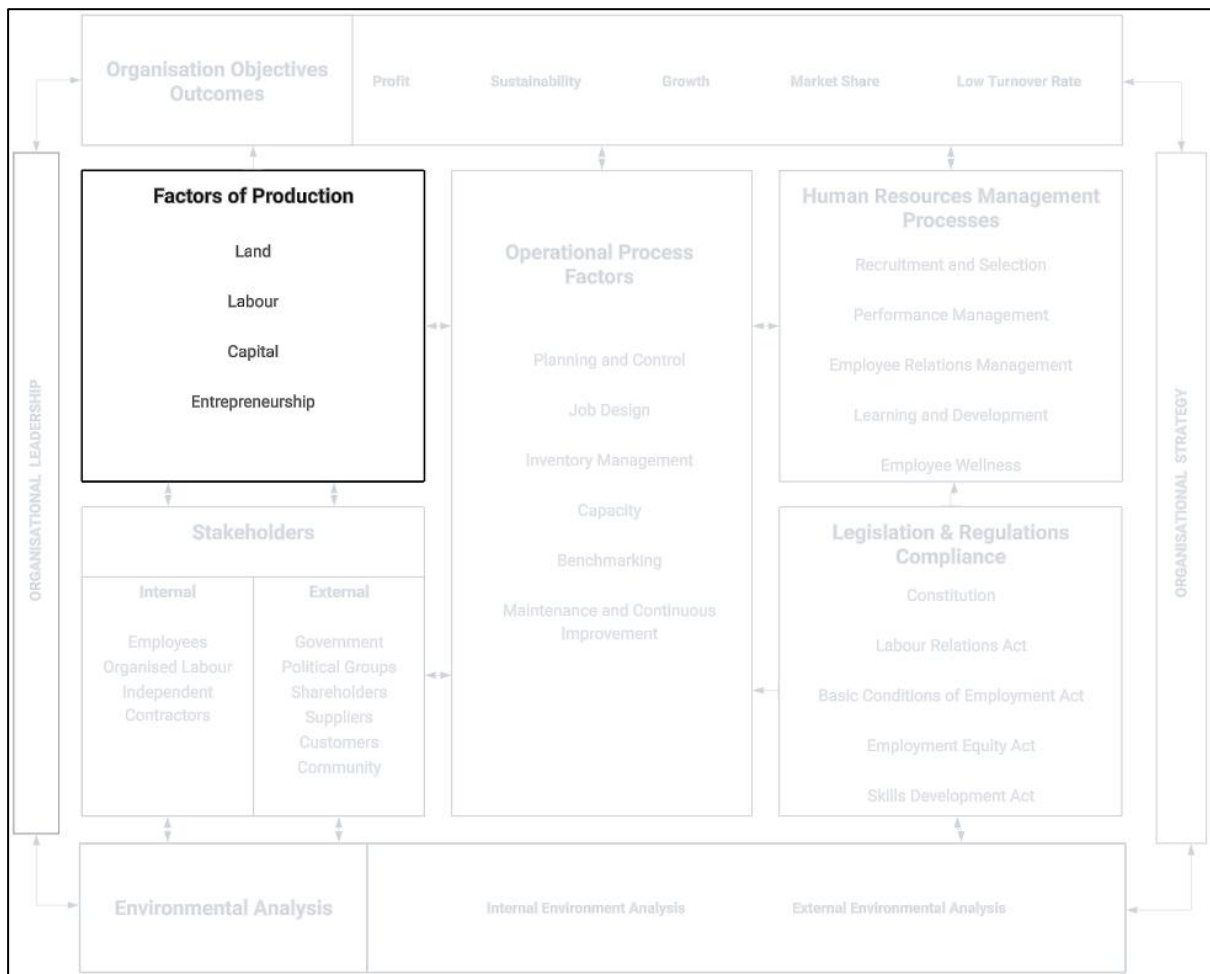
The other groups for engagement would include suppliers, regulatory bodies, industry peers, communities, and competitors to obtain the information that will improve efficiencies (Friedman & Miles, 2002).

The maintenance approach not only refers to the physical maintenance of equipment or machinery but also outlines that maintaining information and other processes is equally important. This maintenance includes robust and valuable stakeholder engagement through collaboration (Parmar *et al.*, 2010). With effective engagement and collaboration with customers, suppliers, regulators, industry peers, and communities, organisations can gather insights, anticipate demand, optimise planning, and respond proactively to market changes by leveraging collective expertise and resources.

By effectively managing these operational process factors, the organisation can enhance productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability, ultimately contributing to achieving its overall objectives and outcomes. The operational factors interface and integrate with the other elements of the framework, such as the human resource management process and the environmental analysis, to effectively contribute to the objectives and outcomes.

6.3.7 Factors of Production

Figure 6.9: Factors of Production



Factors of production are those critical aspects in any organisation that are the foundation of how the organisation undertakes its operations. It includes land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship.

6.3.7.1 Land

Land is a fundamental factor in production, as it contains natural resources such as minerals, forests, water bodies, and agricultural land. In the organisational context, this also refers to the space or area where the organisation is situated or located. It carries high significance as the first and most critical resource an organisation must consider

when establishing it, considering that it is the primary place where the production or services will be undertaken (Holbeche, 2022b).

Organisations strategically acquire land for various purposes aligned with their objectives as part of organisational development and growth. It enables them to have land as an asset where they conduct their operations. However, it also serves as an investment for the sustainability and growth of the organisation and its operations. The acquisition and management of land are integral parts of the operational processes in any organisation, and this should be utilised not only for the place of operations but also as an investment for the long-term benefit of the organisation, which addresses its objectives and outcomes (Nkomo & Marnewick, 2021).

This sub-element in the production factors is a critical factor driving economic activities and operations for an organisation. This sub-element must align with the overall operations factors and the human resource management process, as it provides the actual premises and structure where the production of services aligns with the organisation's objectives and outcomes. Overall, the effective management of land as a resource is essential for organisations to achieve their strategic objectives and outcomes through the efficient and meaningful optimisation of their operational processes that align with their human resource management processes to attain the desired outcomes.

6.3.7.2 Labour

The factor of production, which is one of the central factors, is labour. It usually refers to the organisation's human resources (par. 4.2. The labour force or human resource naturally consists of diverse levels, including skilled artisans, professionals, and those with management capacity and capabilities (Hewett *et al.*, 2018; Jackson *et al.*, 2018; Katzenellenbogen, 1982). Each level's capacity is determined by their skills, education qualifications, years of experience, and training. The organisation needs to establish mechanisms and processes to identify the types and levels of labour required and measure its capacity to undertake the roles within the organisation.

Organisations utilise labour as a resource (par. 2.2) to achieve their overall organisational objectives and outcomes (Anbu, 2019). It requires the effective alignment of human resource management processes and operational process factors, while considering the external and internal environment of the organisation, to structure labour as a resource effectively. The practical and efficient deployment of labour as a resource ensures that the organisation's tasks proceed in a timely and cost-effectively manner. The organisation should be able to set processes, such as workforce planning, through the alignment and utilisation of human resources processes (par. 4.2.2), to enable effective operations (Cooke, 2018; Jackson *et al.*, 2018).

Labour is a critical factor in production, and various levels and skills contribute to the organisation's effectiveness. Therefore, the organisation must develop mechanisms to identify the required labour, establish processes to measure their capacity, and provide mechanisms to develop and sustain the skills necessary to achieve the organisational objectives and outcomes (par. 2.7.7).

6.3.7.3 Capital

Capital is a production factor comprising financial resources, physical assets, and infrastructure used in production (par. 2.4.1). It contributes significantly to the organisation, as it provides the financial capacity to support its operations. However, access to capital varies across industries and sectors in the country (par. 2.3.7). Well-capitalised industries, such as finance, mining, and telecommunications, often possess ample financial resources, advanced technology, and modern infrastructure. On the other hand, smaller businesses, startups, and sectors in rural or underserved areas may face challenges in accessing capital due to limited resources and inadequate infrastructure.

In the broader spectrum of organisations in South Africa, capital is invested to achieve strategic objectives related to growth, innovation, and profitability (Van *et al.*, 2022). Capital investments in machinery, equipment, and technology enhance production

efficiency, reduce costs, and increase output (par. 4.3). Investments in research and development (R&D), technology upgrades, and infrastructure development enable organisations to innovate, adapt to market changes, and remain competitive. Effective capital investments further support business expansion, enabling companies to penetrate their respective markets and adopt effective diversification strategies, which ultimately lead to long-term revenue growth and profitability Prasad *et al.*, 2019).

The country's capital-intensive industries depend mainly on the efficient use and maintenance of capital assets. For instance, manufacturing sectors such as automotive, chemical, and electronics rely on sophisticated machinery and equipment for their production processes. Conversely, construction workers rely heavily on heavy machinery and tools for site development and building construction (par. 2.5.2.4). The various sectors and organisations require a structured capital investment process and mechanisms to support their needs and enable them to attain their objectives and outcomes.

6.3.7.4 Entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship as a significant factor of production involves identifying, organising, and managing resources coordinated to create new ventures or innovations within existing ones. It plays a pivotal role in the economy, comprising a diverse range of startups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and innovative ventures. Several public and private sector initiatives are being implemented to promote entrepreneurship, support small businesses, and foster innovation (Davidsson, 2015).

Many government programs, incubators, accelerators, and funding schemes are in place to support SMEs and startups in South Africa. It provides them access to financing, mentorship, networking opportunities, and business development services. Entrepreneurship as a process plays a significant role as a factor of production, guiding and directing the innovation and business acumen required to develop and improve the effectiveness of an organisation. The process must be practical and utilised

accordingly to contribute to the objectives and outcomes of the organisation. To support and improve entrepreneurial capacity, government and private sector initiatives in major cities, such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, host thriving innovation hubs, co-working spaces, and tech incubators that foster collaboration, creativity, and entrepreneurship across various sectors (Teck *et al.*, 2019).

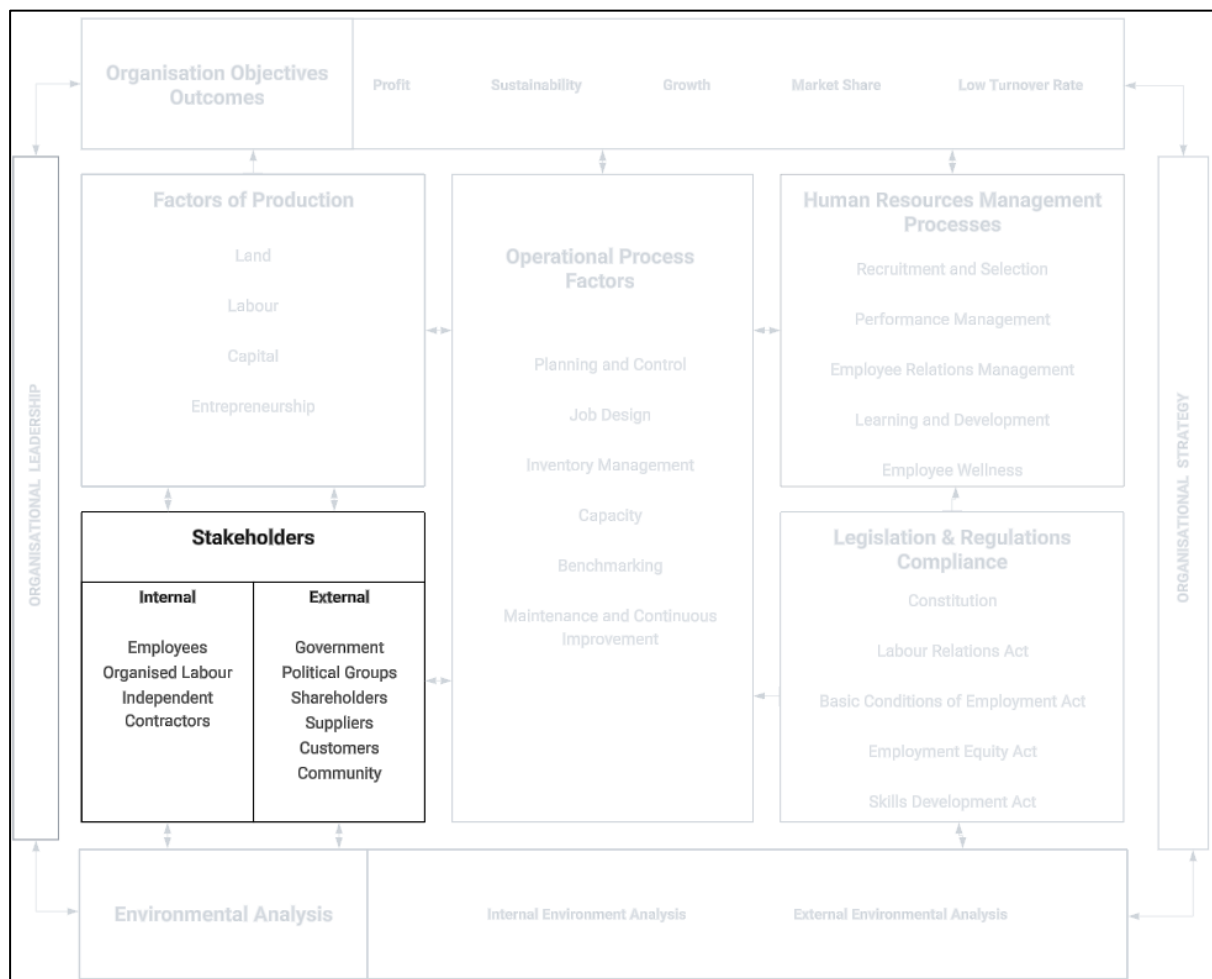
Entrepreneurship aligns with organisational objectives by driving growth, innovation, and adaptation to market changes. It enables organisations to explore new markets, expand product/service offerings, diversify revenue streams, and spur innovation within organisations by promoting a culture of creativity and risk-taking (CAN, 2021).

Through entrepreneurship, organisations adapt their capacity to evolving market dynamics and technological advancements. It is further supported and aligned with the human resource management processes as it creates organisational culture and practices that support entrepreneurship within the organisations by fostering a culture of innovation and providing training opportunities for employees to drive innovation and business growth (Davidsson, 2015; Javadian *et al.*, 2016; Teck *et al.*, 2019). As part of the process, various aspects of the organisational operations, such as product development, market expansion strategies, and business model innovation, are impacted to improve the objectives and outcomes. As a factor of production, entrepreneurship is a crucial driver of growth and innovation for any organisation, as it embeds an innovation culture and facilitates collaboration for organisational success.

6.3.8 Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or groups that interact with the organisation in its activities and operations. They all play a significant role in the organisation's operations and have different points and purposes of engagement with the organisation (par. 4.5.1). Various stakeholders engage with the organisation, including both internal and external ones. The internal stakeholders are more inwardly focused and iterative, and the external ones are more outwardly focused and have an inward engagement perspective.

Figure 6.10: Stakeholders



6.3.8.1 Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders have a more direct impact or influence on the direction and activities of the organisation as they are more based on or directly involved from an inward point of view. It includes employees (par. 4.2.7.4), executives, managers, supervisors, board of directors, shareholders, trade unions, and employer representative organisations (par. 0). The internal stakeholders hold an integral stake in the functioning and success of any organisation as they are directly involved in the functions and activities of the organisation. The organisation needs to have the capacity and develop processes for identifying and effectively managing the internal stakeholders to ensure that their contribution and participation in the organisation's activities are effective. They add the desired value to the objectives and outcomes.

The alignment of internal stakeholders with human resource management processes is essential, as it effectively manages critical internal stakeholders, including employees, trade unions, and management (Friedman & Miles, 2002).

The legislative and regulatory element of the framework also provides for the effective management of other internal stakeholders, such as the board of directors, trade unions, and employer representative organisations. This element establishes the governance and rules of engagement that govern how internal stakeholders must interact with the organisation. Their role is facilitated through policies and procedures emanating from legal prescripts (Derakhshan *et al.*, 2019).

Each internal stakeholder needs to understand their role and contribution to the organisation to have the capacity to outline and express the expectations it has of each stakeholder. For instance, the board of directors is responsible for providing strategic guidance, overseeing organisational activities, and ensuring accountability. On the other hand, shareholders own shares in the organisation, which entitle them to profit and voting rights (Parmar *et al.*, 2010).

The role of internal stakeholders, such as trade unions, entails serving as advocates for workers' interests and negotiating with management on employment-related matters. This engagement must be regulated and managed in accordance with the human resource management processes and the relevant legislative and regulatory elements of the framework, ensuring compliance and effectiveness. As part of collective bargaining agreements, trade unions secure fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for their members while addressing broader social and economic issues, such as inequality and poverty, through advocacy. The other critical stakeholder is management, which is responsible for setting strategic goals, making key decisions, and overseeing daily operations. The organisation must develop processes and mechanisms to capacitate managers to be able to navigate regulatory challenges while promoting diversity, inclusion, accountability, and ethical conduct within the workforce to drive performance and innovation (Safapour *et al.*, 2019).

6.3.8.2 External Stakeholders

The external stakeholders significantly and equally impact the organisation. Still, from an outward point of view, in that they are not directly responsible or involved in the functioning and activities of the organisations (par. 4.6.5). The external stakeholders include customers, suppliers, the government in its three spheres, the community/society, regulatory bodies, and other interested parties such as the media and competitors. It is equally essential for the organisation to have the capacity to identify the external stakeholders and develop processes and mechanisms to engage with them. The organisation must also understand the different roles and responsibilities of external stakeholders and ensure that these are articulated and understood by both the organisation and the external stakeholders (Parmar *et al.*, 2010).

The customer is a critical stakeholder for the organisation as they drive revenue and product success based on the view that the organisation operates to service or produce goods for consumption by the customer. The organisation needs to develop a mechanism to understand the customer's needs and how it can improve and increase customer demand, which will drive the organisation's supply and contribute to its overall objectives and outcomes. Understanding cultural differences, language preferences, and socio-economic factors that influence purchasing decisions is essential, as it enables the organisation to plan better for its customers. The other critical external stakeholder for the organisation is the suppliers, who are responsible for furnishing the organisation with materials and services vital for operations. It is equally essential for the organisation to establish strong supplier relationships, and upholding fair procurement practices is essential for sustainable supply chain management (Friedman & Miles, 2002).

As the South African economy and business environment are highly regulated, the role of government as an external stakeholder is essential. The government, through its different spheres, is responsible for regulating and implementing laws that govern operations and conduct in the environment. Several government agencies regulate businesses and provide support or incentives to promote economic growth.

Organisations must remain informed about relevant legislation, engage with government stakeholders, and advocate for their interests while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements (Parmar *et al.*, 2010).

The other important stakeholder for the organisation is the local community in which it operates, as the community influences its reputation and social licence to operate. The organisation must engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives to contribute to community development, address social issues, and foster positive relationships with stakeholders. The organisation can adopt some of the approaches that include supporting local education, healthcare, or environmental projects and involving community members in decision-making processes. The organisation aims to build goodwill and contribute to its overall objectives and outcomes (Safapour *et al.*, 2019).

The organisation is responsible for developing mechanisms and processes of engaging with the Media, which shapes public opinion of organisations. The organisation must maintain positive media relationships, and effective public relations strategies are vital for its success. The organisation can develop approaches to proactively communicate, monitor media, and respond promptly during crises to safeguard its reputation and brand image (Derakhshan *et al.*, 2019).

6.4 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the integrated human resources management (par 6.3) processes with operations management processes and factors underpinned by applicable legislation and regulations provide the organisation with the capacity and ability to navigate the economy (par. 6.3.1.4). Through practical internal and external environmental analysis, the organisation can develop processes and procedures to structure and position itself to respond to the dynamic environment and utilise its factors of production for the effective implementation of strategies (par. 4.4) developed and implemented by the leadership to attain the organisational objectives and outcomes. It includes ensuring that the organisation can gain market share, grow its profit margins, reduce turnover rates (par. 2.5.3.8), and create a sustainable organisation

that contributes positively to society and the economy at large, in a manner that is both beneficial and productive.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have outlined the integrated operations management and human resource framework. The chapter further articulates the framework's various elements and aspects, providing a detailed explanation of how the framework is developed and integrated (par. 6.3). In this chapter, the proposed conceptual framework has outlined how the integration of operations and human resource management with the stakeholders, environmental analysis, and production factors aligns for the organisation's benefit. The conceptual framework outlines the adaptiveness and comprehensiveness of internal and external factors that influence and enhance the successful management of organisational objectives and outcomes, considering both internal and external environments.

The chapter has also outlined the proposed human resource and operations management integrated framework, explaining how it is based on critical operations and human resource factors and elements, as well as internal and external environmental factors central to the functioning of organisations. The framework has demonstrated how to increase further or improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations through the robust integration and alignment of vital human resources processes and elements, thereby enhancing the operations management outlook of an organisation.

7. CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 provides an in-depth analysis of the data collected from stakeholders within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) (par. 3.5), exploring their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) (par. 4.2) and Operations Management (OM) practices (par. 2.5.1). This chapter builds on the insights from previous sections, examining specific practices in HRM and OM that contribute to operational success, employee engagement, and organisational cohesion.

The analysis begins with a demographic overview, presenting the profiles of participants to establish context for their insights. The chapter then outlines the data analysis process, including data cleaning, coding procedures, and the identification of main themes (par. 5.5). This systematic approach enabled the researcher to capture recurring themes and different perspectives, which inform the findings presented in this chapter.

The chapter also discusses stakeholders' understandings of HRM and OM, covering their roles and contributions to RSR's organisational objectives. HRM's role includes providing a skilled workforce, managing employee relations, and supporting compliance, while OM focuses on optimising resources, ensuring regulatory adherence, and driving operational efficiency. These practices are further explored through participants' experiences of change and transformation at RSR, highlighting areas where HRM and OM have supported or faced challenges in achieving organisational adaptation and improvement.

Additionally, Chapter 7 assesses the effectiveness of HRM and OM practices in meeting employee expectations. It evaluates current practices, including HRM's support for wellness, safety, and staff development, as well as OM's role in enhancing performance through effective communication, teamwork, and streamlined processes. The chapter also identifies areas where both functions could improve, such as cross-functional collaboration, empowerment, and adaptability. Recognising these areas for

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enhancement reflects RSR's commitment to continuous improvement, aligning with the proactive approach outlined in Chapter 6.

In summary, Chapter 7 presents a comprehensive analysis of HRM and OM practices at RSR, based on direct stakeholder feedback. By detailing both strengths and areas for growth, the chapter provides actionable insights to support RSR in enhancing its operational strategies and fostering a positive organisational culture.

7.2 Demographic Information

Before exploring the emerging themes from the interviews, it is essential to provide an overview of the demographic profile of the participants involved in this study. This section outlines the diverse backgrounds of the employees from the Railway Safety Regulator who participated in the research, focusing on their role within the organisation, demographic characteristics, and individual needs.

A total of thirty-five participants, drawn from both operations and support functions, were interviewed to gather insights into their experiences and perspectives. The demographic profile included information on participants' gender, age, ethnicity/race, language proficiency, and any accessibility needs. This diversity provided a rich foundation for understanding the workforce at the Railway Safety Regulator, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the themes that emerged from the study.

Table 7.1 below presents the detailed demographic data of each participant, reflecting the varied backgrounds in terms of age ranges, linguistic diversity, and ethnic representation. This diversity of perspectives contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences, allowing the study to capture the impact of organisational practices across different demographic groups within the Railway Safety Regulator. The demographic breakdown also highlights the importance of inclusivity and the varied accessibility needs among participants, ensuring a well-rounded view of employee needs and perspectives across organisational functions.

Table 7.5: Demographic Information

Participant no.	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Language Proficiency	Accessibility Needs
Participant 1	Female	45-54	Coloured	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 2	Male	35-44	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 3	Female	45-54	Coloured	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 4	Male	25-34	Indian / Asian	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 5	Prefer not to say	45-54	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 6	Female	45-54	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 7	Female	55-64	Coloured	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 8	Female	45-54	White	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 9	Female	35-44	Black	English	Other
Participant 10	Female	35-44	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 11	Female	45-54	Coloured	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 12	Male	45-54	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs

Participant no.	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Language Proficiency	Accessibility Needs
Participant 13	Male	45-54	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 14	Male	25-34	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 15	Male	35-44	Black	IsiZulu	No accessibility needs
Participant 16	Female	45-54	Coloured	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 17	Female	45-54	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 18	Female	25-34	Black	Sesotho	No accessibility needs
Participant 19	Male	25-34	Indian / Asian	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 20	Prefer not to say	45-54	Black	isiZulu	No accessibility needs
Participant 21	Male	45-54	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 22	Male	35-44	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 23	Male	45-54	Coloured	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 24	Male	45-54	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs

Participant no.	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Language Proficiency	Accessibility Needs
Participant 25	Female	45-54	Black	isiZulu	No accessibility needs
Participant 26	Female	25-34	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 27	Male	45-54	Coloured	Afrikaans	No accessibility needs
Participant 28	Male	35-44	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 29	Male	45-54	Coloured	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 30	Female	25-34	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 31	Female	45-54	Coloured	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 32	Female	45-54	Black	IsiXhosa	No accessibility needs
Participant 33	Male	25-34	Black	isiZulu	No accessibility needs
Participant 34	Female	35-44	Black	English	No accessibility needs
Participant 35	Male	35-44	Black	English	No accessibility needs

Table 7.2 provides additional insights into the participants' professional experience and occupational levels within the Railway Safety Regulator. Participants in this study have diverse tenures, ranging from 1 to 5 years of experience, to those who have served for more than 20 years. This range highlights the breadth of expertise and perspectives that are brought to the study. Table 7.2 illustrates the occupational levels of participants, spanning from levels B1 to B5 and E1 to E5, reflecting a cross-section of roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

Table 7.6 Demographic Information (continued)

	Educational Background	Years of Working Experience	Occupational Level (Grade)	Occupational Category
Participant 1	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 2	Higher National Diploma	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 3	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 4	Bachelor's degree	1-5 years	Semi-Skilled (B1-B5)	Support Functions
Participant 5	Master's degree or higher	16-20 years	Senior Management (E1-E5)	Operations Functions
Participant 6	Master's degree or higher	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions

	Educational Background	Years of Working Experience	Occupational Level (Grade)	Occupational Category
Participant 7	Bachelor's degree	More than 20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Consulting
Participant 8	Master's degree or higher	More than 20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 9	Bachelor's degree	6-10 years	(C1-C5)	Support Functions
Participant 10	National diploma	1-5 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 11	Higher National Diploma	16-20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 12	Higher National Diploma	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 13	Bachelor's degree	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 14	Bachelor's degree	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 15	Master's degree or higher	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions

	Educational Background	Years of Working Experience	Occupational Level (Grade)	Occupational Category
Participant 16	Higher National Diploma	11-15 years	Semi-Skilled (B1-B5)	Support Functions
Participant 17	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 18	Bachelor's degree	11-15 years	Semi-Skilled (B1-B5)	Support Functions
Participant 19	Higher National Diploma	16-20 years	Senior Management (E1-E5)	Operations Functions
Participant 20	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 21	Bachelor's degree	More than 20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Consulting
Participant 22	Master's degree or higher	More than 20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 23	National diploma	6-10 years	(C1-C5)	Support Functions
Participant 24	National diploma	1-5 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions

	Educational Background	Years of Working Experience	Occupational Level (Grade)	Occupational Category
Participant 25	Higher National Diploma	16-20 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 26	Master's degree or higher	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 27	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 28	Higher National Diploma	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 29	Master's degree or higher	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Operations Functions
Participant 30	Bachelor's degree	6-10 years	Semi-Skilled (B1-B5)	Support Functions
Participant 31	Master's degree or higher	16-20 years	Senior Management (E1-E5)	Operations Functions
Participant 32	Master's degree or higher	6-10 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Support Functions
Participant 33	Bachelor's degree	11-15 years	Professional Qualified Middle Management (D1-D5)	Consulting

	Educational Background	Years of Working Experience	Occupational Level (Grade)	Occupational Category
Participant 34	Master's degree or higher	6-10 years	Senior Management (E1-E5)	Operations Functions
Participant 35	Bachelor's degree	6-10 years	(C1-C5)	Support Functions

7.3 Data Analysis Process

7.3.1 Data Cleaning

Data cleaning is essential in qualitative research to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information gathered from participants. This study involved in-depth interviews with employees of the Railway Safety Regulator who work in both support and operations functions. To maintain data integrity, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to accurately capture participants' expressions. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), verbatim transcription is crucial in qualitative research, as it preserves the varied and detailed responses of participants.

Once transcribed, the transcripts underwent thorough review and editing. This involved removing typographical errors, correcting false starts, and eliminating repetitions that did not add value to the content. These steps ensured the transcripts were clear, coherent, and ready for systematic coding and analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). Data cleaning enhances the quality of qualitative data by making it more accessible and interpretable, thereby enabling researchers to extract meaningful insights from participant responses effectively.

7.3.2 Analysis using Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

The cleaned data were then prepared for analysis using Atlas.ti version 24, a widely recognised Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). CAQDAS tools, such as Atlas.ti, are beneficial in organising, categorising, and visualising complex qualitative data, which aids in the analysis process (Frieze, 2019). One of the primary reasons for using Atlas.ti in this study was its capability to streamline the organisation, extraction, comparison, and exploration of themes and codes within the text, which are essential for in-depth qualitative analysis.

Furthermore, Atlas.ti enabled the creation of networks and visual relationships among data codes, providing a graphical view of connections and themes that facilitates a deeper understanding of data patterns (Silver & Lewins, 2014). This graphical approach is particularly useful for large datasets, as it enables the researcher to identify relationships and thematic clusters visually. However, it is important to recognise that while Atlas.ti, and other CAQDAS tools assist in organising and presenting qualitative data, the responsibility for interpreting the data and deriving meaningful insights remains with the researcher (Ngalande & Mkwinda, 2014). This software-based approach thus supports but does not replace the researcher's analytical judgment.

7.3.2.1 Coding Process

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data presented. Thematic analysis is regarded as a rigorous and inductive process designed to identify and examine themes from word-based data in a way that is transparent and dependable (MacQueen & Namey, 2011:15). The data were organised, coded, and grouped; themes were constructed, refined, and finalised. Thematic analysis was employed to make sense of the data provided by the participants and to identify suitable themes that align with the proposed study objectives. This is an iterative process, meaning that the steps were repeated several times as new insights emerged (Frieze, Soratto, & Pires, 2018).

The steps of thematic analysis that were followed using Atlas.ti are as follows:

1. Importing data into the software.
2. Coding the data involved identifying relevant segments of text and assigning codes to them.
3. Creating the code structure, which involved organising and grouping the codes into categories and themes.
4. Utilise the analysis tools in Atlas.ti to explore patterns and themes in the data, utilising frequency tables, word clouds, and networks.
5. Interpreting and reporting the findings involved drawing conclusions and making connections between the themes and the research question.

Table 7.3 below demonstrates how themes and codes were developed from analysing the interview transcripts for emerging themes. As illustrated, the quote from Participant 6 was assigned the code “Ineffective strategies employed” and categorised under “Change management approach at the RSR,” which was grouped under the theme “Experiences of change and transformation in the organisation”.

Table 7.7 Example of the coding process

Theme	Category	Code	Reference from transcript
Experiences of change and transformation in an organisation	Change management approach at the RSR	Ineffective strategies employed	<i>"Fails to address change fatigue: Frequent changes without adequate time for implementation and stabilisation". (Participant 6)</i>

7.4 Main Themes

The thematic analysis conducted resulted in the development of four main themes for this research study, each including more than one sub-theme. These themes are tabulated in Table 7.4 below.

The themes revolved around four key concepts: the roles of the OM and HRM functions in the organisation, governance aspects, the organisational culture, and the alignment of OM and HRM to achieve organisational goals. Each of these themes will be discussed in detail below, cross-referencing evidence from the theoretical and literature studies described in the previous chapters.

Table 7.8: Main themes

THEMES	
Theme	Detailed description
Theme 1: Understanding of HRM and OM practices Sub-theme 1.1: Current OM practices Sub-theme 1.2: Effectiveness of OM Sub-theme 1.3: Effectiveness of HRM Sub-theme 1.4: Role of OM principles and practices Sub-theme 1.5: Role of HRM practices	7.4.1
Theme 2: Cultural aspects Sub-theme 2.1 Contributions to change and transformation in the organisation Sub-theme 2.2 Transparency and accountability	7.4.1.4
Theme 3: Governance and ethics Sub-theme 3.1: HRM adherence to governance and ethics Sub-theme 3.2 OM adherence to governance and ethics	7.4.2.3
Theme 4: Strategic collaboration between OM and HRM Sub-theme 4.1 Value and contribution of HRM to OM Sub-theme 4.2: Collaboration towards strategic goals	Error! Reference source not found.

7.4.1 Theme 1: Understanding of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Operations Management (OM) Practices

The first theme that emerged was the understanding of HR and Operations Management practices among different sample groups (Operations, HR, and other support functions) and participants at different levels of the organisation. The theme

also includes a discussion of current OM practices, as well as an analysis from the participants' perspectives of the effectiveness of OM and HRM practices, respectively.

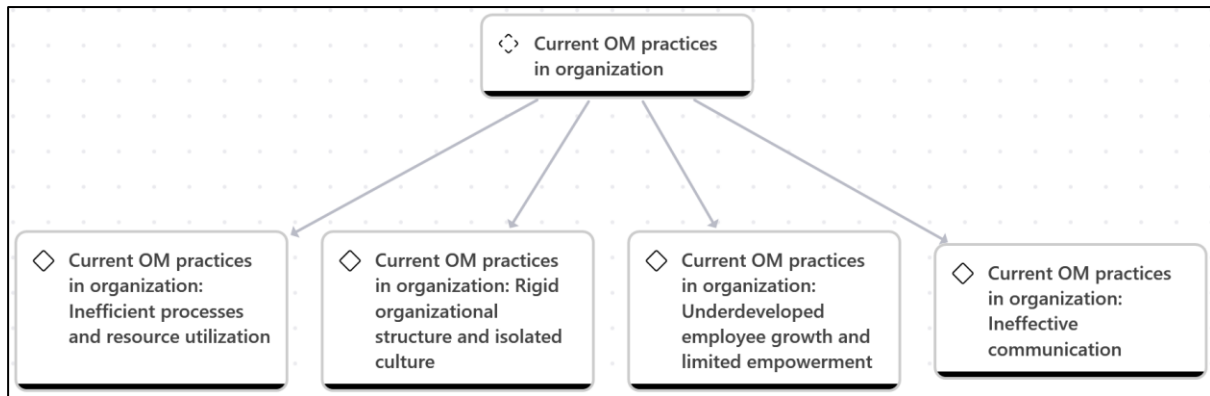
7.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Current OM Practices in the Organisation

Effective Operations Management (OM) is essential for maintaining productivity, efficiency, and adaptability within any organisation. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices play a central role in supporting the organisation's objectives, especially within a regulated industry where adherence to standards and operational efficiency are paramount. However, the study's findings reveal several areas in RSR's current OM practices that stakeholders perceive as barriers to optimal performance and organisational growth (par 2.5.2).

Participants highlighted several key issues impacting OM effectiveness, including ineffective communication, inefficient processes and resource utilisation, a rigid organisational structure, and an isolated culture. These challenges, coupled with underdeveloped employee growth and limited empowerment, present opportunities for RSR to enhance its operational practices and cultivate a more agile and collaborative environment.

The subsections that follow discuss each of these challenges in detail, offering insight into the specific OM practices that stakeholders identified as limiting RSR's potential. These findings highlight the need for a comprehensive review of current OM strategies to address inefficiencies, improve communication, and promote a culture that encourages employee development and empowerment.

Figure 7.1: Current OM Practices in Organisation



Ineffective Communication

Effective communication is foundational to successful Operations Management (OM), facilitating coordination, clarity, and timely completion of tasks. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), however, stakeholders have identified ineffective communication as a significant limitation within current OM practices. Participant 16 highlighted that communication challenges within OM have led to misunderstandings and missed deadlines, ultimately affecting productivity and operational efficiency:

Poor Communication: Ineffective communication leads to misunderstandings, errors, and missed deadlines. (Participant 14)

Research describes the critical role of effective communication in OM, noting that it directly impacts an organisation's ability to coordinate activities and achieve operational goals. According to Daft and Marcic (2020), "ineffective communication can create silos, reduce transparency, and lead to errors that impede operational flow". Clear and consistent communication is essential in regulated industries like RSR, where precise adherence to protocols and deadlines is essential. When communication breakdowns occur, they not only disrupt workflows but also compromise the organisation's ability to meet safety and compliance standards.

Poor communication within OM can also create a disconnect between departments, resulting in reduced alignment and collaboration across teams. As Stevenson (2020) suggests, "well-structured communication channels are necessary for fostering collaboration and ensuring that all departments are aligned with organisational goals".

When communication lacks structure or clarity, employees may struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities, resulting in confusion and a lack of accountability.

At RSR, improving communication within OM is crucial for enhancing overall efficiency and consistently meeting operational goals. This may involve adopting structured communication protocols, providing training in effective communication practices, and fostering a culture of openness and responsiveness. Enhanced communication practices could reduce misunderstandings, improve coordination between departments, and ultimately increase the effectiveness of OM.

In summary, ineffective communication in OM at RSR has led to misunderstandings, errors, and missed deadlines, impacting both productivity and operational success. Addressing these challenges through structured and consistent communication practices is essential for achieving organisational goals and fostering a collaborative culture. As Daft and Marcic (2020) suggest, communication is a critical component of effective OM, as it enables organisations to operate smoothly and achieve higher levels of performance.

Inefficient Processes and Resource Utilisation

Efficient processes and effective resource utilisation are central to successful Operations Management (OM). However, the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) participants noted significant inefficiencies in these areas, primarily due to outdated technology, manual processes, and inconsistent procedures. Participant 25 highlighted that many RSR processes remain manual and paper-based, making them prone to errors, time-consuming, and resource-intensive:

Inefficient processes: Many processes are manual and paper-based, prone to errors, resulting in wasted time and resources (Participant 25).

This observation was further supported by Participant 6, who pointed to the use of outdated technology and insufficient resources as major hindrances to productivity and operational efficiency:

Inadequate Technology and Resources: Outdated technology and insufficient resources impede productivity and efficiency. (Participant 6)

In addition to technology limitations, Participant 6 revealed that inconsistent processes and procedures have contributed to operational inefficiencies, as a lack of standardisation causes confusion and leads to errors across different departments:

Lack of Standardisation: Inconsistent processes and procedures cause confusion, errors, and inefficiencies. (Participant 6)

The literature supports the need for streamlined and automated processes to enhance operational efficiency and resource utilisation. According to Stevenson (2020), "automation in operations management reduces manual errors, accelerates task completion, and optimises resource use". When organisations rely heavily on manual processes, they risk increased human error, slower processing times, and inefficient resource use. This is particularly problematic in regulated industries, such as RSR, where accuracy and efficiency are crucial to meeting safety standards and compliance requirements.

The lack of standardisation further illuminates these inefficiencies. Consistent and standardised processes are vital for operational continuity and minimising errors. Hill and Hill (2020) argue that "standardisation in OM establishes clear expectations, reduces variability, and enhances the predictability of outcomes". When procedures are inconsistent, employees may face confusion about how tasks should be completed, leading to inefficiencies and potential misalignment with organisational goals.

Improving process efficiency and resource utilisation at RSR would likely involve investing in technology upgrades, automating repetitive tasks, and establishing standardised procedures across departments. Adopting digital solutions could help streamline workflows, reduce errors, and enable employees to focus on higher-value activities, thus maximising productivity and resource effectiveness. Creating clear and standardised operational procedures would support greater consistency, reduce confusion, and enhance collaboration across the organisation.

In conclusion, RSR's current OM practices suffer from inefficient processes and resource utilisation due to outdated technology, manual workflows, and inconsistent procedures. Addressing these inefficiencies by implementing automation and standardisation could greatly enhance operational productivity and resource optimisation. As Stevenson (2020) suggests, the adoption of technology and standardised processes in OM is crucial for reducing waste and improving organisational effectiveness.

Rigid Organisational Structure and Isolated Culture

A flexible organisational structure and a collaborative culture are critical components of effective Operations Management (OM). However, participants at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) described the organisation's structure as rigid and its culture as isolated, both of which hinder OM processes and overall productivity (par. 2.5.1.3). Participant 35 noted that the OM processes at RSR are largely reactive, with a focus on addressing immediate issues rather than adopting proactive planning approaches:

Reactive: Primarily focused on responding to immediate issues rather than proactive planning. (Participant 35)

This reactive stance within OM can limit an organisation's (par 4.5) ability to anticipate challenges and implement preventive measures, which are essential for long-term operational success. Research by Cameron and Green (2019) highlights that "proactive planning in OM enables organisations to address potential issues before they escalate, leading to greater resilience and adaptability". Moreover, Participant 35 also pointed to a top-down decision-making approach, where most decisions are made centrally, with minimal input from lower-level employees:

Top-down approach: Decision-making is often centralised, leaving little room for employee input or empowerment. (Participant 35)

Top-down structures can hinder employee engagement, reduce motivation, and stifle innovation, as employees may feel disconnected from the decision-making process. According to Daft and Marcic (2020), "organisations with centralised decision-making

often experience slower adaptation to change and limited employee engagement". In contrast, organisations that embrace decentralised structures and foster employee input can create a more agile and responsive operational environment.

Participant 6 added that RSR's work environment is highly siloed, with departments and teams working in isolation rather than engaging in cross-departmental collaboration:

Siloed: Departments and teams work in isolation, causing communication breakdowns, duplication of effort, and a lack of collaboration. (Participant 6)

A siloed culture creates barriers to effective OM by limiting communication and collaboration, which can lead to inefficiencies and misaligned goals. According to Buchanan and Huczynski (2019), "siloed organisational structures can result in duplicated efforts, delays, and miscommunication, reducing an organisation's overall effectiveness". Breaking down silos and encouraging interdepartmental collaboration can improve coordination, foster innovation, and enhance operational efficiency by aligning goals across teams.

Addressing these structural and cultural challenges at RSR could involve adopting a more collaborative, decentralised approach to decision-making and fostering cross-departmental communication. By promoting a culture that values employee input and teamwork, RSR can transition from a reactive to a proactive operational stance, making the organisation more resilient and adaptable to change. Creating cross-functional teams or holding regular interdepartmental meetings could help break down silos and encourage knowledge sharing, which would contribute to a more integrated and efficient OM approach.

In summary, the rigid organisational structure and isolated culture at RSR are significant barriers to effective OM. A shift towards a more decentralised, collaborative structure could empower employees, enhance communication, and improve overall operational efficiency. As Cameron and Green (2019) suggest, fostering a flexible and collaborative culture is essential for organisations aiming to optimise operations and sustain long-term success.

Underdeveloped Employee Growth and Limited Empowerment

Employee growth and empowerment are essential to fostering a motivated, innovative, and resilient workforce. However, participants at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) expressed concerns regarding the lack of adequate training and limited empowerment within the organisation, which has led to restricted opportunities for employee development and engagement. Participant 15 highlighted that insufficient training and development opportunities hinder employees' ability to grow and enhance their skills, impacting overall performance and satisfaction:

Insufficient training: Employees may not receive adequate training or development opportunities, hindering growth and improvement. (Participant 5)

A lack of training and development opportunities can lead to skill gaps and low morale, thereby limiting employees' ability to perform effectively in their roles. According to Noe *et al.* (2017), "ongoing training and development are vital for maintaining an adaptable and skilled workforce, enabling employees to contribute meaningfully to organisational goals". When employees are not given opportunities to develop their skills, they may become disengaged, which can impact both individual and organisational performance.

In addition to limited training, participants indicated that a lack of employee empowerment restricts autonomy and innovation within RSR. Participant 26 noted that micromanagement and a lack of autonomy prevent employees from taking ownership of their tasks, hindering motivation and personal growth:

Limited Employee Empowerment: Micromanaging and a lack of autonomy hinder employee motivation, innovation, and growth. (Participant 26)

Empowering employees is fundamental for fostering a culture of innovation and accountability. Research by Spreitzer (2008) suggests that "employee empowerment involves granting employees the autonomy to make decisions, which enhances their sense of ownership and commitment to the organisation". When employees are given the freedom to make decisions, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated,

contributing innovative ideas and solutions. Conversely, a lack of empowerment, often characterised by micromanagement, can lead to decreased job satisfaction and stifled creativity.

To address these issues, RSR could benefit from implementing a structured training and development program modified to employee needs and organisational goals. Adopting empowerment strategies, such as delegating decision-making authority and reducing micromanagement, could enhance employee engagement, motivation, and retention. Creating opportunities for employees to participate in meaningful projects or initiatives may also foster a culture of growth and autonomy, which would support both individual and organisational success.

In summary, employee underdevelopment and limited empowerment within RSR are challenges that impede workforce motivation, innovation, and overall effectiveness. Enhancing training and development opportunities, while fostering a culture of empowerment, can lead to a more engaged, capable, and proactive workforce. As Noe *et al.* (2017) and Spreitzer (2008) suggest, empowering employees and providing development opportunities are critical steps in building a resilient and innovative organisational culture.

7.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Effectiveness of OM Practices

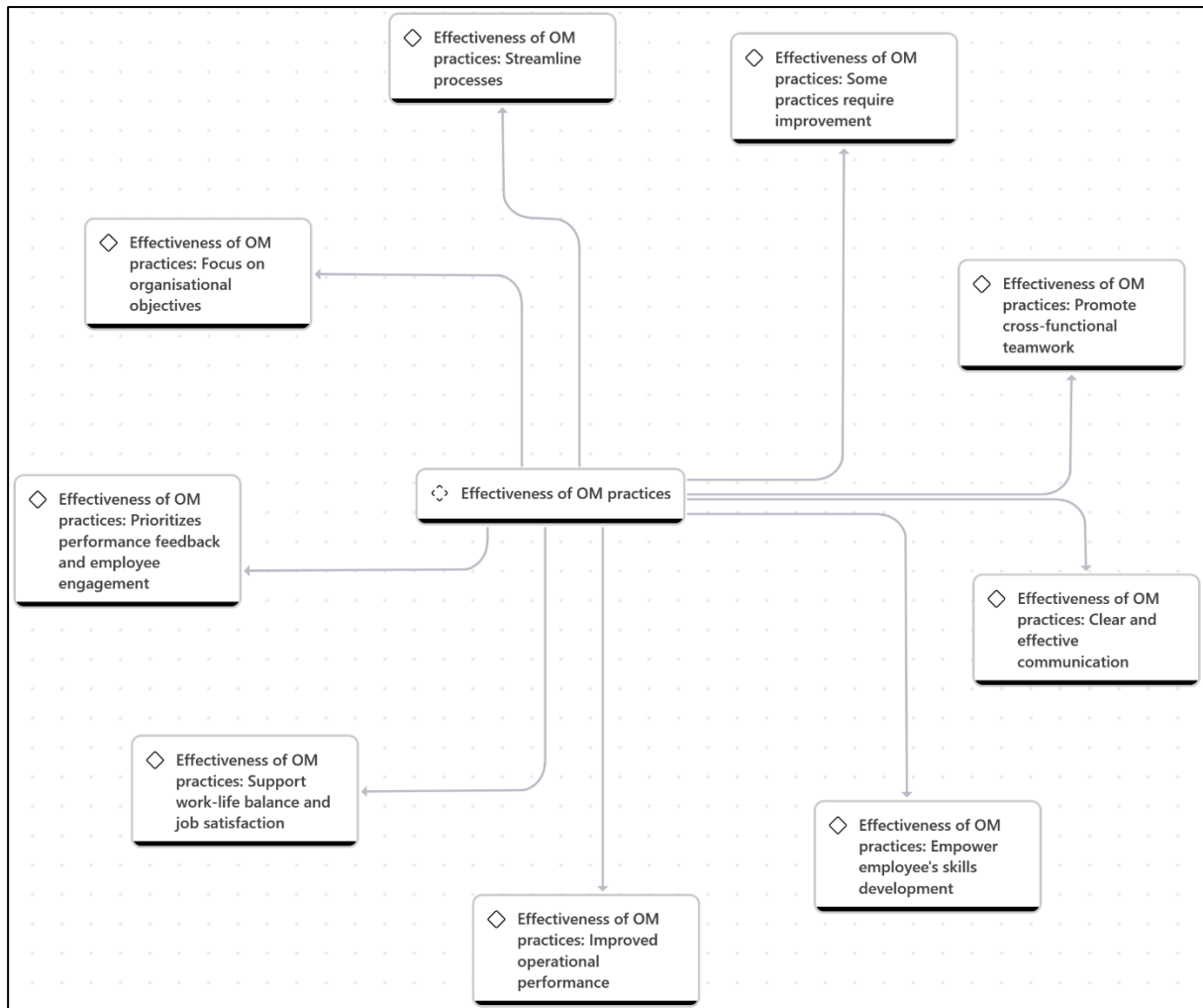
The effectiveness of Operations Management (OM) practices is pivotal to an organisation's overall productivity, efficiency, and employee satisfaction. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are structured to support clear communication, skill development, and alignment with organisational objectives. Participants emphasised the importance of these practices in fostering a cohesive work environment, improving operational performance, and promoting cross-functional teamwork, all of which contribute to RSR's mission.

Participants highlighted several aspects of OM practices at RSR as particularly effective, including a focus on organisational objectives, streamlined processes, and

prioritisation of employee engagement through performance feedback. These practices demonstrate OM's commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability, allowing RSR to navigate the complexities of its regulated industry effectively. Additionally, OM's emphasis on work-life balance and job satisfaction further supports a sustainable work culture, which in turn enhances employee retention and morale.

However, participants also noted areas where OM practices could be enhanced, suggesting a need for ongoing evaluation and refinement. The following subsections explore these themes in detail, illustrating the strengths and areas for improvement within RSR's OM practices and providing insights into how these practices contribute to the organisation's goals.

Figure 7.2: Effectiveness of OM Practices



Clear and Effective Communication

Clear and effective communication is a cornerstone of successful Operations Management (OM) practices, as it facilitates alignment, engagement, and goal attainment within an organisation. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are recognised for their emphasis on open communication channels and regular updates, which help keep employees informed and connected to organisational goals. Participant 26 highlighted the role of communication in maintaining clarity around expectations and fostering engagement:

Clear Communication: Effective OM practices ensure clear communication of goals, expectations, and feedback, keeping me informed and engaged. (Participant 26)

Effective communication supports productivity and reduces misunderstandings, enabling employees to focus on their tasks with a clear understanding of their objectives. Research by Men and Bowen (2017) underlines that "open and transparent communication in operations management contributes to higher employee engagement and trust, which are essential for achieving organisational success". When OM practices prioritise communication, employees are more likely to feel involved and motivated, as they understand how their work aligns with organisational goals.

Additionally, Participant 5 emphasised that regular updates and accessible communication channels foster engagement and trust within RSR:

Effective communication: Regular updates and open communication channels keep me informed and engaged. (Participant 5)

Frequent communication, such as status updates and feedback sessions, creates a culture of transparency and accountability, where employees feel confident in their roles and valued by the organisation. According to Clampitt and Downs (2018), "regular updates and open communication channels are fundamental for creating a responsive and adaptable organisation that can navigate both internal and external challenges." By establishing consistent communication practices, OM at RSR supports

a collaborative work environment where employees are well-informed and prepared to meet organisational objectives.

Effective communication in OM enhances coordination across departments, enabling RSR to respond promptly to emerging issues and ensuring that all team members are aligned with operational priorities. Harzing & Feely (2019) suggest that "clear communication within operations fosters cooperation and ensures that departments are synchronised, reducing redundancies and streamlining processes". At RSR, this focus on communication contributes to a more unified workforce that can effectively meet the organisation's needs.

In summary, transparent and effective communication within OM at RSR is crucial in maintaining employee engagement, clarity, and alignment with organisational goals. Through regular updates and open channels, OM fosters a culture of transparency and trust, enabling the organisation to operate efficiently and cohesively. As Men and Bowen (2017) and Clampitt and Downs (2018) suggest, communication is a fundamental element of successful OM practices, contributing to both employee satisfaction and operational success.

Empower through Skills Development

Empowering employees through skills development is vital to effective Operations Management (OM), as it fosters a workforce capable of driving operational excellence and supporting continuous improvement within an organisation. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are recognised for their commitment to enhancing employee skills, providing training, and creating a learning culture. Participant 7 highlighted OM's role in offering development opportunities that expand employees' capabilities and support operational goals:

Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for employees to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities, making them more capable of driving operational excellence and innovation. Streamline processes for efficiencies. (Participant 7)

Providing employees with the tools and resources to develop their skills improves individual performance and strengthens the organisation's capacity for innovation and efficiency. According to Cascio and Boudreau (2018), "skills development initiatives are essential for building a resilient workforce that can adapt to changes and contribute to continuous improvement". By investing in skill-building, RSR's OM practices enable employees to stay current and actively contribute to the organisation's strategic objectives.

Participant 26 further noted that RSR's culture of continuous improvement encourages innovation and professional growth, aligning with employees' aspirations for development:

Continuous Improvement: A culture of continuous improvement encourages innovation, learning, and growth, which aligns with my desire for professional development. (Participant 26)

A continuous improvement culture fosters an environment where employees feel motivated to seek new knowledge and refine their skills. Research by Jain *et al.* (2019) supports this approach, stating that "a culture of continuous improvement empowers employees to actively engage in learning, resulting in a more agile and innovative organisation". This mindset is particularly beneficial in regulated industries, where staying adaptable and proactive is crucial for maintaining operational effectiveness.

Additionally, OM practices at RSR empower employees by giving them autonomy and decision-making authority, which enhances job satisfaction and engagement. Participant 34 expressed that this empowerment allows them to take ownership of their tasks, contributing to a greater sense of purpose in their work:

Empowerment and Autonomy: OM practices that empower employees and provide autonomy motivate me to take ownership and make decisions, leading to increased job satisfaction. (Participant 34)

Empowering employees with autonomy enhances their motivation and encourages innovation, as employees feel trusted to make decisions within their roles. According

to Lee and Edmondson (2017), "empowered employees are more likely to take initiative and drive positive change, as they feel ownership and responsibility for their work". By promoting autonomy, RSR's OM practices support a collaborative and proactive work environment that benefits both the employees and the organisation.

In summary, the effectiveness of OM practices at RSR is evident in their commitment to empowering employees through skills development, continuous improvement, and autonomy. These practices align with the organisation's operational excellence and innovation goals, creating a dynamic and engaged workforce. As Cascio and Boudreau (2018) and Jain *et al.* (2019) suggest, empowering employees through skill-building and autonomy fosters a resilient and motivated workforce, contributing to long-term organisational success.

Focus on Organisational Objectives

A strong focus on organisational objectives is a fundamental aspect of effective Operations Management (OM) practices, as it ensures alignment between individual tasks and the organisation's broader mission. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices emphasise clear and well-defined goals, which provide employees with a sense of purpose and direction. Participant 21 highlighted that this focus on organisational objectives helps employees prioritise their efforts effectively:

Clear goals and objectives: Well-defined goals and expectations help me focus my efforts and prioritise tasks. (Participant 21)

Having clearly defined objectives enables employees to direct their energy toward achieving the organisation's mission, enhancing productivity and job satisfaction. Research by Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) indicates that "well-articulated objectives in operations management support a structured approach to task management, ensuring that employees understand how their roles contribute to organisational success". When employees see the connection between their work and the organisation's overarching goals, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their tasks.

A focus on organisational objectives also fosters alignment and consistency across departments, helping the organisation work cohesively towards shared outcomes. According to Heizer, Render, and Munson (2020), "alignment with organisational objectives ensures that operational processes are strategically directed, allowing for efficient use of resources and effective task prioritisation". At RSR, OM practices that emphasise goal alignment ensure that employees can make informed decisions about their work priorities, ultimately contributing to the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness.

Clear objectives provide a framework for assessing performance, enabling OM to track progress toward specific targets and make adjustments as needed. This structured approach supports continuous improvement, as employees can receive feedback on their progress toward established goals. Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis (2019) state that "establishing measurable objectives allows operations managers to monitor outcomes and foster a culture of accountability and progress". By maintaining a focus on well-defined goals, RSR's OM practices encourage a results-oriented culture that aligns with organisational priorities.

OM's focus on organisational objectives at RSR is instrumental in promoting alignment, task prioritisation, and continuous improvement. By setting clear goals and expectations, OM practices help employees understand their roles in the context of the organisation's mission, fostering a cohesive and productive workforce. As Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) and Heizer *et al.* (2020) suggest, a clear focus on objectives is essential for driving operational success and achieving long-term organisational goals.

Promote Cross-Functional Teamwork

Promoting cross-functional teamwork is a key aspect of effective Operations Management (OM) practices, as it encourages collaboration across departments, enhances innovation, and supports organisational cohesion. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are recognised for fostering a collaborative environment where employees from different functions can work together toward

shared goals. Participant 29 emphasised the role of OM in breaking down departmental silos, creating a sense of unity within the organisation:

Collaboration and Teamwork: Effective OM practices foster collaboration, breaking down silos and promoting cross-functional teamwork, making me feel part of a cohesive team. (Participant 29)

Cross-functional teamwork enables departments to leverage diverse skills and perspectives, resulting in more comprehensive and innovative solutions to organisational challenges. According to Adler and Chen (2020), "Cross-functional collaboration in operations management is essential for addressing complex issues and enhancing adaptability in dynamic environments". By promoting a collaborative culture, OM practices at RSR ensure that employees can effectively combine their expertise and contribute to a cohesive, unified organisation.

Cross-functional teamwork encourages knowledge sharing and reduces redundancies, leading to more efficient operations. Employees who work across functions gain insights into different aspects of the organisation, which fosters a holistic understanding of processes and challenges. Research by Ancona and Backman (2019) supports this approach, stating that "cross-functional teams increase organisational agility by enabling faster decision-making and problem-solving". At RSR, OM's emphasis on teamwork helps employees respond more effectively to evolving operational needs, contributing to a more resilient and adaptable organisation.

Additionally, promoting cross-functional teamwork enhances employee engagement, as individuals feel part of a larger organisational mission rather than isolated within their departments. This sense of belonging and shared purpose contributes to greater job satisfaction and motivation. Bratton & Gold (2017) state, "Cross-functional teamwork provides employees with opportunities to connect with colleagues from different areas, strengthening engagement and commitment to organisational objectives". By creating opportunities for collaboration, OM practices at RSR help cultivate a connected and engaged workforce.

In summary, OM practices at RSR promote cross-functional teamwork, which fosters collaboration, reduces silos, and enhances organisational agility. By encouraging employees to work across departments, OM supports innovation, efficiency, and a unified organisational culture. As Adler and Chen (2020) and Ancona and Backman (2019) suggest, cross-functional teamwork is essential for achieving operational success and building a resilient, adaptable organisation.

Improved Operational Performance

Effective Operations Management (OM) practices are essential for enhancing productivity and fostering continuous improvement, collectively improving operational performance (par 2.5.1.4). At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are designed to support efficiency, innovation, and progress, allowing the organisation to meet its goals more effectively. Participant 12 emphasised the role of OM in driving productivity and efficiency:

Enhance productivity and efficiency. (Participant 12)

Improving operational performance involves streamlining processes, optimising resource use, and encouraging employees to work toward productivity targets. According to Slack, Brandon-Jones, and Johnston (2019), "OM practices focused on productivity and efficiency are crucial for maximising output with minimal resource expenditure, ultimately supporting organisational profitability and sustainability". By prioritising these elements, RSR's OM practices align daily operations with strategic objectives, enhancing overall performance.

Participant 26 and Participant 32 further highlighted that OM practices at RSR foster a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging employees to identify areas for enhancement and implement changes that drive progress:

Foster a culture of continuous improvement. (Participant 26)

Continuous improvement: Encouragement to identify areas for improvement and implement changes fosters a culture of innovation and progress. (Participant 32)

A continuous improvement culture empowers employees to actively evaluate and enhance their workflows, contributing to a more agile and adaptable organisation. Research by Bessant and Caffyn (2020) highlights that "a culture of continuous improvement encourages employees to engage in ongoing problem-solving, resulting in incremental innovations that improve operational efficiency and service quality". By promoting continuous improvement, OM practices at RSR enhance performance and create an environment where employees are motivated to innovate.

Continuous improvement in OM supports RSR's resilience by building a foundation for long-term success. This approach allows the organisation to respond quickly to changes and continuously refine processes to meet new demands. According to Liker and Convis (2018), "an organisation that cultivates continuous improvement is more capable of sustaining operational excellence, as it is equipped to evolve with industry changes and improve performance over time". At RSR, this commitment to ongoing improvement ensures that OM practices remain effective and relevant.

In summary, OM practices at RSR enhance operational performance by promoting productivity, efficiency, and a culture of continuous improvement. By empowering employees to identify and implement improvements, OM supports a resilient and forward-looking organisation. As Slack *et al.* (2019) and Liker and Convis (2018) suggest, continuous improvement is integral to maintaining high operational standards and fostering innovation within the workforce.

Streamline Processes

Streamlining processes is a key focus of Operations Management (OM), as it ensures efficiency and reduces organisational waste. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices prioritise streamlined workflows to help employees complete tasks efficiently and effectively, maximising resource utilisation and minimising delays. Participant 23 highlighted the importance of efficient processes in supporting productivity:

Efficient processes: Streamlined processes and minimal waste enable me to complete tasks efficiently and effectively. (Participant 23)

Streamlined processes reduce redundancies and simplify workflows, enhancing the organisation's ability to meet objectives without unnecessary expenditure of time or resources. According to Hill and Hill (2020), "streamlining operational processes is essential for optimising performance, as it allows organisations to focus on high-value activities and eliminate non-essential tasks." By adopting this approach, RSR's OM practices enable employees to work more effectively, contributing to overall organisational efficiency.

Additionally, streamlined processes support agility, allowing RSR to adapt more quickly to changing requirements or unexpected challenges. Efficient workflows improve the organisation's responsiveness, as employees can pivot their focus as needed without getting bogged down by complex or outdated processes. Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) argue that "operations management focused on process optimisation enhances organisational agility and resilience, enabling a swift response to internal and external changes". For RSR, streamlined OM practices mean employees can remain focused on their core responsibilities, fostering a productive work environment.

Streamlining processes fosters a culture of continuous improvement, as employees consistently identify areas for further refinement and improvement. By continuously reviewing and improving workflows, RSR's OM practices maintain efficiency over time, ensuring that processes remain relevant and practical as organisational needs evolve. Jacobs & Chase (2021) emphasised that "continuous process optimisation is a cornerstone of operational excellence, as it sustains efficiency gains and promotes long-term improvement". This commitment to streamlined processes at RSR ensures that OM practices align with both immediate and future goals.

In summary, OM practices at RSR effectively streamline processes, enabling the organisation to operate efficiently, reduce waste, and respond to changes with agility. By focusing on process optimisation, RSR fosters a productive work environment where employees can complete tasks effectively. As Hill and Hill (2020) and Jacobs and Chase (2021) suggest, streamlined processes are fundamental to achieving operational efficiency and sustaining organisational success.

Prioritises Performance Feedback and Employee Engagement

Prioritising performance feedback and employee engagement is an essential aspect of effective Operations Management (OM), as it aligns individual contributions with organisational goals while fostering a supportive and empowering work environment. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices emphasise regular feedback and active employee involvement, meeting employee expectations for development and engagement. Participant 27 highlighted the importance of feedback and coaching in identifying improvement areas and supporting career growth:

Performance Feedback and Coaching: Regular feedback and coaching help me identify areas for improvement, develop new skills, and advance in my career. (Participant 27)

Providing consistent feedback enables employees to understand their strengths and areas for development, encouraging continuous learning and skill enhancement. According to Aguinis (2019), "regular feedback in performance management systems contributes to skill development and goal alignment, creating a culture of accountability and improvement". By prioritising performance feedback, OM practices at RSR help employees stay engaged with their roles and motivated to achieve personal and organisational goals.

OM practices at RSR prioritise employee involvement in decision-making, fostering a culture of empowerment and inclusion. Participant 31 expressed that opportunities to contribute ideas and participate in decisions make them feel valued and engaged:

Employee involvement: Encouragement to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making makes me feel valued and empowered. (Participant 31)

Employee engagement in decision-making enhances motivation and encourages innovation, as employees feel empowered to share insights and take ownership of their contributions. Research by Saks (2020) highlights that "high employee engagement is associated with increased commitment, as employees who feel valued are more likely to contribute ideas and actively support organisational objectives". By

fostering an inclusive environment, OM at RSR supports a productive and dynamic workforce.

Prioritising feedback and engagement enhances retention by creating a positive organisational culture. Employees who feel heard, valued, and supported are more likely to remain committed to the organisation, reducing turnover. Lavy and Littman-Ovadia (2017) argue that "a focus on engagement and development creates a workplace where employees feel a sense of belonging and purpose, which is essential for long-term retention and satisfaction". At RSR, OM's emphasis on performance feedback and engagement contributes to a loyal and motivated workforce that aligns with the organisation's mission.

In summary, OM practices at RSR effectively prioritise performance feedback and employee engagement, supporting both individual development and organisational success. OM fosters a culture of empowerment and continuous improvement by providing regular coaching and involving employees in the decision-making process. As Aguinis (2019) and Saks (2020) suggest, feedback and engagement are fundamental to building a motivated and high-performing workforce.

Support Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Supporting work-life balance and promoting job satisfaction are crucial elements of effective Operations Management (OM) practices, as they contribute to employee well-being, productivity, and retention. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), OM practices are recognised for accommodating employee needs, providing flexible schedules, and fostering a positive work environment. Participant 6 emphasised the importance of work-life balance, noting how OM practices demonstrate consideration for employee well-being:

Work-Life Balance: OM practices that support work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling and adequate resources, demonstrate care for my well-being. (Participant 6)

Flexible scheduling and resource allocation allow employees to manage their responsibilities more effectively, contributing to higher morale and engagement. According to Kossek, Valcour, and Lirio (2020), "OM practices that emphasise work-life balance promote a supportive culture that enhances both employee satisfaction and organisational commitment". By prioritising work-life balance, RSR's OM practices ensure that employees feel valued and supported, which contributes to a more productive and engaged workforce.

Participant 8 further corroborated the positive impact of OM practices on job satisfaction, noting that supportive operational practices at RSR have led to low staff turnover and a cooperative workplace culture:

Profit, success and low staff turnover. Good cooperation between people and departments. Happy employee (Participant 8).

A low turnover rate often reflects high employee satisfaction and engagement, indicating that employees feel content with their roles and the organisation's culture. Research by Greenhaus and Allen (2020) suggests that "when employees experience work-life balance and job satisfaction, they are more likely to remain loyal to the organisation, resulting in lower turnover and reduced recruitment costs". At the RSR, OM practices that promote cooperation and well-being contribute to a stable and cohesive work environment.

Supporting work-life balance enhances job satisfaction and boosts overall organisational performance. Employees who are satisfied with their work-life balance tend to experience lower stress levels, leading to improved mental health and increased productivity. According to De Simone (2021), "Work-life balance initiatives within OM create a supportive work environment that minimises burnout and enhances job performance". By prioritising employee well-being, OM practices at RSR ensure that employees can sustain high levels of performance over the long term.

In summary, OM practices at RSR promote work-life balance and job satisfaction through flexible scheduling, resource allocation, and a culture of collaboration. These practices contribute to low turnover, high job satisfaction, and a collaborative

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environment that aligns with organisational goals. As Kossek *et al.* (2020) and Greenhaus and Allen (2020) suggest, work-life balance and job satisfaction are essential for creating a loyal, motivated workforce that drives organisational success.

Improvement Areas

While Operations Management (OM) practices at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) demonstrate effectiveness in various areas, participants noted that certain practices could benefit from further improvement. The organisation's commitment to adaptability and excellence highlights this focus on continuous refinement. Participant 1 highlighted that although specific areas, such as risk management, have been successful, other OM practices still have room for enhancement.

The effectiveness of some operations management practices has also been called for improvement. At this stage, there are bright spots, e.g., risk management, but the rest need some improvement. (Participant 1)

Identifying areas for improvement is a critical component of OM, as it allows the organisation to address gaps and optimise processes. According to Hammer (2021), "continuous improvement in OM involves regularly evaluating practices to identify inefficiencies, streamline processes, and enhance overall productivity". At RSR, acknowledging that some practices need improvement aligns with a proactive approach, where OM can implement targeted changes to enhance effectiveness across all functions.

The specific areas requiring improvement may involve streamlining processes, optimising resource allocation, or enhancing communication channels to ensure that operational goals are met efficiently. Kaplan and Mikes (2020) emphasise that "organisations with a commitment to continuous improvement are better able to identify operational shortcomings and implement solutions that enhance resilience and efficiency". By recognising the need for improvement, RSR can leverage feedback from employees and integrate best practices to strengthen its OM functions.

Focusing on areas needing improvement creates opportunities for organisational learning, as employees and managers can collaborate on refining processes and adopting new methods. Research by Jabbour and de Sousa Jabbour (2019) suggests that "a focus on improvement encourages innovation and supports a learning culture, as employees are more likely to propose solutions when they are aware of operational challenges". At RSR, OM's commitment to addressing areas needing improvement helps create an adaptive environment where innovation and problem-solving are encouraged.

In summary, while OM practices at RSR show strengths in certain areas, there is also a recognition that some practices require improvement. This commitment to continuous enhancement ensures that OM remains effective and aligned with organisational goals. As Hammer (2021) and Kaplan and Mikes (2020) suggest, identifying and addressing areas for improvement is essential for sustaining operational excellence and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

7.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Effectiveness of HRM Practices

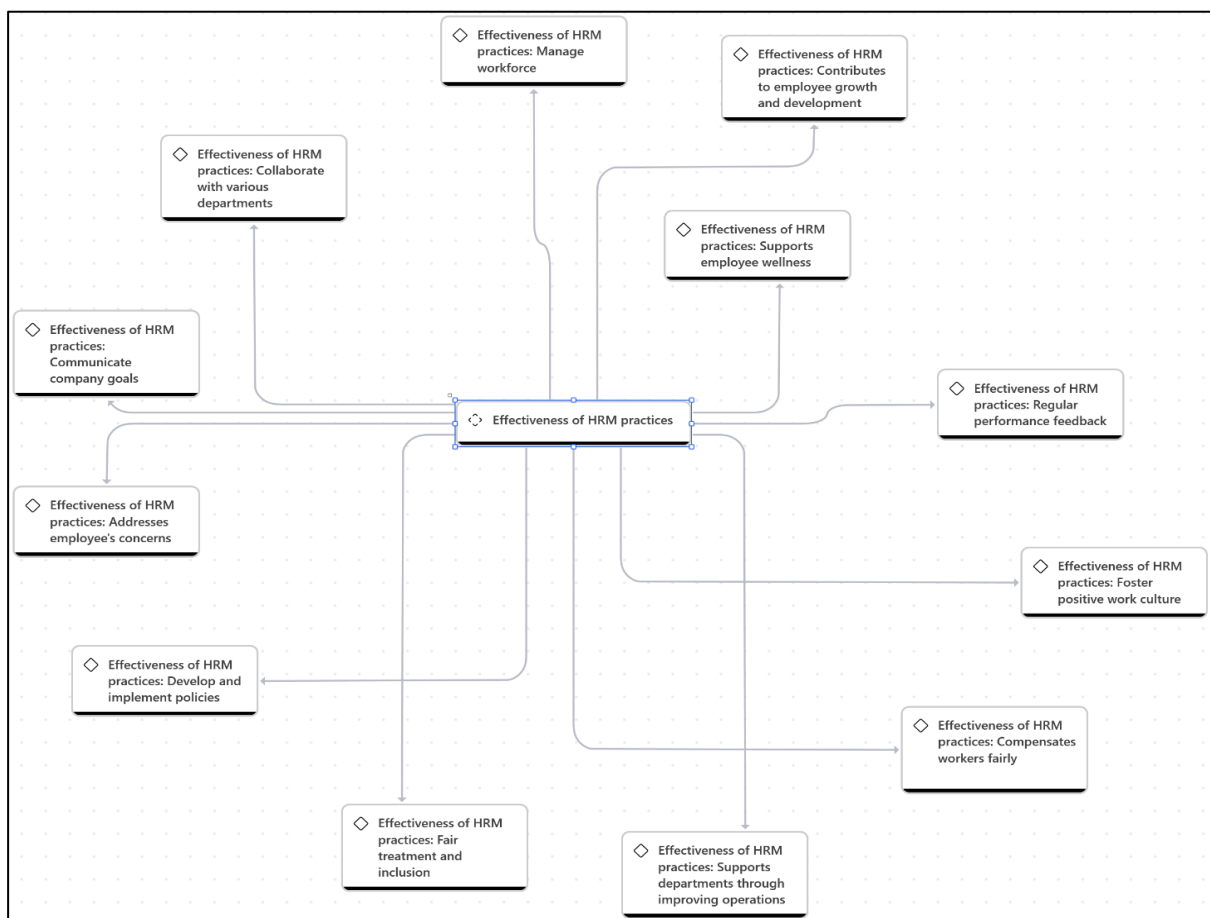
The effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices is critical to an organisation's overall performance, employee satisfaction, and cultural alignment. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM plays an integral role in creating a supportive work environment, aligning organisational goals with employee needs, and driving operational efficiency. Participants in this study shared insights into how various HRM practices contribute to the organisation, emphasising HRM's responsiveness to employee concerns, interdepartmental collaboration, and consistent communication of company goals.

In addition to addressing individual employee needs, effective HRM practices at RSR also focus on fair compensation, fostering a culture of growth and development, and ensuring the implementation of equitable policies. As noted by several participants, HRM's commitment to fair treatment, inclusion, and a positive work culture contributes to a more engaged and cohesive workforce. This focus on inclusivity and respect

aligns with best practices in HRM, which advocate for policies and practices that support diversity and create a sense of belonging within the organisation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

The following subsections examine specific HRM practices that participants identified as impactful, including managing workforce dynamics, providing regular performance feedback, and promoting employee wellness. These HRM functions not only enhance individual employee growth but also contribute to operational improvements, helping to create an organisation where employees feel valued and motivated. By examining each of these practices in detail, this section highlights how effective HRM can drive organisational success and foster a workplace culture that supports both personal and professional development.

Figure 7.3: Effectiveness of HRM Practices



Addresses Employee's Concerns

A key indicator of effective Human Resource Management (HRM) is the ability to address employee concerns in a timely and empathetic manner, fostering a workplace environment where employees feel heard and supported. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM practices have been noted as effective in addressing employee concerns, with Participant 11 emphasising the department's responsiveness to feedback and issues raised by staff:

Addressing employee concerns and feedback. (Participant 11)

When HRM actively engages with employees' concerns, it fosters a culture of trust, transparency, and open communication, which are crucial for maintaining high levels of employee morale and retention. Research supports this focus, noting that HRM functions that prioritise employee feedback and grievance management contribute positively to organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). By addressing concerns promptly, HRM at RSR helps mitigate potential conflicts, reduce turnover, and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Effective grievance management and responsiveness to employee concerns are essential components of HRM's role, as they demonstrate the organisation's commitment to its workforce. According to Noe *et al.* (2017), "employees who feel their concerns are acknowledged and addressed are more likely to feel valued and engaged, leading to a more committed workforce". This engagement is especially important in industries such as railway safety, where employees face high-stakes responsibilities and stress levels may be elevated. HRM's attentiveness to employee needs can alleviate stress and enhance employee well-being, ensuring that employees feel supported and respected in their roles.

Addressing employee concerns aligns with HRM's role as a strategic partner in organisational success. By actively listening to employees, HRM can identify recurring issues, improve workplace policies, and adapt practices to meet the evolving needs of the workforce. This proactive approach supports continuous improvement and

reinforces the organisation's dedication to employee well-being, thus building a foundation of mutual respect and engagement.

In summary, addressing employee concerns effectively is a core strength of HRM at RSR, contributing to an environment where employees feel valued and supported. By maintaining open channels for feedback and responding to employee needs, HRM fosters a culture of trust and transparency that supports long-term organisational commitment. As Armstrong and Taylor (2020) emphasise, HRM's role in addressing concerns is essential for creating a workplace culture that values employee input, enhancing both job satisfaction and organisational performance.

Collaborate with Various Departments

Effective Human Resource Management (HRM) practices involve fostering interdepartmental collaboration to ensure that employee needs and organisational goals are aligned. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM is noted for its collaborative efforts across various departments, which support both employee satisfaction and organisational success. Participant 4 emphasised HRM's role in working alongside other departments to enhance productivity and customer satisfaction:

Collaborate with other departments to drive business success, improve productivity, and enhance customer satisfaction. (Participant 4)

Interdepartmental collaboration is essential for aligning HRM's efforts with the broader organisational strategy, enabling departments to work together seamlessly toward shared goals. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), "HRM's collaboration with other departments creates a cohesive organisational culture, where resources are shared, and processes are optimised". By working closely with other functions, HRM ensures that its policies and initiatives are responsive to the specific needs of each department, fostering a culture of unity and teamwork.

HRM's collaboration with departments such as operations, finance, and compliance enables better coordination in areas that directly impact employees, including

scheduling, resource allocation, and performance management. This partnership approach not only supports employee satisfaction but also enhances organisational effectiveness by ensuring that all functions are aligned with strategic objectives. Dessler (2020) highlights that "HRM's interdepartmental collaboration is vital for developing well-integrated policies and for addressing issues that require cross-functional input, thus driving more effective decision-making".

Collaborative efforts also enhance communication across the organisation, allowing HRM to understand and address the unique needs of each department. By creating opportunities for *interdepartmental* teamwork, RSR's HRM supports a more adaptable and resilient workforce that is prepared to meet both employee expectations and organisational demands. This cross-functional approach ensures that HRM initiatives, such as training programs, employee wellness, and performance appraisals, are relevant and effective across different areas of the business.

In conclusion, HRM's collaboration with various departments at RSR contributes significantly to organisational success, as it fosters a unified approach to meeting both employee and business needs. This collaborative strategy fosters productivity, enhances customer satisfaction, and promotes a positive work culture. As Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest, interdepartmental collaboration is essential for maximising the effectiveness of HRM practices, creating a cohesive organisation that is well-equipped to achieve its strategic objectives.

Communicate Company Goals

Clear and consistent communication of company goals is a key responsibility of Human Resource Management (HRM), as it ensures that employees are aligned with the organisation's strategic direction and aware of policies that affect their roles. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM plays an active role in disseminating information about company goals, policies, and processes, which supports a unified and transparent workplace. Participant 9 emphasised the importance of HRM in educating employees and raising awareness about HR policies:

Education and awareness also play a critical part for us as employees because sometimes we may not know the policies off the top of our heads. HR can inform us about these processes and all relevant information. I expect HR to always be available to staff, so we are always aware and reminded of the processes and information relevant to us. (Participant 9)

By actively communicating organisational goals and policies, HRM helps employees understand their role in achieving organisational objectives, fostering a sense of purpose and connection to the organisation's mission. Research outlines that clear communication from HRM contributes to employee alignment with organisational goals, enhancing productivity and engagement. According to Noe *et al.* (2017), "effective communication by HRM builds trust and clarity, reducing uncertainty and allowing employees to focus on their contributions to the company".

Participant 32 further noted that HRM's transparent communication practices have helped employees stay informed and aligned with the organisation's expectations and goals:

Clear Communication: HRM practices ensure transparent communication about organisational goals, expectations, and policies, keeping me informed and aligned. (Participant 32)

In addition to communicating goals, HRM at RSR fosters an environment where employees feel empowered to provide feedback and contribute to organisational decisions. Participant 17 highlighted that HRM encourages open communication, providing employees with a platform to voice concerns and suggestions, which can influence organisational choices:

Employee Voice: HRM encourages open communication and feedback, allowing me to share concerns and suggestions that influence organisational decisions. (Participant 17)

Empowering employees to share feedback and engage in open communication strengthens their commitment to the organisation, as they feel their perspectives are

valued. According to Dessler (2020), "HRM practices that encourage employee voice contribute to a culture of inclusion and innovation, where employees are more engaged and committed to achieving company goals". By establishing clear communication channels and supporting employee input, HRM fosters a collaborative culture where employees are both informed and actively involved in the organisation's direction.

In conclusion, HRM's role in communicating company goals at RSR enhances transparency, alignment, and employee engagement. By educating employees on policies and providing a platform for feedback, HRM ensures that the workforce is well-informed and able to contribute to the organisation's success. As Noe *et al.* (2017) and Dessler (2020) suggest, effective communication by HRM is crucial for fostering a cohesive and motivated workforce that aligns with the company's mission.

Compensates Employees Fairly

Fair and competitive compensation is a fundamental aspect of effective Human Resource Management (HRM), as it not only acknowledges the contributions of employees but also enhances satisfaction, motivation, and retention (par 4.2). At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM is recognised for its commitment to compensating employees equitably, ensuring that pay reflects both the value of the work performed and market standards. Participant 27 noted that HRM at RSR upholds the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, ensuring employees are compensated fairly, particularly when taking on additional or acting roles:

So, HR then makes sure that I am compensated. I mean, when you think of equal pay for work of equal value, HR would support and make sure that if I am assisting in any role or acting in any role, HR will compensate me fairly. (Participant 27)

Fair compensation practices contribute to a sense of justice and recognition within the workplace, fostering a positive organisational culture. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), "HRM's commitment to fair compensation is essential for employee morale and can significantly impact engagement and productivity". When employees feel they are rewarded fairly for their work, they are more likely to be motivated and committed to their roles.

In addition to fairness, HRM at RSR ensures that compensation packages are competitive within the industry, supporting the organisation's ability to attract and retain talent. Participant 19 highlighted that HRM not only provides fair compensation but also develops competitive recognition programs that enhance employee satisfaction:

Recognition and Rewards: HRM develops and implements fair and competitive compensation and recognition programmes. (Participant 4)

Competitive compensation aligns with best practices in HRM, as it reflects market trends and ensures that the organisation remains attractive to potential employees. Research by Dessler (2020) supports this approach, noting that "compensation that is both fair and competitive helps organisations retain skilled employees, reducing turnover and associated recruitment costs". Competitive pay structures contribute to a strong employer brand, positioning RSR as an organisation that values its workforce.

The development of fair and competitive compensation and recognition programs demonstrates HRM's role in supporting employee well-being, fostering loyalty, and building a high-performance culture. By ensuring equitable pay and recognition, HRM at RSR promotes a culture of respect and appreciation, where employees feel their contributions are valued and rewarded.

In summary, HRM's commitment to fair and competitive compensation at RSR enhances employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention. By aligning pay practices with both internal fairness and external competitiveness, HRM supports a productive and loyal workforce. As Armstrong and Taylor (2020) and Dessler (2020) suggest, fair compensation practices are essential for building a positive organisational culture and sustaining long-term employee engagement.

Contributes to Employee Growth and Development

A fundamental role of Human Resource Management (HRM) is to foster employee growth and development, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their roles and advance their careers. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM is recognised for its significant contribution to employee development,

offering training and development opportunities that enable employees to achieve both personal and professional goals. Participant 10 emphasised the role of HRM in supporting their individual growth and helping them fulfil their responsibilities:

HR personally assists in meeting my needs, okay? Very importantly, HR contributes extensively to my growth and development. They contribute to growing me as an individual. They contribute to me reaching the goals and responsibilities that I have been assigned to. (Participant 10)

HRM's focus on growth and development fosters a culture of continuous learning, where employees feel supported in acquiring the skills needed to excel. Research by Noe *et al.* (2017) highlights that "ongoing development opportunities are essential for employee engagement, as they enable employees to develop their potential and advance within the organisation". This approach not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens the organisation by creating a more skilled and capable workforce.

Participant 11 further noted that RSR's HRM function ensures employees are adequately capacitated to meet job expectations, providing them with the necessary training and exposure to industry processes.

So, when you are recruited into a specific position, you are aware of what your deliverables will be. So, you obviously contract with them and over a period of time, obviously implement those activities. HR or I assist in terms of, I think more from just the monitoring point of view, but also in terms of ensuring that I'm adequately capacitated to implement. So, they provide me with the necessary training, upskilling, exposure to, I think, various processes. (Participant 11)

This emphasis on capacity building aligns with best practices in HRM, where structured training and upskilling programs help employees stay relevant and adapt to changes in the industry. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), "providing development and learning opportunities ensures that employees have the necessary skills to adapt to evolving organisational needs, which is particularly valuable in rapidly changing industries".

In addition to role-specific training, RSR's HRM supports employees' career aspirations, offering development pathways that align with individual goals. Participant 4 noted that HRM offers relevant training, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities, helping employees achieve their long-term career objectives:

Development Opportunities: HRM offers relevant training, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities, aligning with my career aspirations. (Participant 4)

The provision of career-aligned development programmes demonstrates HRM's commitment to fostering a supportive work environment where employees feel empowered to pursue growth. Research by Dessler (2020) supports this approach, suggesting that "when HRM invests in development programmes that align with career aspirations, it enhances job satisfaction and retention, as employees feel valued and motivated to remain with the organisation".

In summary, HRM at RSR contributes to employee growth and development by providing structured training, capacity building, and career-aligned development opportunities. This commitment to employee advancement not only supports individual aspirations but also enhances organisational effectiveness by building a skilled, motivated workforce. As Noe *et al.* (2017) and Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest, investing in employee growth is essential for creating a resilient, future-ready organisation.

Develop and Implement Policies

An essential responsibility of Human Resource Management (HRM) is the development and implementation of policies that align with organisational goals, uphold industry standards, and ensure compliance with legal requirements. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM is recognised for its effectiveness in creating policies that support the organisation's mission while promoting a structured and compliant workplace. Participant 34 highlighted HRM's role in establishing policies, procedures, and training programs that align with RSR's goals and regulatory requirements:

Develop and implement policies, procedures, and training programmes that support organisational goals and compliance with regulations. (Participant 34)

The development and implementation of policies are foundational to HRM's role in shaping an organisation's culture and operational standards. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), "Policies and procedures serve as a framework for consistent and fair treatment of employees, guiding them in line with the organisation's mission and legal obligations". Effective policy development ensures that employees understand organisational expectations and that HR practices are carried out consistently across the organisation.

Participant 27 further emphasised that HRM at RSR ensures compliance with labour laws and industry standards, which is essential for minimising legal and reputational risks:

Ensure compliance with labour laws, regulations, and industry standards, mitigating legal and reputational risks. (Participant 27)

By establishing policies that are aligned with legal and regulatory standards, HRM reduces the risk of non-compliance, which could lead to costly legal issues and damage the organisation's reputation. Dessler (2020) notes that "HRM's role in ensuring compliance through well-defined policies is critical for organisational integrity and for fostering a culture of accountability and respect". Compliance-focused policies protect both the organisation and its employees, creating a safe and fair work environment.

Policy development at RSR is designed to support a structured approach to HRM practices, such as recruitment, training, and performance management, which in turn supports organisational stability and growth. Policies that are regularly reviewed and updated ensure that HRM practices remain relevant and responsive to changes in the industry or regulatory environment. Noe *et al.* (2017) argue that "effective policy implementation requires continuous review and adaptation to meet evolving organisational and regulatory needs".

In summary, HRM at RSR contributes significantly to organisational success by developing and implementing policies that promote compliance, mitigate risks, and align with organisational goals. This structured approach to policy development ensures that HRM practices support a compliant, fair, and effective workplace. As Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest, the role of HRM in policy creation and implementation is critical for establishing a stable and legally sound foundation for the organisation.

Fair Treatment and Inclusion

Fair treatment and inclusion are fundamental values within effective Human Resource Management (HRM), as they foster a supportive and equitable work environment that respects the diverse needs of employees. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM practices are recognised for their commitment to fairness and inclusivity, which helps employees feel valued and empowered in their roles. Participant 22 highlighted HRM's role in ensuring fairness by applying policies and procedures consistently across the organisation:

Fairness and Consistency: HRM ensures consistent application of policies, procedures, and practices, promoting fairness and equal opportunities. (Participant 22)

The consistent application of policies is essential for building trust and credibility in HRM, as employees expect policies to be applied impartially and equitably. According to Dessler (2020), "fairness in HRM practices, including the equitable application of policies, is critical for employee morale and organisational cohesion". When employees feel they are treated fairly, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work.

Beyond fairness, HRM at RSR is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion and support, thereby enhancing the organisation's diversity and overall well-being. Participant 30 noted that HRM's focus on inclusivity has created an environment where they feel supported and empowered:

Supportive Culture: HRM promotes a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and well-being, ensuring I feel supported and empowered to excel in my role. (Participant 30)

Inclusion initiatives contribute to a positive workplace culture where diversity is embraced, and employees from different backgrounds feel respected and understood. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) emphasise that "HRM practices that encourage inclusivity create a workplace where all employees have equal opportunities to succeed, irrespective of their background or personal characteristics". This approach fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that each employee's contributions are valued, which is essential for individual and organisational success.

In addition, HRM's focus on fair treatment and inclusivity aligns with best practices for creating a psychologically safe workplace. Inclusive HRM practices reduce the likelihood of discrimination and bias, fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns. Noe *et al.* (2017) suggest that "inclusive HRM practices encourage collaboration, innovation, and a more cohesive workforce by acknowledging and celebrating the unique strengths of each employee".

In summary, the emphasis on fair treatment and inclusion in HRM practices at RSR demonstrates the department's effectiveness in creating an equitable and supportive work environment. HRM fosters a culture where employees feel respected and empowered by ensuring fairness, consistency, and inclusivity, contributing to organisational cohesion and productivity. As Dessler (2020) and Armstrong & Taylor (2020) suggest, fair treatment and inclusivity are cornerstones of effective HRM that enhance employee satisfaction and strengthen organisational culture.

Foster Positive Work Culture

Creating a positive work culture is a core function of Human Resource Management (HRM), as it enhances employee engagement, motivation, and well-being. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM practices are credited with establishing a supportive and safe environment that encourages employees to thrive. Participant 16 emphasised that HRM fosters an atmosphere conducive to high employee engagement and satisfaction:

Foster a positive work environment, promoting employee engagement, motivation, and well-being.

A positive work culture is critical for productivity and employee retention, as engaged and motivated employees are more committed to their roles and the organisation. According to Meyer and Allen (1991), "a strong organisational culture enhances affective commitment, as employees feel an emotional connection to the organisation." By promoting a supportive environment, HRM encourages employees to align with RSR's mission and values, creating a unified workforce.

Additionally, Participant 2 highlighted HRM's role in creating a safe, trusting work environment. This sense of security allows employees to rely on HR for support, especially in sensitive areas related to interpersonal relations and workplace challenges:

The HR has created a platform or an environment which is conducive for me to come and work for the organisation and feel safe to conduct my duties, as well as to ensure that I can trust the human resource. And also, in times of consultation when it comes to human relations, I can also count on HR, so that stakeholder management between HR and the operations is there, it is well managed, well looked after, and it is effective.
(Participant 2)

A safe and trusting environment fosters open communication, enabling employees to voice their concerns and seek guidance without hesitation. Kahn (1990) suggests that "psychological safety is essential for employee engagement, as it gives individuals the confidence to express themselves and contribute fully to the organisation". By fostering this trust, HRM at RSR supports a culture where employees feel valued and secure.

HRM's role in promoting a positive work culture encompasses efforts to support inclusivity, work-life balance, and recognition. Each of these elements strengthens workforce resilience and morale. Schein (2010) argues that "a positive work culture is built on shared values and practices that respect diversity and recognise contributions, leading to a more cohesive organisation." By promoting these values, HRM at RSR lays the foundation for a resilient, high-performing team.

In summary, HRM at RSR has been instrumental in fostering a positive work culture, characterised by trust, safety, and engagement. This supportive environment contributes to a motivated workforce that is aligned with organisational goals. As Meyer and Allen (1991) and Schein (2010) suggest, a positive work culture, led by effective HRM practices, is essential for nurturing employee commitment and organisational success.

Manage Workforce

An essential function of Human Resource Management (HRM) is workforce management, encompassing workforce planning, succession planning, and talent management. These practices ensure that the organisation is well-prepared to meet both current and future staffing needs. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM's role in managing the workforce is highly valued by employees, as noted by Participant 23:

Manage workforce planning, succession planning, and talent management to ensure future organisational needs are met. (Participant 23)

Effective workforce management involves anticipating and addressing organisational staffing needs, enabling HRM to support the organisation's strategic objectives. According to Collings, Scullion, and Caligiuri (2018), "strategic workforce planning and talent management are critical for maintaining a competitive advantage, as they enable organisations to align their workforce capabilities with evolving business goals". By prioritising workforce planning, RSR's HRM can ensure that talent is available and ready to step into key roles as the organisation grows and changes.

In addition to workforce planning, talent management and succession planning are key components of HRM's role in managing the workforce. These practices help identify and develop potential leaders within the organisation, fostering internal mobility and reducing the need for external recruitment. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) argue that "effective talent management enables organisations to nurture a pipeline of future leaders, reducing the risks associated with turnover and leadership gaps". By

cultivating talent from within, RSR's HRM supports organisational continuity and strengthens its capacity to meet future challenges.

HRM's workforce management practices contribute to employee engagement and retention. When employees see that HRM is invested in their growth and development through succession and talent management initiatives, they are more likely to feel committed to the organisation. As DeCenzo, Robbins, and Verhulst (2019) note, "employees who perceive clear career progression opportunities and organisational support for their development demonstrate higher levels of commitment and motivation". RSR's focus on workforce management fosters a sense of security and opportunity, contributing to a loyal and motivated workforce.

In summary, HRM's effectiveness at RSR is demonstrated through its strategic management of workforce needs, from succession planning to talent development. By aligning workforce management practices with organisational goals, HRM ensures that RSR is well-prepared for future growth while enhancing employee engagement. As Collings, Scullion, and Caligiuri (2018) and Cascio and Boudreau (2016) suggest, strategic workforce management is essential for creating a resilient and forward-looking organisation.

Regular Performance Feedback

Regular performance feedback is a core component of effective Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, as it establishes clear expectations, provides constructive guidance, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM's commitment to providing regular feedback is well-regarded by employees. Participant 22 highlighted the role of performance evaluations in setting goals and delivering feedback that supports employee development:

Performance Management: HRM conducts regular performance evaluations, sets clear goals and expectations, and provides constructive feedback. (Participant 22)

Research supports the value of regular performance feedback, noting that consistent evaluations and feedback help employees understand their progress and areas for improvement, thereby enhancing both engagement and productivity. According to Aguinis (2019), "effective performance management systems provide regular, actionable feedback, enabling employees to align their performance with organisational goals and personal development objectives". This alignment is critical in regulated industries like RSR, where precision and accountability are paramount.

Participant 7 emphasised that the effectiveness of HRM practices in meeting employee expectations can be evaluated through both quantitative metrics (e.g., retention rates) and qualitative feedback (e.g., employee engagement surveys). This approach allows HRM to adjust practices based on employee input, ensuring alignment with their needs and expectations:

The effectiveness of HRM practices in meeting HR needs and expectations, as perceived by employees, can be assessed through a combination of quantitative data, such as retention rates and performance metrics, and qualitative feedback, including employee surveys and engagement levels. Regular evaluation and adjustment of HR practices based on this feedback are essential for continuous improvement and ensuring alignment with employee needs and expectations. (Participant 7)

Incorporating employee feedback into performance management fosters a responsive and adaptive HRM system, allowing the organisation to refine its practices to meet evolving employee needs. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) argue that "collecting and analysing employee feedback provides valuable insights into HRM effectiveness and offers opportunities for improvement". By engaging employees in this process, RSR can make adjustments that reinforce a supportive workplace culture and promote job satisfaction.

Additionally, Participant 15 highlighted that performance feedback at RSR includes recognising and rewarding high performance, which encourages employees to strive for excellence and contribute to organisational success: (Participant 15)

Recognition of performance is crucial for reinforcing positive behaviours and motivating employees to excel. According to DeNisi and Murphy (2017), "recognition and reward systems that acknowledge individual contributions foster motivation and reinforce a culture of high performance". This practice supports RSR's objective of building a dedicated workforce that is aligned with organisational goals.

In summary, HRM's practice of providing regular performance feedback at RSR promotes alignment, continuous improvement, and a culture of recognition. HRM fosters an environment that encourages excellence and meets employee needs by setting clear expectations, offering constructive feedback, and valuing employee input. As Aguinis (2019) and DeNisi & Murphy (2017) suggest, regular feedback and recognition are fundamental to effective performance management and organisational success.

Supports Departments through Improving Operations

An effective Human Resource Management (HRM) function not only supports individual employees but also plays a central role in enhancing departmental and organisational operations (par 4). At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM is recognised as a pivotal support department that aids other units in achieving their goals, fostering a cohesive environment where departments can operate efficiently. Participant 14 emphasised HRM's role as the central hub for all departments, highlighting the importance of HRM's engagement and support:

Well, if you really look at the HR business, it is basically the centre of all departments, either being support or core departments. So, it is very important that HR engages with all these departments to create awareness so that we improve our operations. So yeah, and that is happening. So, I'm quite happy with how HR does things. At the moment, we are being developed, the mandate of the HR is being executed through the supporting department. (Participant 14)

HRM's involvement with multiple departments reflects a collaborative approach that enables smoother operations, as HRM offers the necessary support to address personnel needs, streamline processes, and implement strategic improvements.

Research by Ulrich *et al.* (2017) supports this approach, stating that "HR's role as a strategic partner involves collaborating with various departments to enhance operational effectiveness and align workforce capabilities with organisational goals". By engaging with other units, HRM ensures that each department has the resources and support needed to function optimally.

In addition, the support HRM provides is informed by data analysis and HR metrics, which guide strategic decision-making and operational improvements. Participant 4 pointed out that HRM leverages data to assess its impact and guide improvements within the organisation:

Analyse HR metrics and data to inform strategic decisions, drive improvement, and measure the impact of HR initiatives. (Participant 4)

The use of HR metrics enables HRM to identify areas for improvement, track the effectiveness of initiatives, and make data-driven decisions that enhance overall operations. According to Boudreau and Cascio (2018), "analysing HR data provides valuable insights into workforce trends, helping organisations improve productivity and adapt HR strategies to meet changing needs". By integrating data analysis into its support processes, HRM at RSR ensures that its initiatives are aligned with both employee expectations and organisational objectives.

HRM's support extends beyond onboarding to address ongoing employee needs throughout their tenure at RSR, as expressed by Participant 9:

I would say that Human Resources plays a big role because it's a support department. It needs to support its employees not only when we join the organisation, but throughout all its processes. (Participant 9)

By offering continuous support, HRM contributes to a stable work environment where employees feel valued and equipped to perform their roles effectively. This ongoing support aligns with best practices in HRM, which emphasise the importance of maintaining employee engagement and operational alignment through sustained HR involvement (Guest, 2017).

In summary, HRM's role at RSR in supporting departments and improving operations highlights its function as a central and strategic partner. Through data-driven decisions, continuous engagement, and collaboration, HRM enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of various organisational functions. As Ulrich *et al.* (2017) and Boudreau and Cascio (2018) suggest, HRM's role in supporting operations is crucial for fostering an adaptable and high-performing organisation.

Supports Employee Wellness

Employee wellness is a critical focus of Human Resource Management (HRM), directly impacting productivity, engagement, and overall job satisfaction. At the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), HRM practices are recognised for their commitment to supporting employee wellness through various programs and flexible work arrangements that address both physical and mental health needs. Participant 10 highlighted the positive impact of wellness programmes, noting how HRM's focus on well-being enhances their ability to perform their duties:

They contribute to wellness. I mean, we have a number of wellness programs within the organization. And all of these wellness programs do contribute to my personal development and even just ensuring that I am fit for my duties. For instance, with the wellness programs that we have, we take things such as blood pressure and financial health, which are crucial to me, obviously, in performing my duties as a person within the organisation. (Participant 10)

Research supports the importance of wellness initiatives in maintaining a healthy workforce, with studies showing that wellness programs contribute to both physical health and workplace morale. According to Cummings and Worley (2020), "employee wellness programs that address health factors, from mental health to physical fitness, play a vital role in sustaining a motivated and productive workforce". Wellness programs that address comprehensive health factors, including financial well-being, help employees feel more supported and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities.

In addition to wellness programs, HRM at RSR has implemented flexible work hours to support work-life balance, which has been especially beneficial for employees

managing personal and professional responsibilities. Participant 5 noted the positive effects of flexible work arrangements, stating that these initiatives contribute to a balanced lifestyle:

Work-Life Balance: HRM promotes flexible work arrangements and employee well-being initiatives, helping me balance work and personal life. (Participant 5)

Flexible work arrangements, including adjusted hours and remote work options, are increasingly considered essential HRM practices supporting employee well-being and reducing burnout. Purce (2019) highlights that "flexible work arrangements provide employees with the autonomy to balance work demands with personal needs, leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover". By offering flexibility, HRM at RSR fosters a culture that respects individual needs, helping employees maintain productivity while achieving a healthier work-life balance.

These wellness initiatives align with best practices in HRM, as a focus on wellness and flexibility is linked to improved retention, employee satisfaction, and organisational commitment. Initiatives that support wellness and work-life balance enhance individual performance and contribute to a positive organisational culture that values employees' holistic well-being (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019).

In summary, HRM at RSR supports employee wellness through comprehensive wellness programs and flexible work arrangements that promote physical health, financial well-being, and a healthy work-life balance. By prioritising wellness, HRM fosters an engaged and resilient workforce, creating a supportive environment where employees can thrive. Cummings & Worley (2020) and Purce (2019) suggest that wellness initiatives are essential components of effective HRM, benefiting both employees and the organisation.

7.4.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Role of OM Principles and Practices

The next theme that emerged from the research was the understanding of how well OM principles and practices were implemented to support the organisation's strategic success.

This section investigates the role of Operations Management (OM) principles and practices within an organisation, highlighting how these practices support efficient operations, enhance productivity, and drive strategic success (par. 2.3). OM is instrumental in designing workflows that streamline tasks and maximise productivity, creating structures that allow for smooth and consistent operational performance. Effective OM also involves meticulous planning for operations, ensuring that resources are allocated wisely and activities are coordinated to meet organisational goals.

Managing operations and resources is a core OM function, as it ensures that all operational assets are used optimally. This responsibility includes overseeing day-to-day tasks and focusing on quality assurance and process enhancement to maintain high standards across functions. OM further supports the regulatory function by implementing practices that align with industry standards and compliance requirements, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to safety and accountability (par. 2.3.6).

In addition, OM practices focus on improving business efficiency through process optimisation, identifying ways to reduce waste and increase output. These efforts contribute to revenue growth by enhancing productivity and profitability. OM also plays a key role in leading employees, ensuring they are motivated and aligned with operational goals. Effective supply chain management secures a steady flow of resources, which is essential for uninterrupted operations.

Risk mitigation is another critical OM responsibility, involving strategies to anticipate and manage potential disruptions (par. 6.3.2). By implementing these practices, OM strengthens the organisation's resilience and supports its long-term sustainability.

In summary, this section examines the various roles that OM practices and principles play in fostering an efficient, compliant, and resilient organisation, underscoring their importance in achieving operational and strategic objectives.

Figure 7.4: Role of OM Practices and Principles

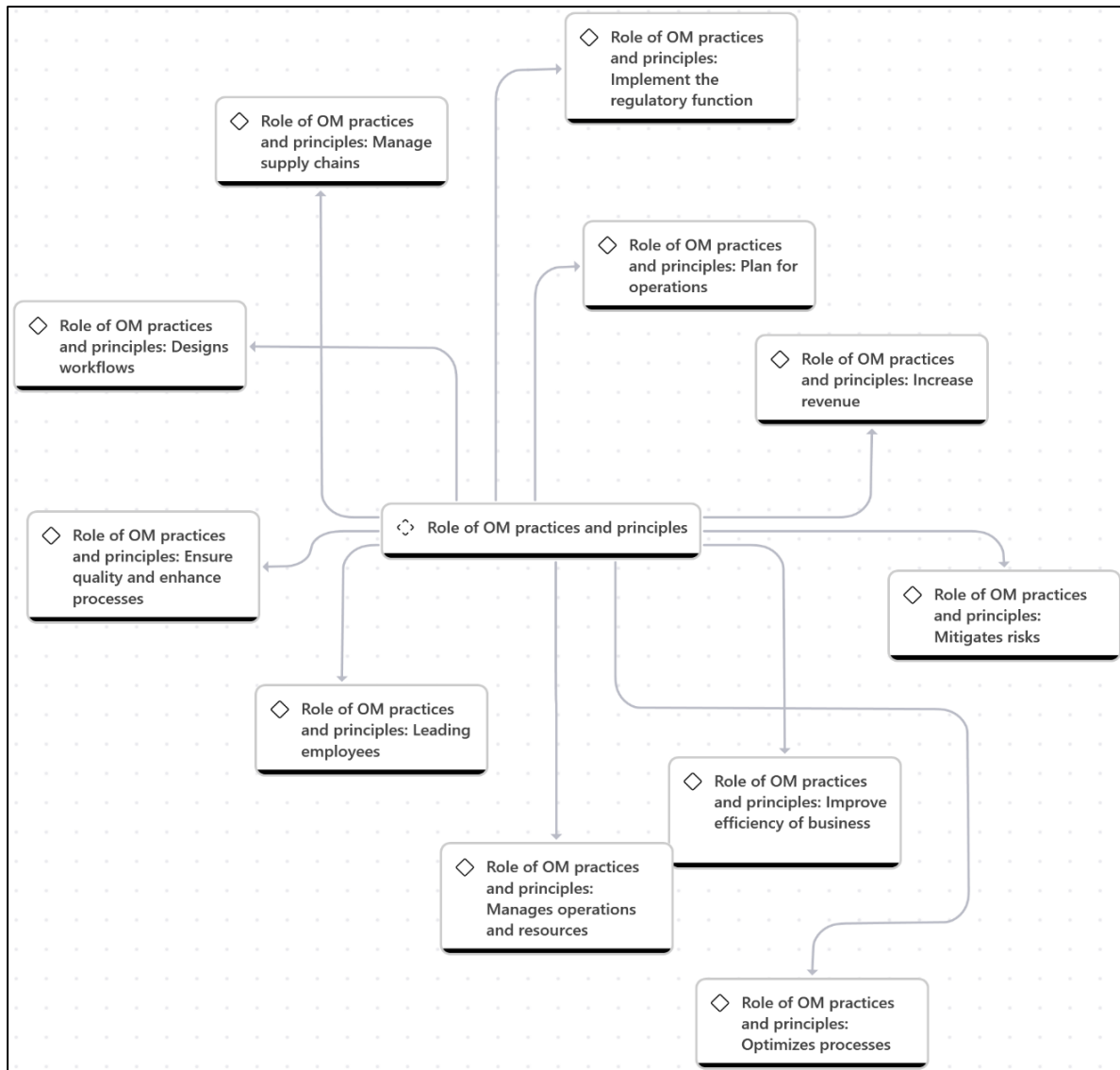


Table 7.5: Role of OM Practices and Principles

	Operations Functions	Support Functions	Totals
Designs workflows	1	0	1
Ensure quality and enhance processes	3	6	9
Implement the regulatory function	2	0	2
Improve the efficiency of business	3	4	7
Increase revenue	0	1	1
Leading employees	0	1	1
Manage supply chains	0	1	1
Manages operations and resources	7	5	12
Mitigates risks	1	1	2
Optimises processes	1	2	3
Plan for operations	3	4	7

Designs Workflows

A core responsibility of operations management is designing efficient workflows that support the creation of goods and services. This function involves mapping out processes, incorporating technology, and ensuring a smooth operational flow (par 2.5.3.8 and 6.3.2). Participant 1 emphasised the role of operations management in designing workflows that align with organisational objectives:

Operations Management is responsible for designing the processes that create goods and services, involving the mapping of workflows, integrating new technologies (Participant 1)

Research highlights the significance of workflow design in operations management, as efficient workflows reduce bottlenecks and increase productivity (par. 2.5.1.3). Slack & Brandon-Jones (2018) state that "workflow design is essential for maximising resource utilisation and ensuring that operational processes are streamlined". Additionally, Stevenson (2020) notes that integrating new technologies within workflow design can enhance responsiveness and adaptability, which are crucial in modern operational environments. In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a crucial role in designing workflows that integrate technology and enhance productivity (par. 3.4). By mapping workflows effectively, operations management ensures that processes are well-organised, resource-efficient, and aligned with the organisation's strategic goals. This focus on workflow design is crucial for establishing a streamlined operational structure that balances service quality and efficiency.

Plan for Operations

Operations management is essential in developing and implementing a clear plan that guides organisational activities throughout the year (par. 6.3.4.1). This planning function enables teams to align their actions with organisational goals, ensuring that resources, finances, and timelines are effectively managed. Participant 19 emphasised the importance of an operational plan in setting clear annual targets and guiding employee responsibilities:

I think the operation management is very critical also in the organisation, because it gives us the view of what we need to be doing for the entire financial year or for the entire year. So, we would know what we are responsible for, what it is that we need to do for us to achieve that task. So, we'll have the operational plan. It will have all those targets that we need to achieve, and it is upon us to achieve those targets. (Participant 19)

Participant 13 highlighted that operational planning involves ensuring necessary resources, finances, and legal compliance, aligning with the Railway Safety Regulator's (RSR) mandate:

I mean in terms of operational management, it's more of making sure that we execute our targets as per the plan. And looking as well as in terms of your delivery, quality of your delivery in terms of, in our case, would be your report. And the impact on the space that we work in, in this case, in terms of regulations on the environment, and ensure that all these things are within the legal framework that the RSR is mandated. And yes, there's small matters of the budget aspect in terms of our annual allocated finances to travel and to do all these things. However, it's more of even how we ensure that our annual targets are implemented resourced. We eventually carry out that working in the operational space and if you were in the operator space, it's just how you're maintaining your processes and your project. But in our case, it is just to make sure that we are carrying out our work in support of the mandate of the RSR.
(Participant 13)

The literature supports the role of operations management in operational planning, emphasising that it sets a clear pathway for achieving organisational objectives. According to Heizer, Render, & Munson (2017), "effective operational planning establishes performance standards and resource allocation, facilitating the achievement of annual goals." Furthermore, Hill & Hill (2020) explain that operational plans provide a framework for resource management and quality control, ensuring that operations are efficient and aligned with legal and financial guidelines (par. 6.3.4). In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a critical role in planning, enabling the organisation to set and achieve its annual goals. By coordinating resources, budgets, and compliance requirements, operations management ensures that targets are met effectively, supporting the organisation's regulatory mandate. This alignment between operational planning and organisational objectives stresses the importance of a structured approach to operations for both efficiency and accountability.

Manages Operations and Resources

A fundamental role of operations management is to oversee both operations and resources within the organisation. This responsibility includes managing operational staff, allocating resources, and structuring tasks to optimise productivity (par. 2.5.1.1). Participant 21 highlighted that, while separate from HR, operations management also plays a role in managing operational staff, focusing on aspects like scheduling, job design, and worker safety:

While distinct from HR, Operations Management also deals with aspects of managing operational staff, from scheduling and job design to ensuring worker safety and productivity. (Participant 21)

Participant 4 further explained that operations management is responsible for organising resources and assigning tasks to ensure efficient operations:

Organising: Allocating resources, assigning tasks, and structuring the organisation. (Participant 4)

The literature supports the role of operations management in allocating resources and workforce. According to Russell and Taylor (2019), "resource management within operations is essential for balancing workload, maximising productivity, and ensuring employee safety and well-being".

In addition, Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) emphasise that operations management is responsible for allocating resources efficiently and structuring tasks to support organisational goals, creating a framework that maximises both human and material resources (par. 2.5.2.2).

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator is crucial in managing operations and resources effectively. By focusing on staff scheduling, job design, and resource allocation, operations management ensures that tasks are performed efficiently and safely, contributing to the organisation's productivity and

stability. This integration of resource management and operational oversight is essential for achieving consistent, high-quality performance (par. 4.3.1).

Ensure Quality and Enhance Processes

Ensuring quality and continuously enhancing processes are critical responsibilities of operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator. Participants emphasised OM's role in setting quality standards (par. 2.6.4), implementing control mechanisms, and promoting process improvement to meet organisational and customer expectations. Participant 31 highlighted that *ensuring quality in both products and services is a foundational principle of operations management*:

Participants remarked that the role of operations management practices and principles is to ensure quality and enhance processes.

Ensuring the quality of products and services is a core tenet of Operations Management, including setting quality standards, implementing quality control and improvement processes, and ensuring that final outputs meet customer expectations and compliance requirements (Participant 31)

Participant 11 elaborated on how operations management ensures compliance with quality standards through monitoring processes, which align with the regulator's policies:

In terms of RSR we would conduct a function in your operations what we would call our operations department. You would then have another department almost monitoring and overseeing to ensure that all the work that was done was done in compliance to our policies and procedures that we have within our organisation. So, it's just to manage the quality of the work that we produce and to ensure that it is aligned to our prescripts. That would be in your execution phase. And then obviously you're monitoring, which would be your quality control and monitoring of the work that was executed. (Participant 11)

Additionally, Participant 15 emphasised the importance of innovation and learning in enhancing processes, while Participant 6 emphasised the role of quality in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty:

Improving: Continuously enhancing processes, products, and services through innovation and learning (Participant 15)

Enhanced Customer Satisfaction: OM ensures consistent quality, reliability, and timely delivery of products and services, fostering customer loyalty and retention (Participant 6)

The literature supports OM's role in quality assurance and process improvement, highlighting that these practices are essential for customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (par. 2.5.1.1 and 2.5.3). Slack & Brandon-Jones (2018) state that "operations management is responsible for developing and maintaining quality standards that ensure products and services meet customer expectations". Additionally, Stevenson (2020) notes that process enhancement through continuous improvement and innovation is crucial in creating value for customers, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a crucial role in ensuring quality and enhancing processes, aligning outputs with regulatory standards and customer expectations. By implementing quality control mechanisms, monitoring systems, and continuous improvement practices, OM contributes to high-quality service delivery and customer satisfaction (par. 2.4). As Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) suggest, quality and process improvement are vital components of OM that drive customer retention, compliance, and overall organisational success.

Operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) plays a crucial role in implementing the organisation's regulatory function within the railway industry (par 3). Participants emphasised that OM is responsible for ensuring safety and compliance standards, benchmarking practices against global standards, and utilising advanced resources and tools. Participant 2 highlighted that RSR's regulatory practices align with international best practices, setting a standard within the industry:

The role of OM practices and principles is to implement the organisation's regulatory function (par. 4.4.2.4). Participant 2 highlighted that *operations management is at the forefront of implementing the RSR's regulatory function in the railway industry. The participant noted that their processes are world-class and can be benchmarked against other countries.*

We have implemented one of the best practices in terms of regulating the industry because we are doing some benchmarking with other countries, such as the UK, in terms of how they are implementing the regulatory function. To ensure the safety of railway operations, I can mention the likes of ORR and now the RSR are using some of the tools that are used in the UK, which is the risk maturity model. And then also in the way in which we conduct our activities, like quality inspection as well as investigation, is in line, and if not, the best with the rest of the world. (Participant 2)

Furthermore, Participant 2 noted that RSR's operations management team is equipped with advanced tools and experienced personnel, ensuring that regulatory functions are carried out effectively and in compliance with RSR's mandate:

I mean, not so long ago, we hosted an international Railway Safety Council, which was a success. Just to say that we are out there, we are among the best countries in terms of regulating the railway industry and also in terms of the resources that we have within the organisation are the best resources because we've got most experienced people within that railway industry that you can judge by the level of our tools that we're using at the RSR, when we conduct safety management system audits, technical inspection as well as investigations that we do and I think we are one of the best battery companies and we ensure that we also in line with the legislation of the country and also ensure that we execute our mandate in line with the RSR act. So that's our role as operations within the RSR (Participant 2)

The literature emphasises the significance of operations management in implementing regulatory functions, particularly in industries that prioritise public safety and compliance. According to Reid and Sanders (2019), "operations management is essential in maintaining safety and regulatory standards, ensuring that procedures

align with national and international legislation". Additionally, Hill and Hill (2020) note that benchmarking against global practices allows organisations to adopt effective methods that enhance their regulatory effectiveness and contribute to their credibility in the industry (par. 5.5).

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator is integral to implementing regulatory functions and maintaining high standards of safety and compliance. By benchmarking practices, utilising advanced tools, and aligning with legislative mandates, OM at RSR ensures that the organisation meets both national and international standards. This approach positions RSR as a leading authority in railway safety, demonstrating the importance of rigorous regulatory practices in operations management.

Improve the Efficiency of Business

Improving efficiency is a core objective of operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator, as OM strives to enhance productivity, reduce waste, and streamline processes (par. 4.3.1). Participants outlined the importance of efficiency in OM practices, highlighting various approaches, including cost reduction, resource optimisation, and automation. Participant 21 emphasised that OM at the regulator *focuses on continuous process improvement to reduce operational costs:*

Continually seeking ways to improve these processes to enhance productivity and reduce costs. (Participant 21)

Participant 16 further corroborated this by explaining that OM practices at the regulator optimise resource use and minimise waste, leading to both cost savings and productivity gains:

Improved efficiency: OM optimises resource allocation, reduces waste, and streamlines processes, leading to cost savings and increased productivity. (Participant 16)

Additionally, Participant 24 noted that efficiency improvements are achieved through the adoption of automation and digitisation, which are fundamental to modern OM practices:

Well, the most fundamental principle of operations management is to improve the efficiency of a unit or a business at large through technological advancement, engineering advancement, process instrumentation, or digitalisation of processes. So that's basically what I understand about operations management, and the two functions of operations management and HR are very similar. (Participant 24)

The literature reinforces the role of OM in improving business efficiency, noting that optimising processes and embracing technology are essential to maintaining competitiveness (par. 2.5.1.3). According to Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017), "the primary goal of operations management is to improve efficiency by managing resources and minimising waste". Stevenson (2020) notes that incorporating automation and digitalisation into processes enables organisations to achieve consistent improvements in productivity and efficiency, which in turn drive business growth and sustainability.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator is instrumental in improving business efficiency through process optimisation, cost reduction, and technological advancements. By continually seeking ways to enhance productivity and reduce waste, OM at the regulator supports organisational sustainability and competitiveness (par. **Error! Reference source not found.**). As Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017) suggest, effective OM practices that focus on efficiency contribute to cost savings and position the organisation to meet future challenges with resilience.

Optimises Processes

One of the fundamental roles of operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator is optimising processes to ensure efficient use of resources and to enhance productivity (par. 2.5.1.3). Participants indicated that OM's focus on process optimisation aims to minimise various forms of waste, including time, materials, and costs. Participant 30 highlighted this role by stating:

Operations Management focuses on optimising processes to maximise output and minimise waste, whether this waste is in the form of time, resources, or costs (Participant 30)

Participant 9 echoed this sentiment, underscoring that OM practices are critical for ensuring the organisation's operations run smoothly and efficiently:

Operations Management practices and principles play a critical role in ensuring the smooth functioning of an organisation's operations, optimising processes. (Participant 9)

The literature supports OM's role in process optimisation, describing it as essential for reducing inefficiencies and improving organisational performance. According to Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017), "process optimisation is central to OM as it allows for better resource allocation, reduced lead times, and overall cost savings." Moreover, Stevenson (2020) explains that OM relies on continuous improvement methodologies, such as lean and Six Sigma, to identify and eliminate waste, thereby enhancing the organisation's responsiveness and adaptability (par. 2.5.2.5).

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a vital role in optimising processes, which are essential for maximising output and reducing waste. By focusing on process efficiency, OM ensures the organisation's operations are cost-effective and sustainable. As Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017) suggest, effective process optimisation contributes to a competitive advantage by reducing unnecessary expenditures and improving productivity, ultimately supporting long-term organisational goals.

Increase Revenue

A crucial role of operations management (OM) is to increase organisational revenue by streamlining processes and responding efficiently to market demands (par. 2.5.2.4). Participant 26 emphasised that OM practices enable organisations to capitalise on new opportunities and respond flexibly to shifts in the market, thereby driving revenue growth:

Increased Revenue: OM enables organisations to respond quickly to changing market demands, capitalise on new opportunities. (Participant 26)

The literature supports OM's role in revenue generation, particularly by improving operational flexibility and leveraging efficiency gains (par. 2.5.2.5). According to Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018), "operations management contributes to revenue growth by enhancing production efficiency and adapting to market trends, which allows organisations to capture demand effectively." Stevenson (2020) further adds that by optimising resources and minimising costs, OM increases the organisation's ability to invest in innovation, thus opening avenues for additional revenue streams.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a strategic role in increasing revenue by enhancing the organisation's responsiveness to market dynamics and improving operational efficiency. By aligning OM practices with market demands, the organisation is better positioned to seize new opportunities and achieve sustainable growth (par. 2.5.2.1). As Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) indicate, OM's contribution to revenue generation lies in its capacity to optimise resources and adapt quickly, creating a robust framework for long-term financial success.

Leading Employees

An essential function of operations management (OM) is to lead employees effectively, ensuring they are guided, motivated, and aligned with organisational objectives (par. 2.5.2.4 and 4.3). Participant 4 highlighted that OM involves providing direction and support to employees to foster a productive and cohesive work environment:

Leading: Guiding, motivating, and directing employees. (Participant 4)

The literature supports the role of leadership within OM, emphasising that effective leadership enhances employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity. According to Daft (2018), "operations management is responsible for creating an environment where employees feel motivated and supported, enabling them to perform at their best".

Additionally, Schermerhorn (2019) notes that leading employees requires a combination of clear communication, motivation, and support, which are essential for achieving organisational goals.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a crucial role in guiding employees, providing motivation, and offering direction. This leadership fosters an environment of collaboration and accountability, aligning the workforce with the organisation's mission. As Daft (2018) indicates, effective leadership in OM is fundamental to building a motivated and high-performing team, which is essential for operational success.

Manage Supply Chains

Another critical operation management responsibility is managing supply chains effectively (par. 2.5.2.6). Participant 24 emphasised OM's role in overseeing supply chains and inventory to ensure a smooth flow of materials and resources:

Manage supply chains and inventory (Participant 24).

The literature highlights the importance of supply chain management (SCM) within OM, as efficient SCM practices help organisations reduce costs, minimise disruptions, and maintain timely delivery of goods and services. According to Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017), "supply chain management is an integral part of operations management, linking suppliers, production, and distribution to meet customer demands".

Chopra and Meindl (2019) stress that effective SCM enables organisations to optimise inventory levels and maintain strong relationships with suppliers, which are crucial for operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator is responsible for managing supply chains and inventory, ensuring resources are available as needed (par 2.5.2.6). Effective SCM minimises costs and enhances the organisation's ability to meet its operational goals consistently. As Heizer, Render, and Munson (2017)

suggest, managing supply chains within OM supports the seamless flow of goods and services, contributing to both organisational resilience and customer satisfaction.

Mitigates Risks

Operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator is also responsible for mitigating risks, a critical function that ensures continuity and safeguards organisational assets. Participants noted that OM actively identifies, assesses, and manages risks to reduce potential operational disruptions (par. 2.5.2.4). Participant 1 highlighted OM's role in risk mitigation:

Identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks in the operations process is crucial
(Participant 1)

The literature supports OM's focus on risk management, emphasising that effective risk mitigation helps maintain organisational stability and prevent losses. According to Hopkin (2018), "risk management within OM involves identifying vulnerabilities and implementing controls to minimise the likelihood and impact of operational disruptions". Additionally, Hillson (2019) notes that proactive risk management allows organisations to operate smoothly by anticipating potential threats and taking steps to prevent them.

In conclusion, operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a key role in mitigating risks, ensuring that operational activities are secure and resilient against potential threats. By focusing on proactive risk identification and control, OM helps safeguard the organisation's assets and continuity. As Hopkins (2018) suggests, effective risk mitigation is essential for achieving operational stability and protecting the organisation's long-term interests (par. 2.5.3). However, there was no unanimous understanding of how these principles and practices contribute to the organisation's success.

7.4.1.5 Sub-theme 1.5: Role of HRM practices in the organisation

This section examines the varied role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices within an organisation, focusing on how these practices contribute to organisational effectiveness and employee satisfaction. HRM is pivotal in aligning workforce capabilities with strategic goals by recruiting, selecting, and retaining a skilled workforce that meets the organisation's objectives. A key responsibility of HRM is to communicate policies and ensure compliance, establish clear guidelines, and uphold regulatory standards across the organisation.

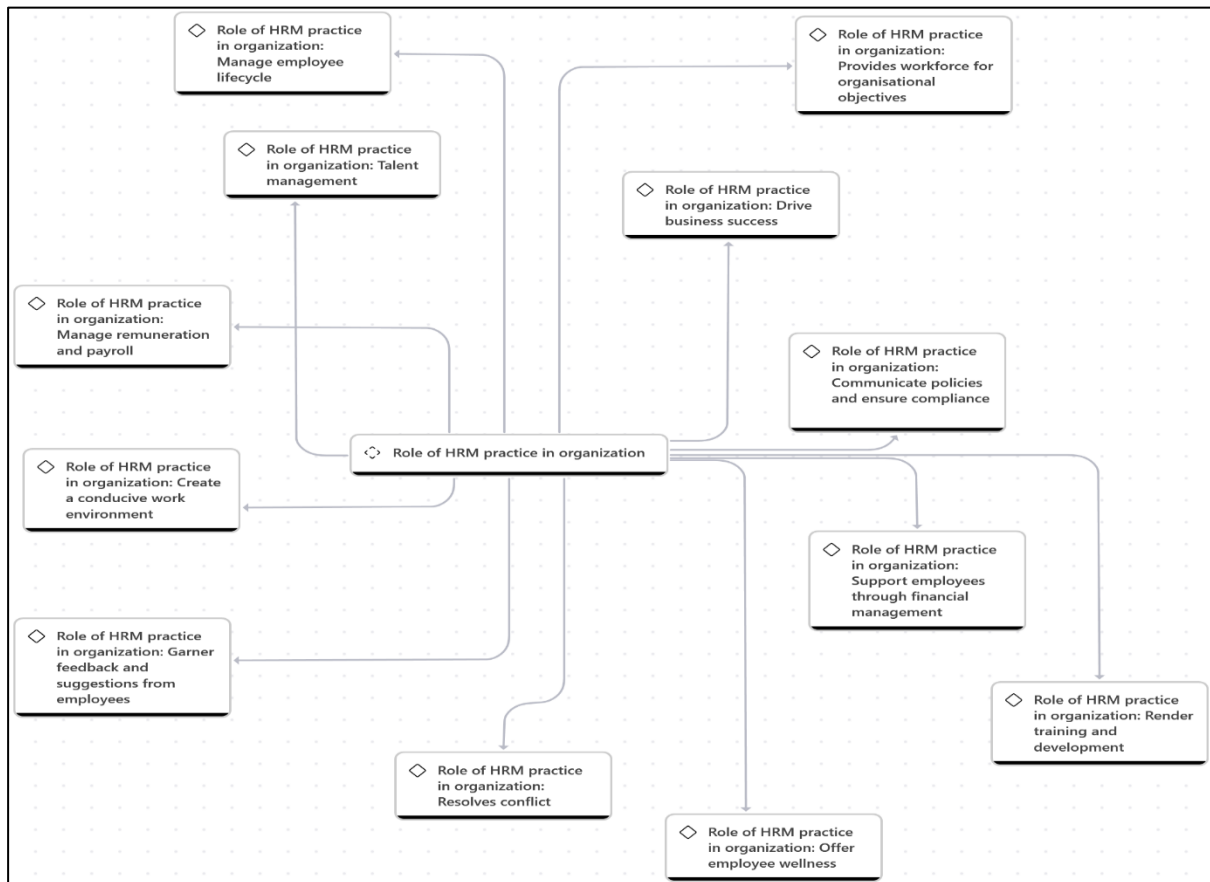
HRM also fosters an inclusive and participative culture by actively seeking employee feedback and suggestions and promoting open communication channels that enhance engagement and satisfaction. Beyond communication, HRM plays a crucial role in creating a conducive work environment and implementing initiatives that support employee well-being and productivity.

HRM is instrumental in driving business success through effective workforce management and strategic alignment. By overseeing the employee lifecycle and ensuring fair and accurate compensation, HRM helps build a motivated and committed workforce. Additional support is provided through financial management programs and wellness initiatives, which cater to the holistic needs of employees.

Talent management is another core function, as HRM identifies and develops high-potential employees, ensuring future organisational success. Through training and development, HRM provides opportunities for skill enhancement and career growth. Ultimately, HRM facilitates conflict resolution, promoting a collaborative and respectful work environment.

In summary, this section explores the extensive role of HRM practices in building an effective, cohesive, and compliant workforce, emphasising how these practices support both organisational objectives and employee well-being.

Figure 7.5: Role of HRM practice in an organisation



Provides Workforce for Organisational objectives

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in supporting organisational goals by providing a workforce that is aligned with strategic objectives (par. 4.4). At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM functions as a support department and a critical component in ensuring that employees are effectively positioned to contribute to the organisation's mission (par. 4.4). The insights from participants illustrate the strategic nature of HRM in aligning workforce capabilities with the organisation's goals, emphasising the importance of recruitment and selection processes to secure employees who are both skilled and fit for purpose (par. 0).

Participants conveyed that the role of the HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator is to provide the workforce that works to meet the organisation's objectives. Participant 22 illustrated this by stating:

The role of human resource management is presented as a support function in the organisation whereby it provides now the resource which is now the employees to conduct activities in line with the objectives of the company and ensure that we achieved those objectives and as part of recruitment and in selection, HR also has to ensure that the resources that they are bringing to the company are resources that are fit for purpose and ensure that they can deliver the mandate of the RSR. (Participant 22)

This aligns with Armstrong and Taylor (2020), who emphasise that HRM functions as a strategic support system crucial for achieving organisational goals. Additionally, Noe *et al.* (2017) emphasise the importance of recruitment and selection in ensuring that employees are both job-fit and culture-fit, thereby furthering the organisation's strategic mission (par. 4.4.2).

Participant 35 noted this as a critical and vital function of the regulator, ensuring alignment with the organisation's strategic objectives.

From my perspective as an executive manager in the operations department at the Railway Safety Regulator, I would describe the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices within an organisation as a strategic and critical function that plays a vital role in aligning the organisation's workforce with its overall mission, vision, and objectives. (Participant 35)

Strategic alignment of HRM practices with an organisation's objectives is essential for fostering productivity and ensuring the workforce can contribute meaningfully to the mission (Bamberger, Biron, & Meshoulam, 2014; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). In safety and regulatory environments, such alignment supports both operational efficiency and compliance with safety mandates (Stone, 2017).

Similarly, Participant 29 stated:

The role of human resources in an organisation, I would say, is the heart of the organisation. Without human resources, there would be no personnel within the organisation to carry out the various functions across other departments. Human resources play a very important and critical role within the organisation. (Participant 29)

In line with this view, Boxall and Purcell (2021) describe HRM as the core of organisational operations (par. 4.5). The literature suggests that without effective HRM, organisations may struggle to maintain a workforce capable of meeting strategic and operational objectives. The alignment of workforce planning with the organisation's goals is fundamental to HRM's contribution to success (Dessler, 2020).

In summary, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator serves as a strategic pillar by providing a workforce that aligns with and advances organisational objectives. Through recruitment and careful selection, HR ensures that employees are equipped to meet operational demands and support the organisation's broader mission, solidifying HRM's role as essential to achieving regulatory and strategic goals.

Communicate Policies and Ensure Compliance

Effective policy communication and ensuring compliance with regulations are fundamental HRM functions that support organisational integrity and alignment with legal standards (par 4.3). At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM actively engages in policy dissemination and compliance enforcement, as participants emphasised through examples like regional roadshows to inform employees of policy changes.

Research supports the strategic importance of HRM in communicating organisational policies (par. 4.4.2.3) and promoting compliance with labour laws. This helps maintain a well-informed workforce and fosters an environment of inclusion and accountability (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Noe *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, regular policy communication and compliance checks help ensure that employees are aware of their

roles in upholding organisational standards, which is critical for sustainable and ethical operations (Stone, 2017).

Participant 10 indicated that the role of HRM practices in the organisation is to communicate policies to employees and ensure awareness of the policies through roadshows.

HR even goes to the point where they have roadshows in several regions, where if the policy changes, they tell us about that specific change. (Participant 10)

Similarly, Participant 15 noted HR's role in compliance with labour laws and promoting diversity:

Participant 15 illustrated that HRM ensures employees comply with labour laws (par. 0 and 6.3.3.3) and regulations.

HRM practices also play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with labour laws and regulations, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting organisational change and transformation. (Participant 15)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays an essential role in both policy communication and compliance. By ensuring that employees are informed and policies are enforced, HRM contributes to a compliant, inclusive, and well-regulated organisational environment, thereby supporting the organisation's broader strategic goals.

Garner Feedback and Suggestions from Employees

An essential function of HRM is to provide employees with a platform to offer feedback and suggestions, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and engagement. At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM establishes forums and roadshows to gather employees' insights and address their concerns, thereby helping to align organisational practices with employee needs and expectations (par 4.5).

Research highlights the importance of feedback mechanisms within HRM in enhancing organisational responsiveness and employee satisfaction. Open communication channels (par. 4.4.2.2), such as regular forums and suggestion systems, allow employees to feel heard, promoting a sense of inclusion and fostering a supportive workplace environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Boxall & Purcell, 2021). According to Stone (2017), engaging employees in feedback processes can lead to meaningful organisational improvements and strengthen alignment with strategic goals (par. 4.5).

Participant 10 revealed that HRM gathers feedback from employees and suggestions through the roadshows they organise. They allow employees to voice their opinions and employ all viable suggestions presented.

During those meetings, our suggestions are effectively voiced, and the changes are then carried out, should the suggestion be viable. So, I do feel as though HR addresses the changes and improvements that we have suggested. (Participant 10 (Participant 14))

Participant 10 further noted HR's commitment to addressing organisational misalignment and providing platforms for employee input:

I mean, HR is one department; if perhaps there's a misalignment in the organisation, they make sure that this alignment is fulfilled. And there are several forums, quorums, and colloquiums that we have as an organisation where we get to voice out if perhaps we are dissatisfied, or if perhaps we need assistance with something. So, HR always makes sure that if perhaps that information is lacking, or if we have any suggestions, I mean, we have even a suggestion mail, where if you are uncomfortable about something, HR would then be able to assist you if you have any valuable contribution. (Participant 10)

In conclusion, by actively gathering feedback and suggestions, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator strengthens employee engagement and organisational alignment. Through established feedback channels, HRM fosters a culture of openness and responsiveness, contributing to the organisation's adaptability and growth (par. 4.2.5).

Create a Conducive Work Environment

HRM plays an essential role in fostering a positive work environment, which promotes both employee well-being and organisational productivity. At the Railway Safety Regulator, participants recognised HRM's efforts to create such an environment through wellness and support programmes, aligning with its strategic importance (par. 4.2.7).

Research highlights the role of HRM in enhancing workplace conditions, with Cascio and Boudreau (2016) noting that HR-driven wellness initiatives can significantly improve employee morale and retention. Moreover, Bratton and Gold (2017) argue that a positive work culture nurtures job satisfaction and reduces turnover, crucial factors for organisational success (par. 0). According to Wilkinson *et al.* (2020), HRM's responsibility in maintaining compliance with labour laws and fostering a supportive environment aligns employee well-being with organisational objectives.

Participants 33 identified the role of the HRM as being the unit that creates a conducive work environment at the regulator (par. 0).

Human Resources also, over and above this, has to make sure that we have a conducive environment in which we work in. They create an environment for us, and they do that through various programmes. I mean they do that through wellness programmes, they do that through support programmes (Participant 33)

Similarly, participant 6 highlighted that the positive work culture has encouraged employee well-being.

HRM also promotes a positive work culture, encourages employee well-being, and ensures compliance with labour laws and regulations. (Participant 6)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a significant role in creating a conducive work environment. Through wellness initiatives and support programs, HRM fosters a positive and productive culture, aligning employee well-being with the organisation's mission (par. 4.4).

Drive Business Success

HRM plays a pivotal role in driving business success by fostering a positive employee experience, which enhances engagement, productivity, and long-term growth (par. 4.4.2.3). At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM practices are seen as essential to creating an environment that aligns employee well-being with the organisation's broader objectives, ultimately supporting business outcomes (par. 4.5).

Literature reinforces the impact of HRM on organisational success, emphasising that HR practices focusing on employee satisfaction and development contribute to improved performance and competitive advantage (par. 4.5.1). According to Becker & Huselid (2018), strategic HRM practices directly influence productivity and operational success by aligning employee capabilities with business goals. Additionally, Schuler & Jackson (2017) argue that HRM's role in shaping workplace culture is a key factor in enhancing organisational resilience and growth.

Participant 1 emphasised HRM's impact on business success and employee experience:

By adopting these practices, HRM can drive business success, enhance employee experiences, and contribute to the organisation's long-term growth and sustainability (Participant 1)

Participant 6 stated that a conducive working environment is crucial for driving business success.

HRM is responsible for creating an environment that fosters engagement, productivity, and growth, which in turn drives business success. (Participant 6)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a strategic role in driving business success by creating a work environment that promotes engagement and productivity. Through effective HR practices, the organisation aligns employee satisfaction with its mission, contributing to sustainable growth and resilience.

Manage Employee Lifecycle

HRM's role in managing the employee lifecycle is crucial for maintaining a productive, engaged, and skilled workforce. At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM practices encompass the entire employee journey from recruitment and development to retention (par. 0 and 0) and separation, ensuring that employees are supported and motivated throughout their tenure.

The literature emphasises the importance of managing the employee lifecycle as a strategic HRM function. According to Kramar *et al.* (2019), effective lifecycle management fosters a committed workforce and promotes long-term organisational success. Marchington and Wilkinson (2020) also argue that HRM practices that encompass training, development, and motivation are essential for building a resilient and capable workforce (par. 4.2.1). Furthermore, Armstrong (2018) highlights that lifecycle management addresses employee satisfaction and aligns workforce capabilities with organisational goals.

Participant 21 noted HRM's comprehensive role in managing the employee lifecycle:

The role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices within an organisation is to manage the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment to separation (Participant 21)

Participant 25 expanded on this, highlighting key areas within the lifecycle that HRM oversees:

HRM practices are responsible for managing the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment and selection to training and development, performance management, compensation and benefits, employee relations, and separation. (Participant 25)

Participant 7 emphasised the importance of motivation in lifecycle management:

HRM practices are essential for building and sustaining a motivated, skilled, and productive workforce that drives organisational success, e.g., recruitment and retention, performance management, strategic planning, etc. (Participant 7)

In summary, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator is instrumental in managing the employee lifecycle, from initial recruitment to separation. By focusing on employee development, motivation, and retention (par. 0 and 0), HRM supports a productive, aligned workforce that contributes to the organisation's success and resilience.

An essential function of HRM is to manage remuneration and payroll, ensuring that employees are compensated fairly and on time for their work. At the Railway Safety Regulator, participants highlighted HRM's role in overseeing payroll processing, promoting pay equity, and aligning remuneration with job responsibilities (par. 0 and 6.3.3.2).

Research supports the critical nature of payroll and remuneration management within HRM. According to Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2019), effective compensation management promotes fairness, boosts employee satisfaction, and aids in talent retention (par. 0 and 0). Furthermore, Martocchio (2020) emphasises that pay equality and transparency are vital for maintaining employee morale and fostering a positive work environment. Gupta and Shaw (2014) argue that ensuring fair compensation based on role and responsibility is key to aligning HR practices with organisational values of equity and inclusion.

Participant 9 highlighted HR's responsibility for managing payroll:

Manages payroll, which is important for every individual within the organisation. Human resources play a critical role in all aspects of the organisation (Participant 9)

Participant 11 emphasised the importance of consistent remuneration:

And then obviously, other factors such as ensuring that the resources are remunerated on a monthly basis for the services that they have provided the organisation with (Participant 11)

Participant 30 indicated that HRM promotes pay equality. Workers are remunerated fairly for the value of the work that they do in the organisation.

Human Resources department also promotes things like equal pay for work of equal value, which means that it makes sure that people are well compensated and paid according to what responsibilities and duties they are assigned to. So, they make sure that if you have more responsibilities than those that are allocated to you, you are paid for those responsibilities, you are well remunerated. The Human Resources department also provides the human capital that is required for the job. (Participant 30)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays an instrumental role in managing remuneration and payroll, promoting pay equity, and aligning compensation with job responsibilities. Through these practices, HRM ensures financial compliance and supports employee satisfaction (par. 6.3.3.3) and organisational fairness.

Support Employees through Financial Management

In addition to payroll, HRM plays a supportive role in financial management, offering employees resources and programs to enhance financial well-being (par. 4.2.7). *At the Railway Safety Regulator, HRM extends its support to employees by providing financial management guidance and related programs*, as Participant 10 highlighted.

The literature emphasises HRM's expanding role in financial wellness, as financial management (par. 2.5.3) support can significantly reduce employee stress and increase productivity. As noted by Towers Watson (2017), financial wellness programs have become essential to HR's support functions, contributing to overall employee satisfaction and reducing turnover. Similarly, Prawitz *et al.* (2013) argue that financial management support helps create a stable work environment by enabling employees to manage personal financial stress effectively.

Participant 10 revealed that the role of HRM at the regulator is to support employees through financial management.

I mean Human Resources department is also responsible for even giving us financial management, even making sure that we are well supported, should you have any programmes. (Participant 10)

In conclusion, the HRM function at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a crucial role in supporting employees through financial management initiatives. This support helps alleviate financial stress, enabling employees to focus on their roles within the organisation (par. 0). According to Towers Watson (2017), "financial wellness programmes reduce employee stress and increase productivity and lower turnover rates". By offering these programs, HRM contributes to a stable and engaged workforce, ultimately enhancing overall organisational performance.

Offer Employee Wellness

Employee wellness programs are a crucial part of HRM's role, fostering employee health, engagement, and retention (par. 0). Participants emphasised that HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator prioritises wellness services (par. 4.2.2.2), such as managing employee relations and implementing wellness programs to support mental and physical well-being.

Research highlights the value of wellness programs (par 0), noting that such initiatives reduce absenteeism and enhance employee morale (Goetzel & Ozminkowski, 2019). In addition, McCarthy, Darcy, and Grady (2016) point out that employee wellness programmes create a positive work environment, which leads to improved productivity and loyalty. These programmes are particularly relevant in regulatory and safety-focused organisations, where well-being is closely linked to performance and compliance (par. 6.3.1.7).

Participants commented that the role of HRM is to provide employee wellness services and programs within the organisation.

I think development also attraction, and retention, and also to manage employee relations and wellness within the organisation (Participant 32)

In conclusion, the Railway Safety Regulator's commitment to employee wellness through HRM is key to fostering a healthy and productive work environment. As noted by Goetzel and Ozminkowski (2019), "workplace wellness programs have been shown to improve employee health, reduce absenteeism, and increase productivity". Through

wellness services and programs, HRM ensures that employees are physically and mentally supported, which not only improves their well-being but also contributes to the organisation's long-term success.

Talent Management

HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator also plays a central role in talent management, ensuring the acquisition, development, and retention of skilled employees. Participants emphasise HRM's responsibility in managing talent through structured processes and proactive acquisition strategies (par. 4.4.2.3).

The literature outlines talent management as a strategic HRM function that drives competitive advantage. According to Collings, Mellahi, and Cascio (2019), effective talent management supports organisational performance by aligning skilled talent with strategic goals (par. 4.5.3). Phillips and Roper (2018) further suggest that managing talent through comprehensive HR processes contributes to a sustainable pipeline of skilled employees, essential for long-term organisational success.

The role of HRM practice at the Railway Safety Regulator is to ensure talent management.

I think the role of human resources practice or function I think is to steer the organisation towards talent acquisition management (Participant 12)

Processes in place to ensure that talent is managed adequately (Participant 31)

In conclusion, HRM's focus on talent management is a strategic priority at the Railway Safety Regulator, essential for maintaining a pipeline of skilled employees. This aligns with the perspective of Collings, Mellahi, and Cascio (2019), who assert that "effective talent management enables organisations to align their human capital with strategic objectives, driving competitive advantage". By managing talent acquisition and development, HRM ensures that the organisation remains competitive and well-prepared to meet future challenges, fostering sustainable growth (par. 4.5).

Render Training and Development

Training and development are core responsibilities of HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator, as participants highlighted the department's role in equipping employees with the necessary skills to perform their duties effectively (par. 0 and 0). Participant responses emphasised HRM's role in continuous training, development, and alignment with evolving industry demands, particularly in response to technological advancements (par 4.2.6 and par 6.3.8.1).

Research highlights the importance of HRM in promoting employee growth and adaptability through effective training. According to Werner and DeSimone (2018), "training and development programs enhance (6.3.3.4) employees' capabilities, preparing them for new challenges and contributing to organisational success." Moreover, Jackson *et al.* (2017) argue that skill development is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge, particularly in sectors such as transportation safety, where skills must remain current in response to rapid technological advancements.

Participant 9 noted HR's commitment to employee development:

Because also without even mentioning the warm bodies, it provides training and development for employees. (Participant 9)

Participant 2 emphasised the importance of ongoing training to keep employees aligned with industry changes:

Also now to assist in terms of providing training to those resources as well as developing once we have caused those resources within the company and those are resources to ensure that they remain in line in terms of the ever-changing technology and also as a support. (Participant 2)

Participant 11 added that HRM ensures skill alignment and addresses gaps:

Having them acquire the correct skills. If there has been a gap identified, we obviously have to ensure, like I said, that they are trained, that they are managed in terms of the performance that we have, and that it is also correct. (Participant 11)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a crucial role in providing training and development, ensuring that employees possess the necessary skills to meet the organisation's goals. By addressing skill gaps and aligning training with technological advancements, HRM supports employees in staying relevant and competent in their roles (par. 6.3.8.1). As Werner and DeSimone (2018) suggest, effective training programs not only enhance employee competencies but also contribute to the long-term resilience and adaptability of the organisation.

Resolve Conflict

Conflict resolution is a crucial responsibility of HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator, as Participant 27 highlighted HR's role in supporting departments by addressing issues and resolving conflicts (par. 0). Through mediation and structured support, HRM contributes to a harmonious work environment that minimises disruptions and maintains productivity.

The literature emphasises HRM's role in conflict management, noting that effective conflict resolution fosters better teamwork and enhances organisational cohesion. According to Robbins & Judge (2019), "HRM acts as an intermediary in workplace disputes, promoting open communication and providing strategies to resolve issues constructively." Furthermore, De Dreu and Gelfand (2018) argue that HR-led conflict resolution mechanisms reduce workplace tension and improve collaboration, ultimately benefiting overall organisational performance (par. 0).

Participant 10 illustrated HRM's role in conflict resolution:

I mean, Human Resources is the one if we have any problems within our departments, Human Resources department will support us and sort of make sure that we do address the problems and concerns that we have in the various departments. If there is any conflict, Human Resources will also be responsible for conflict resolution.
(Participant 10)

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator plays a vital role in resolving conflicts, ensuring that workplace tensions are addressed promptly and constructively.

By facilitating communication and mediating disputes, HRM supports departmental harmony and contributes to a cohesive and productive work environment. As Robbins & Judge (2019) highlight, effective conflict resolution by HRM is essential for fostering a collaborative and resilient organisational culture.

An insight emerging from this theme is that there is a troubling lack of insight among participants from both the operations and support functions regarding the value that either of these functions adds to the core business of the organisation. This will be addressed in more detail in the conclusions and recommendations of Chapter 8.

7.4.2 Theme 2: Cultural aspects

7.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Contributions to Change and Transformation in the Organisation

Change and transformation are inevitable within organisations that operate in dynamic and regulated industries, such as the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). Participants shared their experiences and perceptions of the change management approach at RSR, identifying areas where the current strategy has fallen short and offering insights for potential improvements (par. 4.2.5.4). They also opined on the roles of the Operations Management and Human Resources Management functions, respectively, in the organisation. These three issues are discussed separately.

Experiences of Change and Transformation

This section explores the experiences of change and transformation within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), providing insights into the organisation's approach to managing change and its impact on operational effectiveness. Change management at RSR has focused on enhancing processes and integrating technology to improve efficiency and support the organisation's regulatory mission. However, participants highlighted several challenges, including a perceived lack of vision that hinders cohesive direction and alignment with long-term goals (par. 4.2.4).

The effectiveness of the strategies employed in RSR's change management approach has been questioned, with participants suggesting a shift toward a proactive plan to anticipate and better manage emerging challenges. Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of processes have also been identified as areas needing improvement to ensure that changes yield the intended outcomes and support continuous development.

Employee engagement and recognition play a significant role in successful transformation efforts, yet participants reported a lack of involvement and acknowledgement in RSR's change initiatives. This gap highlights the need for structured training and support, enabling employees to adapt to new processes and feel valued within the organisation. Additionally, the organisation's approach to change has been described as rigid and unresponsive, limiting its ability to adjust dynamically in a rapidly evolving industry.

Effective communication is essential for successful change management. At the Railway Safety Regulator, a clearer communication strategy is needed to ensure employees understand the organisation's transformation goals and their role in achieving them. Finally, participants emphasised the importance of strong leadership in navigating change, calling for decisive and visionary leaders who can guide RSR through its transformation journey. These insights provide a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's change management practices and employee perspectives on how these approaches impact operations and employee morale (par. 0).

In summary, this section examines the Railway Safety Regulator's experiences with change management, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. By understanding these perspectives, the Railway Safety Regulator can refine its approach to change, fostering a culture that supports adaptability, employee engagement, and strategic alignment.

Change Management Approach at the Railway Safety Regulator

The participants reflected on the existing change management practices at the Railway Safety Regulator, highlighting positive aspects and areas requiring improvement. They noted that while change initiatives are implemented, the organisation's approach has faced some challenges, particularly in communication, employee involvement, and the provision of adequate resources to support these changes. Participant feedback revealed that a more structured and inclusive change management strategy could enhance employee buy-in and reduce resistance, facilitating smoother transitions within the organisation.

Participants offered several strategies for improvement, emphasising the importance of transparent communication, employee engagement, and structured support throughout the change process. These suggestions aim to address existing challenges, ultimately fostering a more adaptable and resilient organisation.

Figure 7.6: Change management approach at the Railway Safety Regulator

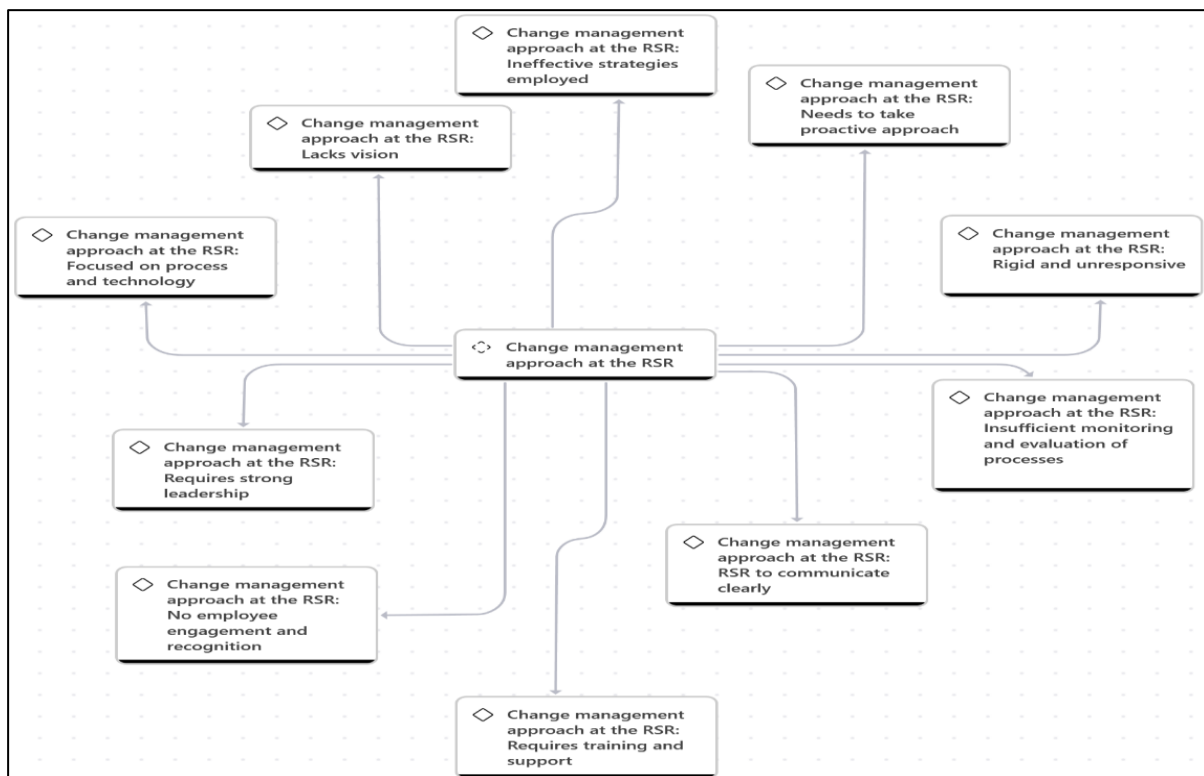


Table 7.6: Change management approach at the Railway Safety Regulator

The findings from the data analysis are visually summarised in Figure 7.3 above, illustrating participants' perceptions of the change management approach at RSR and their recommended improvements.

	Operations Functions	Support Functions	Totals
Focused on process and technology	2	3	5
Ineffective strategies employed	4	3	7
Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of processes	3	3	6
Lacks vision	5	2	7
Needs to take a proactive approach	3	3	6
No employee engagement and recognition	6	5	11
Requires strong leadership	0	2	2
Requires training and support	5	3	8
Rigid and unresponsive	1	3	4
RSR to communicate clearly	4	3	7

Focused on Process and Technology

Change management often tends to prioritise technological advancements and process optimisation over the human and cultural aspects, which are equally important (par 0). According to Cameron and Green (2019), successful organisational change hinges on adopting new technologies, refining processes, and addressing cultural and behavioural dimensions. These aspects are crucial for ensuring that employees are engaged and committed to the change, rather than simply complying with new procedures (Hayes, 2018). This argument aligns with the perspectives shared by

participants, indicating that an overemphasis on process and technology can lead to resistance if the cultural transformation is neglected.

Further to the abovementioned, the literature suggests that organisations need to integrate both technical and cultural change strategies to facilitate a smooth transition (Kotter, 2017). Technology-focused changes alone may result in short-term improvements but fail to generate long-lasting impacts if the organisational culture does not evolve concurrently (Burnes, 2020). This insight underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive approach to change management, one that encompasses both process innovations and cultural transformations.

Participants 4, 5, and 6 shared that they perceive the railway safety regulator's change management approach as too focused on process and technology. *Employees in the regulator's support and operations functions shared this perception.*

Needs to address cultural and behavioural changes, not just process and technological changes (Participant 6)

The participants further suggest that the regulator needs to put more effort into cultural transformation.

Should focus more on cultural transformation and less on just process changes.

Participants 4, 5, and 6's concerns are supported by existing research, which argues that organisations often prioritise process and technology changes without adequately addressing cultural transformation (Cameron & Green, 2019; Burnes, 2020). Kotter (2017) emphasises that cultural change should be a core component of any change management strategy.

Need for a Clearer Strategic Direction

A clearly articulated strategic vision is essential for successful change management (par. 0). According to Cummings and Worley (2019), change initiatives are most effective when they are aligned with the organisation's overarching vision and mission. This alignment ensures that employees understand the purpose behind the change

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and can better align their efforts with organisational goals (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017).

Research suggests that ambiguity in the direction of change can lead to confusion and resistance among employees, as they may struggle to connect the changes with their day-to-day responsibilities and the broader organisational goals (Kotter, 2017). Communicating a strategic direction not only facilitates smoother implementation but also helps secure buy-in from stakeholders across various levels of the organisation (Hayes, 2018). Therefore, creating a clear, consistent, and compelling strategic direction is critical for overcoming resistance and ensuring effective change.

The need for a well-defined strategic direction is emphasised in the literature. Cummings & Worley (2019) suggest that a clear alignment with the organisation's vision is crucial for successful change. This echoes the concerns of the participants, who highlighted the challenges they faced due to a lack of clarity (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017).

Participants 4, 5, and 6 highlighted the lack of vision in the Railway Safety Regulator's approach to change and transformation.

Needs a clear and consistent vision for change (Participant 4)

This perceived lack of alignment with organisational goals has made it challenging for Participant 5 to adapt to the changes.

Without a clear direction and strategy, it becomes difficult to align changes with broader organisational objectives.

Participant 6 emphasised the importance of aligning the change process with the organisation's strategic goals, mission, and objectives.

Should be more strategic, ensuring alignment with the organisation's overall vision, mission, and objectives.

Suboptimal Strategies Employed

Effective change management requires strategies that are well-coordinated and considerate of human elements, such as employee fatigue and the need for diversity. Research indicates that poorly coordinated or ad hoc strategies often lead to suboptimal results (Cameron & Green, 2019). A structured approach, with well-defined goals, timelines, and success metrics, is critical for effective change management (Kotter, 2017).

Moreover, addressing change fatigue is a key component of managing long-term transformations. As highlighted by Hayes (2018), organisations that implement frequent changes without adequate stabilisation time often face employee burnout and resistance. Therefore, strategies need to account for the human experience of change to be truly effective.

Additionally, recruitment strategies that fail to promote diversity and inclusivity are considered suboptimal in driving organisational transformation. Research by Thomas and Ely (2020) emphasises the need for diverse recruitment practices to foster organisational innovation and transformation. *Conducting internal studies, as suggested by Participant 2, can help organisations understand barriers to diversity and improve recruitment outcomes.*

Participants 1 and 6 alluded to the change management approach as being *suboptimal due to a lack of coordination*. Participant 1 observed that:

Ad hoc and not always coordinated.

Similarly, Participant 6 stated that the approach requires a structured methodology, highlighting the need for:

A structured approach, with clear goals, timelines, and metrics for success.

Furthermore, Participant 6 emphasised that the current strategy fails to address change fatigue.

Fails to address change fatigue: Frequent changes without adequate time for implementation and stabilisation (Participant 6)

Participants also perceived that the regulator had employed ineffective strategies in its change management approach. Particularly, Participant 13, who works in operations, noted that the current strategy used for recruiting employees in operations is also suboptimal. This strategy hinders transformation as recruitment tends to focus on individuals with operational backgrounds, often limiting opportunities for fresh graduates:

I'll come back to the candidates that the organisation can attract. Because of the transformative part, again in terms of us, we are in a disadvantaged position, such that we can't recruit someone, maybe brand new from university or something. It will always have to be someone who has an operational background from either of these operators, and then you need someone who has that understanding. Now, in terms of transforming the space, we are always, I don't know why we don't like to take risks. We are always lagging in terms of advancement, and to transform the organisation, I think it then becomes what other operators are doing. We can try to lead the industry, but that is not necessarily the space or the function that the regulator can play because you all must regulate what is there. But now you can't be what you hate and not be in touch with the reality you see. So, for me, I'm a little bit not too sure how we can do this one. It's a little bit difficult for me, I could say. (Participant 13)

Participant 2 highlights a lack of racial diversity in the regulator's recruitment. The participant suggests that the regulator could employ more effective strategies to encourage racial diversity, including conducting a study to determine the reasons for this trend.

I cannot pin it on HR but mostly maybe it is how the people outside, which may be when it comes to recruitment and selection, maybe there is no interest on the other racial groups to apply to the RSR because what I've observed ever since I arrived, the RSR is basically more of African or let me say black people within the RSR, the majority are blacks mostly. We have few White, Coloured and Indian and if HR can explore that

obviously dependant on the interest of the people to apply to the RSR but in terms of how our HR is managing that part, I cannot follow them because they are like adverts they openly welcoming everyone in all the different cooperation groups to apply to the RSR. However, we do have a fair presentation of different racial groups within the RSR, but I think maybe we can still do more to ensure that we recruit, or maybe we could conduct a study on why some other racial groups are not interested in joining the RSR.

The participants' concerns align with existing literature, which highlights that poorly coordinated strategies can lead to suboptimal outcomes in change management (Cameron & Green, 2019). Kotter (2017) stresses the importance of clear goals and a structured approach to avoid challenges such as change fatigue (Hayes, 2018). Furthermore, Thomas and Ely (2020) echo the need for improved diversity strategies, arguing for more inclusive recruitment practices.

Needs for a Proactive Approach

Proactive change management is essential for effectively addressing current and future challenges. According to Cummings & Worley (2019), a proactive approach involves anticipating potential issues and opportunities, allowing organisations to plan for change rather than simply reacting to it (0). A reactive approach, by contrast, can lead to rushed decisions that may not align with long-term organisational goals (Kotter, 2017).

Being proactive allows organisations to be more agile and adaptable, positioning them to respond efficiently to external pressures and business needs (Hayes, 2018). Research suggests that proactive change management strategies result in higher employee engagement and more successful outcomes (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017). By strategically planning for change, organisations can align their objectives, resources, and timelines, ensuring smoother transitions and better alignment with business goals (par. 0).

Participants 3, 5, and 6 expressed the need for the RSR to adopt a more proactive approach to its change management strategy. They indicated that the current

approach lacks structure and is more reactive than forward-thinking. As Participant 5 explained:

Lacks a structured approach, often reacting to changes rather than proactively planning (Participant 5)

Participant 3 emphasised the importance of being responsive to business needs while planning for future developments:

Be proactive and responsive to business needs (Participant 3)

The need for a proactive approach, as expressed by Participants 3, 5, and 6, is supported by the literature, which emphasises the importance of planning for future changes rather than reacting to them as they arise (Cummings & Worley, 2019; Kotter, 2017). A proactive strategy not only ensures better alignment with business needs but also enhances organisational agility and adaptability (Hayes, 2018).

Insufficient Monitoring and Evaluation of Processes

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are crucial for ensuring that organisational change initiatives achieve their intended outcomes (par. 4.4.2.4). According to Burnes (2020), ongoing monitoring allows organisations to track progress and measure the impact of change efforts, thereby facilitating continuous improvement. Without proper evaluation metrics, organisations risk implementing changes that are ineffective or misaligned with their strategic goals (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

Moreover, Kotter (2017) stresses the importance of continuous feedback loops, enabling organisations to adjust their strategies based on real-time data. Monitoring and evaluation not only highlight the successes of change initiatives but also reveal areas that require further refinement (Hayes, 2018). When organisations fail to establish adequate metrics, it becomes challenging to gauge the overall success and sustainability of the transformation efforts (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017).

Employees working in the support and operations functions of the Railway Safety Regulator indicated that the organisation has insufficient monitoring and evaluation processes related to its change and transformation initiatives (par. 3.5.4). Participants 5 and 6 emphasised that this lack of evaluation hinders the continuous improvement of processes and initiatives. As Participant 5 noted:

Fails to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of changes, hindering continuous improvement (Participant 5)

Similarly, Participant 6 added:

Has inadequate metrics and monitoring: Insufficient tracking and evaluation of change initiatives' success and impact (Participant 6)

Furthermore, both Participants 4 and 6 highlighted the importance of monitoring to help the organisation recognise its successes and identify areas for improvement:

Should be continuously evaluated and improved, learning from successes and setbacks (Participant 6)

The participants' concerns regarding insufficient monitoring align with the literature, which emphasises the need for robust evaluation processes to support continuous improvement in change management (Burnes, 2020; Cummings & Worley, 2019). Without effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, organisations may struggle to assess the impact of their initiatives and adapt accordingly (Kotter, 2017; Hayes, 2018).

Insufficient Employee Engagement and Recognition

Employee engagement and recognition are critical components of successful change management. According to Cameron and Green (2019), employee involvement in change initiatives fosters ownership and reduces resistance (par. 0). When employees are engaged in the process, they are more likely to feel a sense of responsibility and commitment to the success of the transformation (Kotter, 2017).

Recognition of employee contributions further reinforces positive behaviour and motivates individuals to continue supporting the change (Hayes, 2018). Without adequate recognition, employees may feel undervalued, which can lead to disengagement and a decline in morale (Cummings & Worley, 2019). Research highlights the importance of creating formal recognition programs to acknowledge the efforts of employees during organisational transformations (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017).

Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 highlighted that there is an insufficient level of employee engagement and recognition in the organisation's approach to change management. Participant 5 *noted that this lack of involvement alienates employees:*

Does not involve employees in the change process, resulting in low engagement and ownership (Participant 5)

The participants also stated that the organisation does not recognise or reward employees' contributions to change and transformation.

Neglects to recognise and reward employee contributions: Failing to acknowledge and incentivise employees' efforts in implementing change (Participant 6)

The participants' concerns regarding insufficient employee engagement (par. 0) and recognition are supported by existing research, which emphasises that involving employees in the change process leads to higher engagement and ownership (Cameron & Green, 2019; Kotter, 2017). Additionally, recognition of contributions is vital for sustaining motivation and commitment during transformation (Hayes, 2018).

Necessitates Enhanced Training and Development Support

Training and development are key enablers of successful change management. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), providing employees with the necessary skills and knowledge is essential for fostering adaptability during organisational transformations (par. 4.4.2.2). Without adequate training, employees may struggle to align with the new processes, leading to frustration and resistance (Hayes, 2018).

Research suggests that training programs modified to employees' specific needs not only improve their ability to adapt but also enhance overall performance during change initiatives (Kotter, 2017). Support systems, such as mentoring and coaching, play a critical role in ensuring that employees feel equipped to manage the transition (Cameron & Green, 2019). Developing structured training and development frameworks helps to build employee confidence and engagement in the change process (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017).

Participants indicated that the regulator does not provide adequate training and support to enable employees to adapt to the envisioned changes and transformation. As Participant 6 explained:

Does not provide sufficient training and support: Employees are expected to adapt without adequate resources and guidance (Participant 6)

The participants emphasised the need for structured training and development opportunities to facilitate the transition and help employees manage the changes effectively:

Should provide training and development opportunities to support employees through the change (Participant 6)

The participants' concerns align with the literature, which highlights the necessity of providing sufficient training and support during change initiatives to ensure employees are well-prepared and engaged (Cummings & Worley, 2019; Hayes, 2018). Training programmes (par. 4.2.8) and support structures are vital for enabling successful adaptation to change (Kotter, 2017; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Inflexible and Slow to Respond

A rigid change management approach can stifle innovation and slow down the organisation's ability to respond to new challenges. According to Alavi and Leidner (2020), flexibility and adaptability are crucial components of modern change management, particularly in rapidly evolving industries. Inflexible strategies often

result in delayed responses to market or internal organisational shifts, reducing the effectiveness of change efforts (Burnes, 2019).

Agility in change management is increasingly recognised as a critical success factor. Organisations that incorporate agile principles into their change processes can better align with fluctuating demands and quickly implement necessary adjustments (Stacey, 2018). Moreover, a responsive approach enables organisations to iterate on their strategies and refine them over time, resulting in more sustainable and effective outcomes (Beer & Nohria, 2020).

Participants expressed concerns that the regulator's change management approach is overly rigid and fails to respond effectively to changing circumstances. This inflexibility was highlighted by several participants, including Participant 4, who remarked:

The approach feels outdated and overly rigid. It should be more agile and adaptable to the constantly shifting environment we work in (Participant 4)

Similarly, Participant 5 emphasised the lack of responsiveness, noting:

There's little room for adjustment once changes are implemented. The organisation is slow to react to new challenges, which hinders progress (Participant 5)

Participant 6 also stressed the need for more flexibility in the process:

It's frustrating when changes don't account for evolving business needs. We need a system that's responsive and capable of adapting to new developments quickly (Participant 6)

The participants' concerns about rigidity and lack of responsiveness in the change management process are echoed in the literature, which emphasises the importance of agility and adaptability in organisational change (Alavi & Leidner, 2020; Burnes, 2019). Stacey (2018) argues that flexibility in change processes leads to more effective responses to evolving circumstances, while Beer and Nohria (2020) advocate for iterative approaches that allow for continuous refinement.

RSR to Communicate Clearly

Clear and transparent communication is a cornerstone of successful change management. According to Lewis (2019), effective communication ensures that employees are informed, builds trust, and reduces resistance to change (par. 0). Research by Armenakis *et al.* (2020) emphasises that a lack of communication during change initiatives can lead to uncertainty, confusion, and diminished morale.

Moreover, transparent communication helps engage stakeholders by providing them with the necessary information to understand the changes and their implications. Effective stakeholder engagement is achieved through regular updates, clear messaging, and opportunities for feedback, which are critical for ensuring alignment and buy-in across the organisation (Clampitt, 2018). Clear communication enables organisations (par. 0) to manage expectations better and foster a culture of openness and collaboration (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Participants highlighted that the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) needs to enhance its communication and transparency when implementing changes. Participant 4 pointed out the gaps in how information is conveyed:

Needs improvement in communication and stakeholder engagement. We are often left in the dark about why certain changes are being made (Participant 4)

Participant 5 further noted the lack of clarity, emphasising the importance of frequent and transparent communication:

There's a lot of confusion because communication is sporadic and unclear. We need regular updates that explain the rationale behind the changes (Participant 5)

Participant 6 echoed these concerns, stating:

Communication is key, and right now it's lacking. If we don't understand the purpose of the changes, it's difficult to support them (Participant 6).

The participants' concerns regarding communication align with existing research, which stresses the importance of clear and consistent communication during organisational change (Lewis, 2019; Armenakis *et al.*, 2020). Regular and transparent communication enhances stakeholder engagement and fosters trust throughout the change process (Clampitt, 2018).

Necessity for Strong Leadership

Leadership plays a critical role in the success of organisational change initiatives (par 0). According to Kotter (2017), strong leadership is essential for motivating and guiding employees through the complexities of change. Leaders must not only communicate a compelling vision but also model the behaviours necessary to achieve it. When leaders demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm, it fosters a sense of trust and credibility among employees, which is key to successful change (Northouse, 2019).

Leaders who actively sponsor and support change initiatives can help overcome resistance by providing the necessary resources and removing barriers to implementation (Burnes, 2020). Furthermore, transformational leadership (par. 4.3.1), which involves inspiring and engaging employees through example, has been shown to significantly enhance the outcomes of change efforts (Avolio & Bass, 2018). The role of leadership is to provide clear direction and ensure that all levels of the organisation are aligned with the change objectives (Yukl, 2020).

Two participants working in the support function emphasised that the change management approach requires stronger leadership to steer the transformation effectively and lead by example. Participant 6 remarked on the importance of leadership setting the tone:

Must be led by example, with leaders demonstrating commitment and enthusiasm for the change (Participant 6)

Similarly, Participant 4 stressed the need for more robust leadership involvement and sponsorship to ensure the success of the initiative:

Requires stronger leadership support and sponsorship (Participant 4)

The need for strong leadership, as expressed by Participants 4 and 6, is consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of exemplary leadership in driving successful change (Kotter, 2017; Northouse, 2019). Effective leadership support and sponsorship are crucial in ensuring that employees are motivated and that barriers to change are effectively managed (Burnes, 2020; Avolio & Bass, 2018).

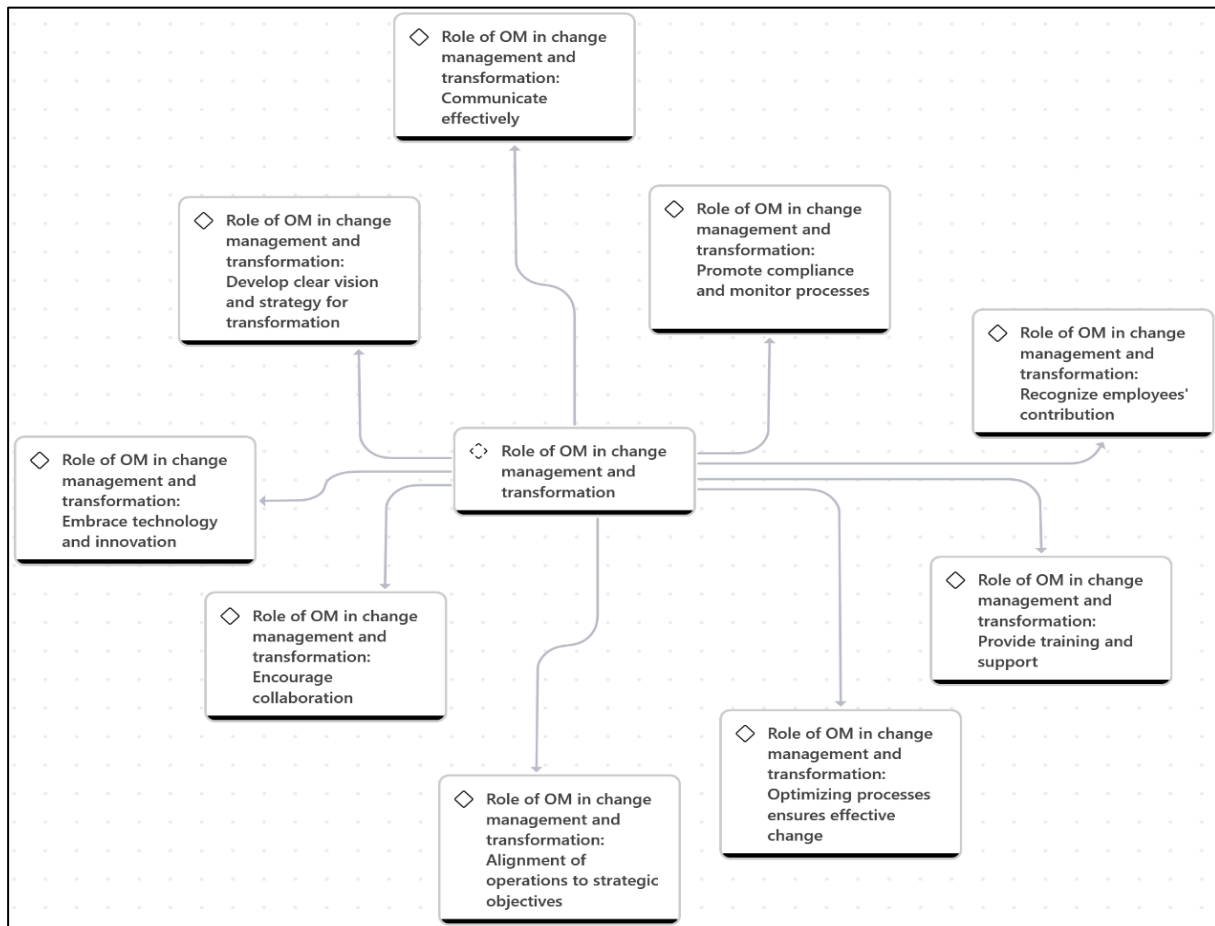
7.4.2.2 Role of Operations Management in Change Management and Transformation

This section highlights the role of Operations Management (OM) in supporting change management and transformation within the organisation. Effective OM practices are essential for aligning operational activities with strategic objectives, ensuring that day-to-day operations are geared towards achieving the broader goals of the organisation. This alignment enables OM to play a proactive role in driving transformation and enhancing overall organisational performance.

A critical responsibility of OM in the transformation process is to facilitate clear and effective communication. OM fosters an environment where everyone understands their role in the transformation journey by conveying strategic changes and operational expectations to employees. Additionally, OM is instrumental in developing a clear vision and strategy for transformation, providing direction and purpose to guide employees through periods of change.

OM also focuses on equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to new processes by providing training and support. This enables employees to embrace new technologies and innovative practices that enhance efficiency and adaptability. In supporting transformation, OM encourages collaboration across departments, fostering a cooperative culture that enables diverse teams to work together on shared goals.

Figure 7.5: Role of OM in Change Management and Transformation



To ensure compliance and effectiveness, OM promotes adherence to industry standards and regularly monitors processes to verify that changes are being implemented correctly. Recognising employees' contributions during transformation efforts is also a priority, as it strengthens morale, motivation, and a sense of ownership among staff.

In summary, this section examines how OM facilitates change management by aligning operations with strategic objectives, fostering clear communication, embracing innovation, and promoting collaboration. Through these practices, OM makes a significant contribution to the organisation's adaptability and success in navigating transformation.

Alignment of Operations to Strategic Objectives

The alignment of operations with strategic objectives is fundamental for achieving organisational success. According to Hill and Jones (2020), operations management must work closely with HR to ensure that organisational processes, such as recruitment and talent management, are aligned with the broader strategic goals. This is particularly important in promoting transformation, ensuring compliance with constitutional and employment laws, and setting recruitment targets for previously disadvantaged groups (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Furthermore, operations management must also embrace international best practices and ensure that the workforce is equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to remain competitive in a global context (Slack, 2019). By aligning operations with strategic objectives, organisations can effectively drive change initiatives, ensuring that sustainability and social responsibility are integrated into their operational strategies (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Participant 2 emphasised that operations management plays a crucial role in ensuring alignment between operations and the regulator's strategic objectives. This is achieved through the adoption of progressive recruitment practices that comply with the Constitution of the Republic and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. The participant also emphasised the importance of benchmarking these practices against international standards:

Well, in terms of transformation, I think it is to work closely with human resources to ensure that the organisation is transformed in line with our Constitution of the Republic and the basic conditions of employment, which we are doing. But HR can't do that alone. Operations need to work hand in hand with HR to ensure that transformation is implemented in terms of recruitment, selection, and change. We are living in an ever-changing world, so our operations resources must be trained and developed with the latest information, not only in South Africa but also internationally, to keep up with changes happening globally. (Participant 2)

Participant 12 further pointed out that operations management contributes to the organisation's recruitment targets, which are designed to drive transformation, especially by promoting employment equity:

I think they can play a very important part in terms of transformation. For instance, the organisation, through Human Resources, has targets related to employment equity, particularly for previously disadvantaged communities like women and black women. Operations can contribute significantly to these efforts. (Participant 12)

Participant 7 added that operations management plays a key role in driving change initiatives forward to ensure the long-term success of the business:

By aligning operations with strategic objectives and driving change initiatives forward, Operations Management contributes to the organisation's long-term success. (Participant 7)

Additionally, Participant 5 emphasised that operations management must incorporate sustainability and social responsibility in their approach to change:

Ensuring sustainability and social responsibility in change initiatives. (Participant 5)

Participant 2's emphasis on aligning operations with the Constitution and employment regulations aligns with the literature, which underlines the role of operations management in driving transformation and ensuring compliance with legal standards (Hill & Jones, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, as noted by Participant 5, operations management's contribution to sustainability and social responsibility is critical in the context of modern business practices (Cameron & Green, 2019; Slack, 2019).

Communicate effectively

Effective communication is a critical aspect of successful change management, particularly within operations management. According to Hayes (2018), clear and transparent communication not only helps employees understand the rationale behind changes but also fosters trust and reduces resistance to them. Engaging with

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stakeholders, including employees, customers, and suppliers, ensures that all parties are aligned with the organisation's strategic goals and objectives (Kotter, 2017).

Transparent communication is especially important when addressing safety concerns, as it allows organisations to manage risks and improve operational outcomes proactively. Research by Burnes (2020) shows that organisations that prioritise open communication during change initiatives are more likely to experience successful implementation and greater stakeholder buy-in. Furthermore, OM's role in communicating safety issues to customers and end users is vital for maintaining public trust and ensuring compliance with safety regulations (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Participants 5, 6, and 12 emphasised that a key role of operations management (OM) in change management and transformation is to ensure clear and effective communication with employees, stakeholders, and customers. Participant 5 highlighted the need for communication across all stakeholder groups:

Communicating effectively with stakeholders, including employees, customers, and suppliers. (Participant 5)

Participant 6 highlighted the importance of transparency in communication, particularly regarding the rationale behind the change management approach:

Providing transparent communication and rationale for change. (Participant 6)

Participant 12 further emphasised the role of communication in enhancing safety for end users. By sharing information regarding operational challenges, such as those identified during audits and inspections, OM can help reduce accidents and improve safety outcomes:

Also, maybe with comms at the same time, saying we think these are the things we found during audits and inspections. If you can align sessions and education on these issues, it can make a difference in reducing road fatalities, train accidents, and help protect pedestrians and daily train users. (Participant 12)

The participants' emphasis on effective communication aligns with the literature, which highlights the importance of clear, transparent communication for fostering trust and ensuring successful change management (Hayes, 2018; Burnes, 2020). OM's role in addressing safety concerns through communication is also critical for improving public safety and operational efficiency (Kotter, 2017; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Develop a clear Vision and Strategy for Transformation.

The development of a clear vision and strategy is a fundamental aspect of successful change management. According to Kotter (2017), creating a clear change vision helps organisations align their transformation efforts with broader organisational goals, ensuring that all stakeholders understand the purpose and direction of the change (par 4.4.2). A well-defined strategy provides a roadmap for executing the transformation, including the necessary steps, timelines, and resources (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

Research further suggests that a structured change management framework enables organisations to handle complex transformations methodically. Burnes (2020) notes that a clear methodology helps reduce uncertainty and resistance by providing transparency and consistency throughout the change process. By developing a vision that resonates with employees and stakeholders, OM can facilitate a smoother transition and ensure long-term success (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Participants 5 and 6 emphasised that operations management (OM) plays a critical role in developing a clear vision and strategy for organisational transformation. Participant 5 highlighted the importance of aligning the change vision with the overall goals of the organisation:

Developing a clear change vision and strategy aligned with organisational goals.
(Participant 5)

Participant 6 echoed this sentiment, adding that a structured framework and methodology are essential for managing change effectively:

Developing a clear change management framework and methodology. (Participant 6)

Both participants agreed that having a well-defined strategy is crucial to ensuring that the transformation aligns with the organisation's objectives and is implemented systematically.

Participants 5 and 6's views are consistent with the literature, which emphasises the importance of a clear vision and strategy in aligning organisational goals with change initiatives (Kotter, 2017; Cummings & Worley, 2019). Developing a structured framework, as Participant 6 suggests, is critical for managing change effectively and ensuring stakeholder buy-in (Burnes, 2020; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Providing Training and Support

Training and Development are crucial components of effective change management. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), providing employees with training not only equips them with the skills necessary to adapt to new processes but also increases their confidence in managing change. This is particularly important in complex organisational transformations, where new capabilities are often required.

Moreover, continuous learning is a vital aspect of fostering organisational resilience. Burnes (2020) argues that embedding a culture of continuous improvement ensures that employees are not just prepared for immediate changes but are also equipped to handle future challenges. By creating an environment that promotes learning, organisations can maintain a competitive edge and remain adaptable in an ever-evolving business landscape (Hayes, 2018). Providing ongoing training and support helps reduce resistance to change and enhances overall organisational performance (Kotter, 2017).

The data analysis revealed that a key role of operations management (OM) in change management and transformation is to provide training and support to employees, fostering continuous learning and improvement within the organisation. Participant 14 emphasised the importance of building new skills and capabilities:

Providing training and support to build new skills and capabilities. (Participant 14)

Participant 8 further highlighted the need to create an environment that encourages ongoing development and adaptation:

Embedding a culture of continuous improvement and learning. (Participant 8)

Both participants agreed that training and support are essential for equipping employees with the skills needed to adapt to changes and for promoting a culture of growth within the organisation.

Participants 8 and 14's emphasis on training and continuous improvement aligns with existing research, which highlights the importance of equipping employees with new skills and fostering a learning culture to support successful change (Cummings & Worley, 2019; Burnes, 2020). By embedding continuous improvement, OM can ensure that the organisation remains adaptable to future changes (Hayes, 2018; Kotter, 2017).

Embracing Technology and Innovation

Technology and innovation are key drivers of organisational transformation in today's fast-paced business environment (par 2.3.10). According to Hammer (2018), the adoption of new technologies can enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve overall performance. In the context of change management, embracing technology allows organisations to remain competitive and adaptable to evolving market demands (Burnes, 2020).

Participant 6 mentioned that *the use of data analytics for strategic decision-making is also crucial for informed change management decisions*. Davenport (2018) notes that leveraging big data and analytics can provide valuable insights into operational processes, helping organisations make more data-driven and accurate decisions during transformations (par 2.6.5 and 4.2.5).

Adaptability to technological change is essential in ensuring the long-term sustainability of operations. Organisations that are flexible and open to incorporating innovative technologies, such as drones for inspections, are better positioned to stay ahead of industry trends and improve their operational processes (Brynjolfsson &

McAfee, 2017). In the context of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions, improving employees' skills to manage new technologies ensures that the workforce remains relevant and capable of handling future advancements (Schwab, 2017).

Operations management (OM) plays a pivotal role in embracing technology and fostering innovation as part of the change and transformation process at the regulator. Participant 11 emphasised the importance of integrating technology into the operations to drive meaningful transformation:

Embracing technology and innovation to drive transformation. (Participant 11)

Participant 1 highlighted the role of data analytics in enhancing decision-making during the change process:

Leveraging data and analytics to inform change decisions. (Participant 1)

In addition, Participant 2 advocated for OM to be adaptable to new technological advancements, such as the use of drones for inspections, which can improve efficiency:

So, I think we need to be adaptable in our operations so that we can easily adapt to any changes in terms of technology. For example, in some countries, drones are used for inspections. We can move in that direction within the RSR. People won't lose jobs; instead, they'll manage these new technologies. If we improve the skills and knowledge of operations staff, we can align with the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions in the change process. (Participant 2).

The participants' emphasis on embracing technology and innovation aligns with existing research, which highlights the importance of technological adaptation in driving transformation and improving operational efficiency (Hammer, 2018; Burnes, 2020). Furthermore, *the use of data analytics for strategic decision-making*, as suggested by Participant 6, is a key component of modern change management (Davenport, 2018; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

Encouraging Collaboration

Collaboration among departments is a key driver of successful change management. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), organisations that foster cross-departmental collaboration are better able to align their operations with strategic objectives and ensure a smoother implementation of change initiatives. Collaborative efforts across departments help to break down silos and promote a unified approach to transformation, which is essential for achieving long-term success (Burnes, 2020).

Moreover, research by Hayes (2018) suggests that collaboration leads to better communication, shared resources, and a more integrated organisational strategy. By encouraging teamwork, OM can ensure that all departments are aligned, thereby reducing conflicts and facilitating the efficient implementation of transformation efforts. Collaboration is particularly important in complex change initiatives, where the involvement of multiple departments is required for effective execution (Kotter, 2017).

The research participants emphasised that operations management (OM) plays an important role in fostering collaboration among departments to ensure a unified approach to transformation. Participant 5 highlighted the importance of teamwork across departments:

Collaborating with other departments to ensure a cohesive approach to change.
(Participant 10)

Similarly, Participant 21 emphasised the need for alignment and integration among departments to facilitate smoother implementation of change initiatives:

Collaborating with other departments to ensure alignment and integration. (Participant 21)

Both participants agreed that collaboration is essential to ensuring that all departments work together effectively in achieving the organisation's transformation goals. Participants 10 and 21's emphasis on collaboration aligns with the literature, which highlights that cross-departmental collaboration is crucial for ensuring a cohesive and

aligned approach to organisational transformation (Cummings & Worley, 2019; Burnes, 2020). Effective collaboration also facilitates the integration of resources and strategies across departments, promoting long-term success (Hayes, 2018; Kotter, 2017).

Promoting Compliance and Monitoring Processes

Compliance and process monitoring are essential for ensuring the success of organisational change and transformation. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), promoting compliance involves ensuring that all organisational activities are aligned with both internal policies and external regulations. This is particularly important for organisations in regulated industries, where adherence to safety and operational standards is critical for organisational success.

Effective monitoring and evaluation of processes are also necessary for assessing progress and identifying areas for improvement. Cummings and Worley (2019) argue that establishing clear metrics and regularly monitoring progress can help organisations measure the success of their change initiatives. Furthermore, monitoring ensures that processes remain effective over time and that any deviations from compliance are promptly addressed (Burnes, 2020).

The data analysis revealed that one of the key roles of operations management (OM) at the Railway Safety Regulator is to promote compliance and continuously monitor and evaluate processes. Participant 9 emphasised that the success of the regulator is highly dependent on adherence to established processes:

I would say through compliance with the processes that are in place. Because obviously, in all the functions, there are processes in place. So, for a success all of those processes they need to be... they would be, obviously, implemented and for staff or also to comply in those processes that would have that would be there.
(Participant 9)

Participants 3 and 30 highlighted the importance of establishing metrics and monitoring progress to ensure the effectiveness of these processes:

Establishing metrics and monitoring progress to evaluate success. (Participant 30)

By ensuring compliance and monitoring the implementation of processes, OM can help the organisation meet its regulatory and safety goals, while also facilitating continuous improvement.

Participants 9 and 30's emphasis on promoting compliance and monitoring progress aligns with the literature, which underlines the importance of compliance in regulated industries and the need for continuous monitoring to ensure the success of organisational processes (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Cummings & Worley, 2019). Establishing metrics, as noted by Participant 6, is key to evaluating the effectiveness of these processes (Burnes, 2020).

Recognising Employees' Contribution

Recognising and rewarding employees' contributions is a vital aspect of successful change management. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), employee recognition programs that acknowledge the efforts and achievements of staff during transformation initiatives can significantly boost motivation and morale. When employees feel valued for their contributions, they are more likely to engage positively with the change process and support the organisation's strategic goals (Ulrich, 2018).

Research by Cameron and Green (2019) suggests that rewards, whether financial or non-financial, play an essential role in reinforcing desired behaviours during change initiatives. Recognising contributions not only increases individual motivation but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and commitment to organisational success (Burnes, 2020). Furthermore, employee recognition can reduce resistance to change by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of transformation efforts.

The research established that a key role of change management in operations management (OM) is to recognise and reward employees' contributions to transformation efforts. Participant 6 emphasised the importance of acknowledging the hard work of employees and providing rewards for their commitment to change:

Recognising and rewarding employee contributions to change efforts. (Participant 27)

By ensuring that employees' efforts are appreciated and rewarded, OM can help foster a positive work environment, increase morale, and promote active participation in the transformation process. The emphasis by Participant 27 on *recognising and rewarding employees' contributions aligns with existing research, which highlights the positive impact of employee recognition on motivation and commitment to organisational change* (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Cameron & Green, 2019). Rewarding employees' efforts helps promote a culture of continuous improvement and reduces resistance to change (Ulrich, 2018; Burnes, 2020).

7.4.2.3 Sub-theme 2.2: HRM's Contribution to Transparency and Accountability

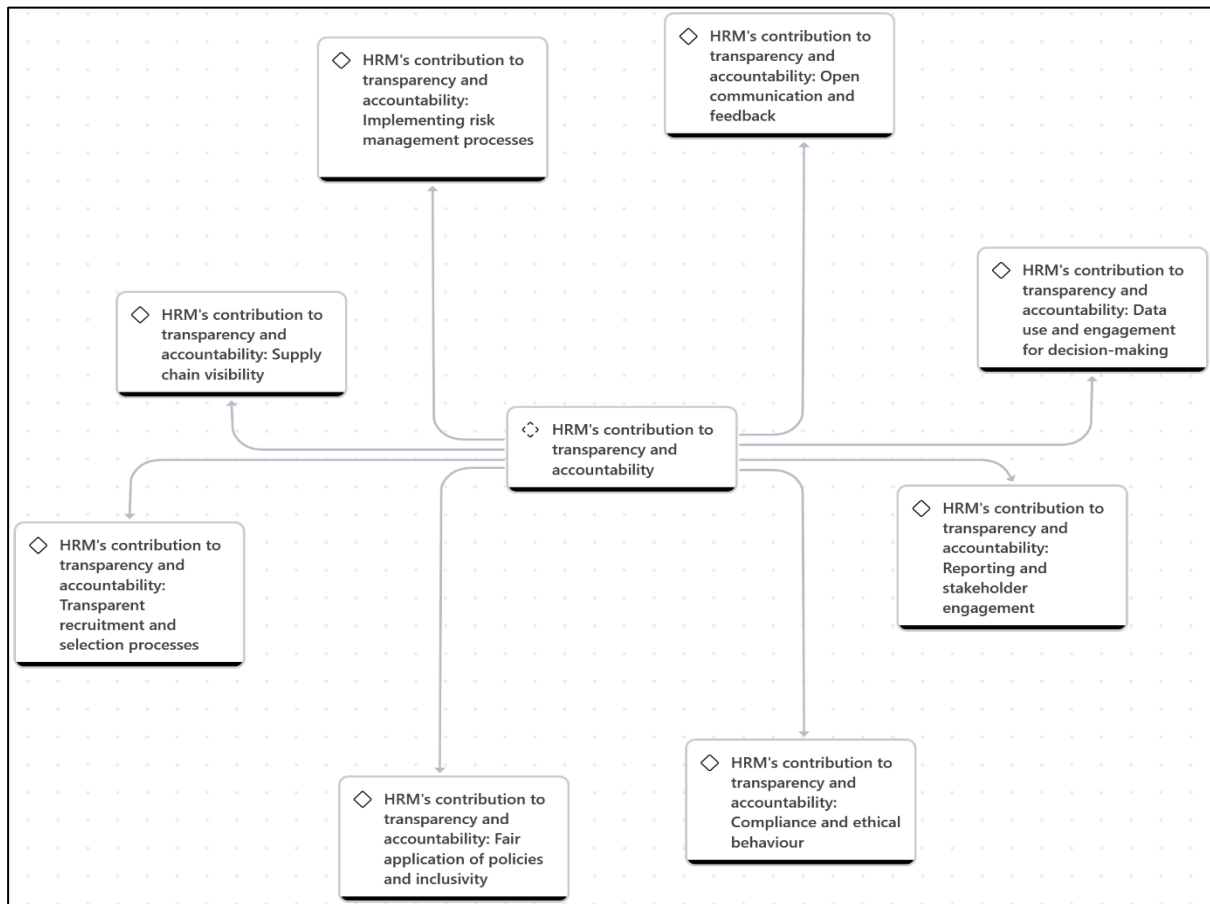
This section examines the crucial role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in promoting transparency and accountability within organisations. Academic literature widely supports HRM's contribution to these principles, emphasising its role in building trust, reducing resistance, and promoting ethical standards. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest that transparent HR practices are instrumental in aligning organisational behaviour with ethical guidelines, as they help establish a culture of openness and trust. Similarly, Ulrich (2018) highlights HRM's role in setting clear performance expectations, providing feedback, and developing leaders who embody accountability across all organisational levels.

HRM contributes to transparency and accountability through several key practices. Transparent recruitment and selection processes ensure fairness and impartiality in hiring decisions, reinforcing trust within the workforce. Compliance with legal and ethical standards is another core responsibility of HRM, promoting integrity and mitigating risks associated with non-compliance. HRM's use of data for decision-making further enhances accountability by enabling objective and informed choices that align with organisational goals.

Additionally, HRM supports accountability through regular reporting and stakeholder engagement, enabling employees and stakeholders to understand the organisation's progress and decisions. Open communication channels and feedback mechanisms foster a culture of transparency, enabling employees to voice their opinions and concerns without fear of retribution. Implementing risk management processes, ensuring supply chain visibility, and promoting the fair application of policies are also vital aspects of HRM's contribution, each reinforcing ethical behaviour and consistent practices.

In summary, this section examines how HRM practices contribute to transparency and accountability in the organisation, creating a foundation of trust, fairness, and ethical conduct that supports sustainable organisational growth and a positive workplace culture.

Figure 7.8 HRM's Contribution to Transparency and Accountability



Transparent Recruitment and Selection Processes

Transparent recruitment and selection processes are essential for promoting fairness and trust in an organisation. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), transparency in recruitment involves clearly outlining job criteria, ensuring that candidates understand the process, and communicating decisions openly. This promotes accountability by allowing both internal and external stakeholders to see that the selection process is based on merit and aligned with legal and organisational policies.

Research by Noe *et al.* (2021) suggests that transparent recruitment practices reduce the likelihood of bias or discrimination, thereby enhancing the organisation's reputation and fostering a more inclusive workforce. Transparency in recruitment not only builds trust but also helps organisations attract top talent by demonstrating their commitment to ethical practices (Ulrich, 2018).

Participant 4 emphasised that one of HRM's primary contributions to transparency and accountability within the regulator is to ensure that recruitment and selection processes are transparent:

HRM's contribution to transparency and accountability to the regulator is to engage in transparent recruitment and selection processes. (Participant 4)

Transparent recruitment ensures that the hiring process is fair, objective, and aligned with organisational policies, reducing the potential for bias and discrimination. By clearly communicating the criteria, processes, and decisions associated with recruitment, HR promotes trust and fairness within the organisation. Transparency in recruitment also demonstrates the organisation's commitment to ethical practices and compliance with employment laws, such as the Employment Equity Act in South Africa.

Participant 4's emphasis on transparent recruitment aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that transparency in the recruitment process promotes trust and fairness. By reducing bias and ensuring compliance with employment laws, transparent recruitment enhances both accountability and inclusivity (Noe *et al.*, 2021; Ulrich, 2018).

Compliance and Ethical Behaviour

Compliance and ethical behaviour are fundamental to fostering transparency and accountability in organisations. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), the role of HRM in developing whistle-blower policies is crucial for protecting employees and encouraging them to report unethical practices without fear of retaliation. These policies ensure that governance violations are identified and addressed promptly, which strengthens organisational transparency.

Internal audits are another essential tool for enforcing compliance and demonstrating accountability. As Burnes (2020) points out, regular audits help ensure that an organisation adheres to regulatory and policy requirements, reinforcing transparency at all levels. By conducting these audits, HRM ensures that both employees and

management are held accountable for their actions, which supports ethical decision-making.

HRM's role in providing training on ethical conduct and compliance is pivotal in building a culture of integrity. Ulrich (2018) highlights that training programs focused on ethics and governance equip employees with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate ethical dilemmas and maintain compliance. Such programs also enhance employees' understanding of their roles in promoting organisational transparency and accountability (Noe *et al.*, 2021).

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a crucial role in contributing to organisational transparency and accountability by promoting compliance and fostering ethical behaviour. Participants highlighted several key practices that support this contribution.

Participant 16 emphasised the development and implementation of whistle-blower policies, which protect employees who report unethical behaviour:

Whistle-blower Policies: HRM develops and implements whistle-blower policies, protecting employees who report unethical behaviour or governance violations. (Participant 16)

In addition, Participant 23 noted that HRM enforces compliance through regular internal audits, which further contributes to the organisation's commitment to transparency:

Audit and Compliance: Regular internal audits and compliance with regulatory requirements demonstrate transparency and accountability. (Participant 23)

Participant 5 highlighted the role of HRM in conducting training programs focused on ethical behaviour and compliance:

Training and development: HRM provides training on ethical conduct, compliance, and governance, promoting a culture of transparency and accountability. (Participant 5)

These initiatives ensure that employees are aware of their ethical responsibilities and that the organisation remains compliant with regulations and internal policies.

Participants 5, 16, and 23's emphasis on compliance, whistle-blower policies, and training aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that HRM's role in promoting ethical behaviour is essential for organisational transparency. As highlighted by Participant 6, internal audits and compliance initiatives are key to enforcing regulatory requirements and maintaining accountability (Burnes, 2020; Ulrich, 2018).

Data Use and Engagement for Decision-Making

Data-driven decision-making and employee engagement are critical to fostering transparency and accountability in modern organisations. According to Davenport (2018), the use of data analytics allows HRM to make informed, evidence-based decisions, providing greater clarity and visibility into organisational processes. By leveraging technology, HRM can track key metrics and monitor real-time performance, ensuring that decisions align with organisational goals and stakeholders are kept informed.

Employee engagement in decision-making further enhances transparency. Research by Noe *et al.* (2021) suggests that employees are more likely to trust management and support organisational initiatives when they are actively involved in governance and decision-making processes. This participatory approach promotes accountability, as it encourages employees to take ownership of the outcomes and fosters a culture of collaboration (Ulrich, 2018).

Human Resource Management (HRM) contributes to transparency and accountability by utilising data and engaging employees in decision-making processes. Participant 4 emphasised the importance of employee participation in governance and decision-making:

Encouragement of employee participation in governance and decision-making processes. (Participant 4)

Participant 13 highlighted the role of data analytics and technology in providing real-time insights, which enhances transparency and accountability within the organisation:

Technology and Data Analytics: Leveraging technology and data analytics provides real-time insights, enabling transparency and accountability in operational decision-making. (Participant 13)

By engaging employees and utilising data-driven approaches, HRM ensures that decision-making processes are transparent and that employees have a voice in shaping the organisation's direction.

Participants 4 and 13's focus on employee engagement and data use aligns with Davenport's (2018) argument that data-driven decision-making increases transparency by providing real-time insights into organisational performance. Additionally, the emphasis on employee participation in governance promotes accountability and trust, as noted by Noe et al. (2021) and Ulrich (2018).

Reporting and Stakeholder Engagement

HRM's role in reporting and stakeholder engagement is crucial for fostering organisational transparency and accountability. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), sustainability reporting is essential for providing insights into an organisation's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices. Such reports provide stakeholders with a clear understanding of how the organisation is managing its impact on the environment and society, thereby enhancing trust and accountability.

Engaging stakeholders through regular updates and progress reports also plays a vital role in promoting transparency. Burnes (2020) argues that continuous communication with stakeholders ensures that they are informed about the organisation's progress, policies, and decisions. This open dialogue helps build trust and ensures that the organisation remains accountable to its stakeholders.

Process documentation, as Participant 6 mentioned, is another key aspect of transparency. According to Noe et al. (2021), documenting organisational processes

and making them accessible to employees and external stakeholders provides clarity on operational practices, helping to reduce confusion and ensure compliance.

Participant 5 highlighted incident reporting and investigation processes as critical for ensuring accountability in addressing operational incidents. Davenport (2018) suggests that having clear procedures for reporting and investigating incidents allows organisations to respond swiftly and transparently, thereby minimising risks and improving safety standards.

The study revealed that HRM contributes significantly to transparency and accountability through comprehensive reporting and active stakeholder engagement. Participant 5 emphasised the role of sustainability reporting in providing visibility into the organisation's environmental and social impact:

Sustainability Reporting: Publishing sustainability reports provides transparency into organisational environmental and social impact. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 also highlighted the importance of regular updates and progress reports to engage stakeholders and foster accountability:

Stakeholder Engagement: Engaging with stakeholders through regular updates and progress reports promotes transparency and accountability. (Participant 5)

Participant 6 outlined the need for documenting organisational processes and procedures to ensure clarity and transparency in operational practices:

Process Documentation: Documenting processes and procedures ensures clarity and transparency in operational practices. (Participant 6)

Additionally, Participant 4 noted that publicly sharing information related to the safety performance of the regulator promotes transparency and accountability: *Publicly available information on safety performance and metrics.* (Participant 4)

Participant 5 further emphasised the role of incident reporting and investigation processes in maintaining transparency, especially in addressing operational incidents:

Incident Reporting and Investigation: Establishing clear incident reporting and investigation processes and protocols promotes transparency and accountability in addressing operational incidents. (Participant 5)

Participants 5 and 6's emphasis on sustainability reporting and stakeholder engagement aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that these practices enhance transparency by providing insights into an organisation's environmental and social impact. Documenting processes and establishing clear incident reporting procedures further contribute to accountability by ensuring operational clarity and effective incident management (Burnes, 2020; Davenport, 2018).

Open Communication and Feedback

Open communication and feedback mechanisms are critical to fostering organisational transparency and accountability. According to Ulrich (2018), establishing open channels of communication allows employees to voice their concerns and share feedback without fear of retribution. This contributes to a culture of openness and trust, where employees feel valued and engaged in the organisational processes.

Employee engagement surveys, as highlighted by Participant 5, serve as an effective tool for HRM to gather insights on employee satisfaction, concerns, and perceptions of HR processes. Noe *et al.* (2021) argue that such surveys provide feedback for improving HR practices and signal to employees that their opinions are valued, further promoting transparency.

As Participant 5 mentioned, holding leadership accountable is another critical aspect of open communication. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) note that by ensuring leaders are held accountable for their actions, HRM promotes a culture of transparency and accountability throughout the organisation. This accountability helps ensure that leadership decisions align with the organisation's values and objectives, contributing to a more ethical and transparent workplace.

Participants emphasised that open communication and feedback mechanisms employed by HRM have played a significant role in promoting transparency and

accountability within the regulator. Participant 16 highlighted the establishment of open communication channels as a means for employees to express concerns and provide feedback:

Open Communication Channels: HRM establishes and fosters open communication channels, ensuring that employees feel comfortable sharing their concerns and feedback. (Participant 16)

Participant 15 noted that HRM deliberately solicits feedback through employee engagement surveys, which provide valuable insights into employee perceptions and concerns:

Employee engagement surveys: HRM conducts regular surveys, providing insights into employee perceptions and concerns. (Participant 15)

Furthermore, Participant 26 stated that open communication and feedback mechanisms empower HRM to hold leadership accountable, fostering a culture of transparency and responsibility:

HRM holds leaders accountable for their actions, promoting a culture of transparency and responsibility. (Participant 26)

The participants' emphasis on open communication and feedback aligns with Ulrich's (2018) findings that these mechanisms are essential for creating a transparent and accountable organisational culture. Furthermore, as noted by Participants 5 and 6, *employee engagement surveys and leadership accountability contribute to fostering openness and trust within the organisation* (Noe et al., 2021; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Implementing Risk Management Processes

Risk management is a critical aspect of promoting transparency and accountability within organisations. According to Hillson (2019), robust risk management processes allow organisations to identify potential risks early and develop strategies to mitigate them, thereby enhancing organisational transparency. These processes ensure that

all stakeholders are aware of the risks involved and the steps taken to address them, fostering accountability.

Burnes (2020) argues that by implementing structured risk management frameworks, HRM contributes to organisational resilience, ensuring that the organisation can effectively navigate uncertainties while remaining transparent in its operations. Risk management ensures that ethical and compliance-related issues are addressed systematically, reducing the likelihood of crises that could undermine the organisation's accountability (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

The implementation of risk management processes at the Railway Safety Regulator has been identified as a key contribution of HRM to transparency and accountability. Participant 15 emphasised that by identifying and mitigating potential risks, HRM helps ensure that organisational processes are transparent and accountable:

Implementing robust risk management processes promotes transparency and accountability by identifying and mitigating potential risks. (Participant 15)

Through these processes, HRM can foresee and address issues that may affect the organisation's operational or reputational standing, thereby maintaining a proactive stance toward organisational integrity.

The emphasis by Participant 15 on risk management aligns with Hillson's (2019) argument that identifying and mitigating potential risks is essential for maintaining transparency. Additionally, Burnes (2020) and Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest that structured risk management processes contribute to accountability by ensuring that organisations proactively address potential threats.

Supply Chain Visibility

Supply chain visibility is a key factor in fostering transparency and accountability in modern organisations. According to Christopher (2020), implementing supply chain visibility initiatives allows organisations to monitor every stage of the supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to delivering finished products. This level of transparency

ensures that stakeholders are aware of the processes and standards used, promoting accountability and reducing risks such as fraud or unethical sourcing.

McKinsey & Company (2019) suggests that supply chain visibility enhances trust between suppliers, customers, and the organisation by providing real-time insights into the flow of goods and services. Transparent supply chains are increasingly important as organisations strive to meet regulatory standards and consumer demands for ethical and sustainable practices (Burnes, 2020). By making information accessible, organisations not only comply with legal requirements but also foster a reputation for integrity.

Participants acknowledged that initiatives aimed at ensuring supply chain visibility have significantly contributed to organisational transparency. Participant 25 highlighted that by enhancing visibility across sourcing, production, and delivery, the organisation promotes transparency:

Implementing supply chain visibility initiatives promotes transparency in sourcing, production, and delivery. (Participant 25)

Supply chain visibility ensures that all stakeholders, including suppliers and customers, have access to accurate and timely information about the organisation's supply chain processes. This transparency facilitates the identification of inefficiencies, promotes ethical sourcing, and ensures accountability throughout the supply chain. The role of supply chain visibility in promoting transparency, as noted by Participant 5, aligns with Christopher's (2020) argument that *monitoring sourcing, production, and delivery processes ensures accountability*. Additionally, McKinsey & Company (2019) emphasise that real-time supply chain insights build trust among stakeholders, supporting both transparency and ethical business practices.

Fair Application of Policies and Inclusivity

The fair application of policies and the promotion of inclusivity are central to organisational transparency and accountability. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), HRM's responsibility is to ensure that policies are applied consistently and

fairly across the organisation, which helps reduce favouritism and discrimination and fosters a transparent work environment. This approach reinforces employee trust and promotes accountability.

Participant 4 mentioned diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives as essential in promoting fair treatment of all employees, regardless of their background. Noe *et al.* (2021) highlight that DEI initiatives ensure that organisations foster an inclusive work environment where diversity is valued, contributing to both transparency and equity in the workplace.

Transparency in compensation and benefits, as noted by Participant 5, is key to maintaining fairness and accountability. According to Ulrich (2018), when employees have clarity regarding how compensation and benefits are determined, they are more likely to perceive the organisation as fair and transparent, which reduces potential conflicts and enhances overall satisfaction.

Participants highlighted that HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator contributes to organisational transparency and accountability by ensuring the fair application of policies and promoting inclusivity. Participant 14 stressed the importance of applying policies consistently and fairly across the organisation:

Fair and consistent application of policies and procedures. (Participant 14)

In addition, Participant 4 mentioned the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which aim to promote fairness and inclusivity in the workplace:

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives promote fair treatment. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 also emphasised that HRM plays a critical role in ensuring transparency in compensation and benefits practices, ensuring employees are compensated equitably:

Transparency in compensation and benefits: HRM ensures fair and transparent compensation and benefits practices. (Participant 5)

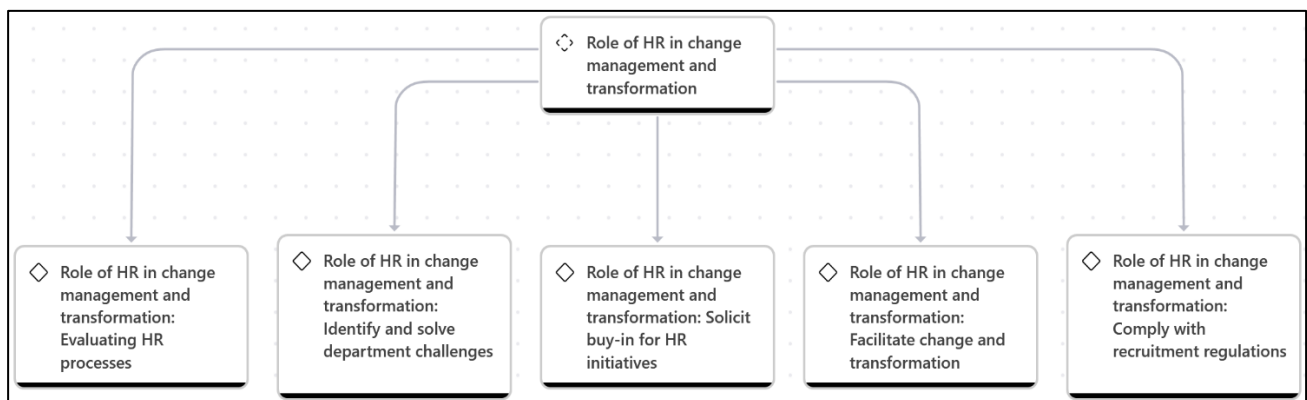
These initiatives demonstrate HRM's commitment to promoting a fair, inclusive, and transparent workplace, fostering accountability and trust within the organisation.

Participants 4 and 14's focus on the fair and consistent application of policies aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that applying policies transparently promotes trust and accountability. Participant 5 notes that *the emphasis on DEI initiatives and transparent compensation practices contributes to creating a fair and inclusive organizational culture* (Noe et al., 2021; Ulrich, 2018).

7.4.2.4 Role of HR in Change Management and Transformation

A significant responsibility of HR in change management is to facilitate transformation efforts actively. This includes guiding employees through transitions, adapting HR strategies to meet changing organisational goals, and supporting a culture that embraces adaptability. Additionally, HR evaluates its processes regularly to ensure they remain relevant and effective in a dynamic environment. This process evaluation allows HR to adjust its practices, providing a framework for continuous improvement as the organisation transforms.

Figure 7.9: Role of HR in Change Management and Transformation



To foster successful transformation, HR also focuses on gaining employee buy-in for new initiatives, ensuring that changes are well-communicated and supported across departments. This involvement helps build a collective commitment to transformation

goals, as employees feel more connected to the process. Moreover, HR plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing challenges within departments, working proactively to resolve issues that may hinder the organisation's ability to adapt effectively.

In summary, this section examines how HR contributes to the organisation's transformation journey by aligning recruitment, process evaluation, and employee engagement with change management goals. By addressing these areas, HR supports a cohesive, agile workforce capable of meeting the demands of a changing organisational landscape.

Compliance with Recruitment Regulations

Compliance with recruitment regulations, particularly those related to employment equity and diversity, is a fundamental aspect of HR's role in change management. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), HR departments must ensure that their recruitment policies are aligned with national regulations such as the Employment Equity Act, which promotes fair and equitable hiring practices. However, HR often faces challenges in executing these policies due to external factors, such as the labour market conditions and the availability of qualified candidates (Noe *et al.*, 2021).

Research suggests that while compliance with legal frameworks is necessary, HR departments should go beyond basic compliance by fostering a proactive approach to talent acquisition and diversity management (Ulrich, 2018). This involves not only adhering to regulations but also implementing innovative recruitment strategies that can help organisations navigate the complexities of the external environment and drive transformative change (Brewster, 2019).

Participant 13 emphasised the crucial role that Human Resources (HR) plays in ensuring compliance with government regulations during organisational change and transformation. The participant highlighted that HR is responsible for adhering to recruitment policies, such as the Employment Equity Act, while acknowledging the limitations imposed by external factors:

Yeah, that one is a little bit difficult in the sense that we have all those policies and procedures, like the Employment Equity Act and all of that, but it depends on what the outer world has for us to absorb from. HR can provide the framework in terms of the procedures and policies aligned with a national government, but there's nothing major they can do beyond that (Participant 13)

The participant further elaborated on the challenges of implementing these policies effectively:

We have the updated policies, but even the applicants don't always allow us to exercise those rights. HR has to ensure the documentation is updated, but we are often limited by the external environment and available applicants (Participant 13)

The participant further noted that while HR can ensure the organisation's documentation and recruitment practices comply with updated policies, they are often constrained by the availability and quality of external applicants.

The literature supports Participant 13's emphasis on the importance of compliance with recruitment regulations. It emphasises HR's role in aligning organisational policies with government mandates (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Noe *et al.*, 2021). However, as Ulrich (2018) notes, HR should also take a proactive stance, aiming to enhance recruitment practices and promote diversity beyond mere compliance.

Facilitating Change and Transformation

The Human Resources Management (HRM) department plays a vital facilitative role in organisational change management. According to Ulrich (2018), HR functions as a bridge between various departments, ensuring that change initiatives are integrated seamlessly across the organisation. By coordinating efforts with key stakeholders, such as finance, communications, and operations, HR can ensure that resources, including funding and skills, are aligned with the objectives of the change process (Beer & Nohria, 2020).

HR's ability to mobilise and equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge is central to ensuring that employees are prepared for organisational transformation (Cameron & Green, 2019). Successful facilitation involves logistical coordination and fostering an environment where employees understand and support the changes being implemented (Hayes, 2018). HR's proactive role in facilitating communication, training, and stakeholder engagement is critical to the overall success of the transformation process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

The Human Resource Management (HRM) department of the regulator plays a crucial role as a facilitator in the organisation's change management and transformation efforts. Participant 12 emphasised that HR's role is to coordinate and bring together key stakeholder departments to execute change programmes effectively:

I think the effective change and transformation will need partnering with the likes of media and comms, and finance, to ensure the funds are available to carry out those sessions and change management programs. HR must also be equipped with knowledgeable and skilful staff to facilitate change management functions within the organisation. (Participant 12)

Participant 24 further elaborated on the importance of HR's involvement in preparing the organisation for upcoming changes:

HR should assist and ensure that, before anything is implemented, the organisation is ready for the changes. This preparation is essential for effective transformation (Participant 24)

The facilitative role of HR, as described by Participant 12 and Participant 24, aligns with the literature, which emphasises HR's role in coordinating resources and preparing the organisation for change (Ulrich, 2018; Cameron & Green, 2019). Ensuring that key departments are involved and employees are equipped for transformation is crucial for successful change management (Hayes, 2018; Beer & Nohria, 2020).

Evaluating HR Processes

Evaluating HR processes is vital in ensuring the effectiveness of change management initiatives, particularly in education and awareness programs. According to Ulrich (2018), feedback mechanisms are critical to HR's role in monitoring the success of its interventions. By regularly evaluating processes and incorporating employee feedback, HR can gauge the impact of its initiatives and make necessary adjustments to improve its effectiveness.

Research also suggests that evaluating processes is key to reducing resistance to change. Armenakis *et al.* (2020) emphasise that regular evaluations provide insight into whether initiatives are working and help organisations address the concerns of employees who may be resistant to change. Effective evaluation processes allow HR to develop more modified approaches, ensuring that education and awareness programs lead to meaningful behavioural shifts and improved organisational outcomes (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

In addition to facilitating change, HR plays a critical role in evaluating its processes, particularly by gathering feedback from staff to assess the effectiveness of education and awareness initiatives. Participant 9 emphasised the importance of continuous feedback to determine whether the initiatives have had a lasting impact on employees:

So, as I have indicated during the education and awareness, it doesn't end there. We should not assume that our staff members have the knowledge and will retain it indefinitely. It is important that HR gets feedback, whether it's positive or negative, to evaluate if the education and awareness we've conducted has been effective (Participant 9)

Participant 15 explained that regular evaluation of HR processes can help mitigate resistance to change by allowing the organisation to adjust strategies based on staff feedback:

Change is often difficult, and there's resistance from staff members. But by evaluating all our processes, we can understand whether the education and awareness initiatives

were successful. HR needs to continuously practice this evaluation to ensure positive change and success (Participant 15)

Participant 13 further suggested that evaluating the HR processes would counteract the resistance to change.

As we know, change is something that is very difficult sometimes in the organisation because sometimes there is resistance to change from the staff members. But I think one that I can think of, it's that evaluation for all the processes. And I think maybe for HR to come up with an approach of knowing that our education and awareness that was conducted to staff members was a success and over and above us doing the evaluation, but in a way of practicing, knowing that it has done maybe a positive change, and it is a success to us (Participant 13)

Participants 9, 15, and 13 emphasised gathering feedback aligned with the literature, which accentuates the importance of continuous evaluation in ensuring the success of HR processes (Ulrich, 2018; Armenakis *et al.*, 2020). Evaluating these processes not only assesses the effectiveness of initiatives but also helps to mitigate resistance to change by addressing employees' concerns and adapting strategies as needed (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

Solicit Buy-In for HR Initiatives

Gaining employee buy-in is essential for the successful implementation of HR initiatives, particularly in the context of organisational change. According to Kotter (2017), soliciting buy-in involves engaging employees at every stage of the process, from the concept phase to implementation. This helps build trust and ensures that employees feel a sense of ownership in the changes being introduced.

Research indicates that continuous engagement and open communication are crucial to securing employee buy-in. Ulrich (2018) highlights that HR must work collaboratively with staff to create a shared understanding of the benefits arising from the transformation, even if those benefits are not immediate. This is particularly important in managing resistance, as employees are more likely to support initiatives when they

see how these initiatives align with their long-term personal and organisational goals (Cameron & Green, 2019).

Participant 11 emphasised that a key role of HR in supporting transformation is to solicit buy-in for the initiatives they develop. The participant explained that this requires continuous engagement with staff throughout the process:

I think it's by partnering with the resources, creating and understanding, but it's a constant process. You can't just do a once-off; it's a continuous process where you take staff along with you from the concept phase up until implementation. In doing so, you get buy-in and support for the initiative and the transformation (Participant 11)

Participant 7 further noted that while transformation can be challenging, building an understanding of how the changes will benefit both the organisation and individuals over time is crucial for securing commitment:

Some transformations are not easy. But I think when you create the understanding of how the organisation will benefit, or how the individuals will benefit—maybe not immediately, but in the future—it will assist with the change being implemented (Participant 7)

Participants 7 and 11's emphasis on the continuous process of securing buy-in aligns with Kotter's (2017) framework, which stresses the importance of involving employees throughout the entire change process. Continuous engagement helps employees understand the benefits of the transformation, increasing their willingness to support HR initiatives (Ulrich, 2018; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Identifying and Solving Department Challenges

HR's role in identifying and solving departmental challenges is critical for the success of change management initiatives. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), effective change management requires HR to engage regularly with departments to diagnose issues and implement modified solutions. This engagement helps ensure that

changes are aligned with each department's unique needs, promoting smoother transitions and minimising disruption.

Research by Ulrich (2018) suggests that HR's ability to identify and address challenges in collaboration with other departments enhances organisational agility and responsiveness. By continuously improving processes and addressing challenges, HR supports not only the operational needs of departments but also contributes to the broader transformation goals of the organisation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Participant 14 emphasised that part of HR's role in organisational change and transformation is to identify challenges faced by different departments through active engagement, and to develop solutions to address those challenges:

I'm sure that can be achieved by engaging with all departments and trying to identify their challenges. Ultimately, HR develops processes to address the identified challenges. As it stands now, I'm quite happy with how the HR business is run, and there is development on a daily basis (Participant 14).

Participant 29 further acknowledged the ongoing improvements being made by HR, despite the understanding that perfection is not always expected:

We appreciate that we are not expecting HR to be 100%, but at least we can see there is change on a daily basis (Participant 29)

Participants 14 and 29's views reflect the literature, which emphasises the importance of HR engaging with departments to identify and address challenges during change management initiatives (Cummings & Worley, 2019). Regular engagement enables HR to develop solutions that enhance departmental processes, thereby contributing to ongoing transformation efforts (Ulrich, 2018; Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

7.4.3 Theme 3: Adherence to Governance and Ethical Considerations

Both the OM and the HRM functions are bound by the rules of corporate governance and ethics and must act accordingly. This theme addresses two areas: general adherence to governance and ethics, and specifically, the adherence of the operations management function to these protocols.

7.4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: HRM Adherence to Governance and Ethics

This section examines the factors that influence an organisation's adherence to governance principles and ethical standards, which are essential for maintaining organisational integrity, accountability, and public trust. Effective governance and ethical practices ensure that an organisation operates within regulatory frameworks and meets societal expectations. This adherence requires robust processes, a strong ethical culture, and the active involvement of various organisational functions, particularly Human Resources (HR), to uphold these standards.

Factors influencing adherence to governance and ethical considerations include hiring practices, compliance with laws and regulations, risk management, and open communication. Additionally, collaboration across departments, the development and enforcement of clear policies, and initiatives aimed at fostering ethical behaviour are instrumental in embedding governance and ethical practices throughout the organisation. This section thoroughly explores these factors, examining how they strengthen organisational accountability, enhance trust, and contribute to sustainable business practices.

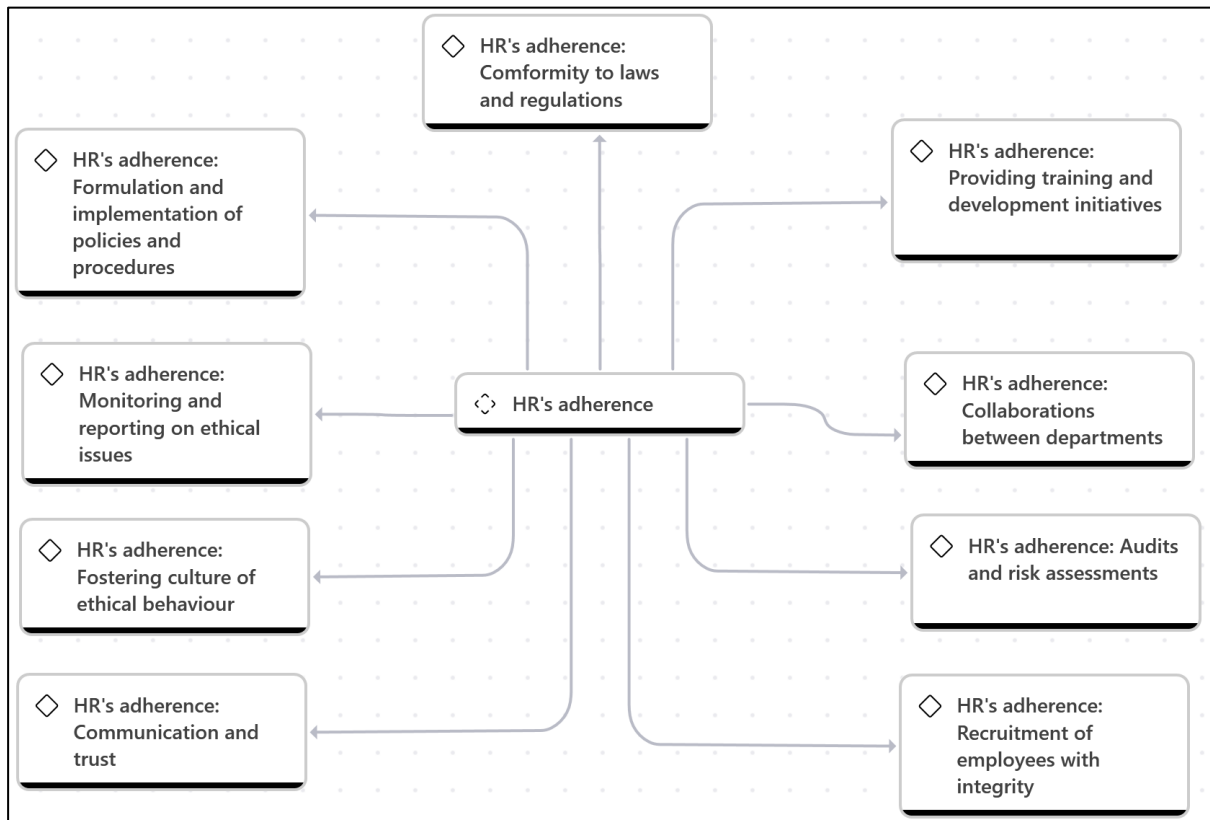
HR's Adherence

HR plays a central role in promoting adherence to governance and ethical considerations within an organisation, as it directly influences the organisation's ethical climate and standards of conduct. This section highlights how HR contributes to ethical governance, from recruiting individuals with integrity to ensuring compliance with laws

and regulations. By conducting audits, managing risk assessments, and monitoring ethical issues, HR safeguards the organisation against potential ethical breaches.

Key practices include promoting communication and trust within the organisation, facilitating interdepartmental collaboration, and developing policies that support ethical conduct. HR also works to establish a culture of integrity by fostering ethical behaviour and implementing training and development initiatives that equip employees with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate ethical challenges. Together, these practices enable HR to serve as a pillar of governance and ethical adherence within the organisation, contributing to a culture of accountability and integrity.

Figure 7.7: HR Adherence



Recruitment of employees with Integrity

The recruitment of employees with integrity is essential for fostering a culture of ethical behaviour within an organisation. According to Armstrong & Taylor (2020), selecting individuals who demonstrate strong ethical values and integrity ensures that the workforce aligns with the organisation's governance framework and ethical standards. When HR adopts transparent and fair recruitment processes, it reinforces the organisation's commitment to ethical practices, which helps build trust and accountability.

Transparency in recruitment also promotes fairness, reducing the risk of bias or favouritism. Noe *et al.* (2021) argue that transparent recruitment practices ensure that all candidates are evaluated based on merit, which aligns with governance principles and promotes equity within the organisation.

Participants emphasised that Human Resources (HR) adheres to governance and ethical considerations by recruiting employees who demonstrate integrity and ensuring that the recruitment process is transparent. Participant 8 highlighted the importance of selecting individuals who align with the organisation's culture of integrity:

Recruitment and selection of employees that fit the current culture of integrity and ethical behaviour. (Participant 8)

Similarly, Participant 24 emphasised the need for transparency and fairness in recruitment and selection processes to ensure that all candidates are treated equitably:

Ensuring transparent and fair recruitment, selection, and promotion processes. (Participant 24)

By prioritising integrity and ensuring transparency in recruitment, HR ensures that the workforce is qualified and aligned with the organisation's ethical values, which promotes accountability and adherence to governance standards.

The emphasis by Participant 8 on *recruiting individuals who align with the organisation's culture of integrity* is consistent with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) view that hiring employees with strong ethical values supports adherence to governance standards. Additionally, Participant 24's focus on transparency in recruitment aligns with Noe *et al.* (2021) argument that transparent processes promote fairness and accountability.

Conformity to Laws and Regulations

Conformity to laws and regulations is a critical aspect of HR's role in promoting governance and ethical standards. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), ensuring compliance with labour laws, employment standards, and industry-specific regulations is crucial for maintaining the organisation's legal and ethical integrity. HR departments must navigate complex legal frameworks, including employment laws,

health and safety standards, and equality regulations, to foster a compliant and transparent organisational environment.

Compliance with national regulations ensures that the organisation operates within the legal framework and helps protect the organisation from legal risks and liabilities. Noe *et al.* (2021) argue that adhering to national laws and regulations provides a solid foundation for ethical behaviour and reinforces the organisation's commitment to good governance.

Human Resources' (HR) adherence to governance and ethical considerations is significantly influenced by their strict conformity to laws, regulations, and industry standards. Participant 19 emphasised the importance of compliance with various legal frameworks that govern HR practices:

Compliance with labour laws, regulations, and industry standards. (Participant 19)

Participant 14 further elaborated that the laws and regulations HR adheres to are constituted at a national level, ensuring that all HR processes align with legal requirements:

That is achieved through the processes that HR is responsible for. As I have gone through most of them, they always articulate what other regulations and laws we need to abide by, and those procedures or processes are developed in line with the national regulations and the process and laws. (Participant 14)

Adhering to national laws and industry standards ensures that HR practices are transparent, fair, and legally compliant, contributing to organisational governance and ethical integrity. The importance of compliance with labour laws and industry standards, as highlighted by Participant 19, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that adherence to legal frameworks is essential for promoting governance and ethical practices. Furthermore, Participant 14's focus on aligning HR processes with national regulations supports Noe *et al.* (2021)'s view that compliance with national laws is a critical component of organisational integrity.

Audits and Risk Assessments

Audits and risk assessments are crucial tools for ensuring adherence to governance and ethical considerations (par 6.3.5). According to Burnes (2020), regular audits provide an opportunity for organisations to evaluate their compliance with internal policies and external regulations, allowing them to identify areas for improvement. By conducting risk assessments, HR departments can anticipate potential governance or ethical challenges and implement strategies to mitigate these risks before they escalate.

Risk management frameworks, as emphasised by Participant 12, are essential for proactively addressing risks within HR operations. Noe *et al.* (2021) argue that regularly updating these frameworks based on audit findings and emerging risks ensures that the organisation stays ahead of potential issues and remains aligned with governance and ethical standards.

The continuous review of governance frameworks, highlighted by Participant 5, is also critical. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), keeping governance and ethical frameworks current with best practices and emerging risks helps ensure that organisations maintain transparency, accountability, and ethical integrity over time.

Audits and risk assessments influence Human Resources (HR) at the Railway Safety Regulator to ensure adherence to governance and ethical considerations. Participant 11 emphasised the importance of regular audits and risk assessments as mechanisms for identifying and mitigating governance and ethical risks:

Conducting regular audits and risk assessments to identify and mitigate governance and ethical risks. (Participant 11)

Participant 22 highlighted the intensive audit processes in place, explaining that these compel the HR department to adhere to governance and ethical standards. The organisation implements risk management registers that help HR identify potential challenges and guide mitigation strategies:

But also, at the same time, we respond actively to our internal audit processes and external audit processes on what we're doing. We also implement risk management registers that assist in identifying and managing areas that may create challenges within HR and affect the whole organisation. (Participant 22)

In addition, Participant 5 noted the continuous review and updating of governance and ethical frameworks to ensure they remain efficient and relevant to emerging risks:

Continuously reviewing and updating governance and ethical frameworks to address emerging risks and best practices. (Participant 5)

These processes ensure that HR maintains high standards of governance and ethical behaviour by proactively addressing risks and continuously improving the frameworks that guide their operations. Participant 11's emphasis on conducting regular audits and risk assessments aligns with Burnes' (2020) argument that these processes are essential for identifying and mitigating governance risks. Participant 22's mention of risk management registers supports Noe *et al.* (2021) view that such tools are critical for managing potential challenges and ensuring adherence to ethical standards.

Monitoring and Reporting on Ethical Issues

Monitoring and reporting on ethical issues are critical for promoting governance and ethical standards in organisations (par 1.12). According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), regular monitoring allows organisations to detect and address ethical issues promptly, ensuring compliance with governance frameworks. Reporting these issues to senior management and the Board, as noted by Participant 6, creates accountability and ensures that leadership is aware of any governance breaches.

Burnes (2020) argues that transparency in reporting fosters a culture of openness, where ethical concerns are taken seriously, and actions are implemented to resolve them. *Continuous monitoring*, as highlighted by Participant 8, *helps organisations stay ahead of potential ethical challenges and allows HR to implement preventive measures that align with governance principles* (Noe *et al.*, 2021).

The Human Resources (HR) department is required to adhere to governance and ethical considerations by actively monitoring and reporting on ethical issues that arise within the regulator (par 6.3.5). Participant 6 emphasised the importance of reporting these issues to senior management and the Board:

Monitoring and reporting on governance and ethical issues to senior management and the Board. (Participant 6)

Participant 7 further explained that this reporting ensures accountability across all levels of the organisation, ensuring that ethical breaches are promptly addressed:

By reporting ethical issues to leadership, HR ensures that accountability is maintained, and that action is taken when governance standards are not met. (Participant 7)

Participant 4 highlighted the transparency that comes from these monitoring efforts, emphasising that regular reporting fosters an open culture where ethical issues are not ignored:

Regular reporting on ethical matters promotes transparency and ensures that the organisation remains committed to upholding its governance principles. (Participant 4)

Additionally, Participant 18 pointed out that monitoring ethical issues allows the HR department to develop proactive strategies to prevent future violations:

Monitoring ethical issues helps HR anticipate potential challenges and develop proactive solutions to avoid governance breaches in the future. (Participant 18)

These monitoring and reporting practices are essential for maintaining a high standard of ethical behaviour and governance throughout the organisation, ensuring that ethical considerations are consistently addressed and managed.

The importance of monitoring and reporting ethical issues, as emphasised by Participants 6 and 7, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that these processes are key to maintaining transparency and accountability. Participant 18's

focus on proactive solutions supports Noe *et al.* (2021) view that regular monitoring helps HR address ethical concerns before they escalate.

Communication and Trust

Effective communication and trust are vital to ensuring that HR adheres to governance and ethical considerations. According to Ulrich (2018), HR departments must serve as role models of integrity and ethical behaviour, fostering a culture where values and ethical standards are communicated openly and consistently. By leading through example, as noted by Participant 8, HR sets the tone for the entire organisation to follow.

Confidentiality and privacy, as highlighted by Participant 4, *are crucial elements of trust within the workplace*. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) argue that HR departments have a responsibility to safeguard sensitive information, and this trust in handling private data is fundamental to maintaining an ethical environment.

Transparency in decision-making is a key aspect of governance. Burnes (2020) suggests that when decision-making processes are open and accountable, employees are more likely to trust organisational leadership and follow governance frameworks. *By promoting transparency, HR ensures that decisions align with ethical standards and organisational values*, as emphasised by Participant 5.

Participants emphasised that communication and trust within the HR department significantly influence adherence to governance and ethical considerations at the regulator. Participant 8 highlighted that the HR department leads by example, continuously communicating the values and integrity of the organisation:

Leading by example. Constant communication about values and integrity. (Participant 8)

Participant 4 further pointed out the critical role HR plays as the custodian of sensitive organisational and employee information. The department must earn and maintain the

trust of employees by ensuring that this information is handled with the utmost confidentiality:

Ensuring confidentiality and privacy of employee and organisational information.
(Participant 4)

Transparency in decision-making is crucial for fostering trust and upholding ethical governance. Participant 15 remarked that the principles of open communication and accountability influence the HR department's decision-making processes:

Ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making processes. (Participant 15)

This emphasis on trust, confidentiality, and transparency ensures that the HR department adheres to governance and ethical standards, fostering a culture of openness and integrity throughout the organisation.

The emphasis on communication and leading by example, as noted by Participant 8, aligns with Ulrich's (2018) argument that HR must model ethical behaviour to foster a culture of integrity. The focus on confidentiality and transparency, as mentioned by Participants 4 and 15, supports Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) and Burnes' (2020) views on the importance of trust and openness in maintaining governance and ethical standards.

Collaborations between Departments

Collaboration between departments is essential for fostering an environment where governance and ethical standards are consistently upheld. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), interdepartmental collaboration ensures that different areas of the organisation are aligned with the same governance goals, which promotes a unified approach to ethical decision-making. By collaborating with stakeholders and other departments, HR can ensure that governance considerations are not siloed but are part of the broader organisational strategy.

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) argue that cross-functional collaboration is critical in complex organisations, where different departments may have varied perspectives on governance and ethics. By working together, departments can share insights and ensure that decision-making processes are informed by ethical considerations and governance standards, as noted by Participants 3 and 4.

Moreover, Burnes (2020) suggests that collaboration enhances accountability, as departments can hold each other to the same standards of governance and ethical behaviour. This collaborative approach helps integrate governance and ethics into the day-to-day operations of the organisation, ensuring that HR and other departments are aligned with the organisation's ethical goals.

Participants agreed that collaborations between departments within the organisation significantly influence the HR department's adherence to governance and ethical standards in their decision-making. Participant 3 emphasised the importance of working closely with stakeholders to ensure that governance and ethical standards are consistently upheld:

Collaborating with stakeholders to ensure governance and ethical standards are met.
(Participant 3)

Participant 4 further highlighted that collaboration with other departments ensures that governance and ethical considerations are integrated into organisational decision-making processes:

Collaborating with other departments to ensure governance and ethical considerations are integrated into organisational decision-making. (Participant 4)

These collaborations promote a cohesive approach to maintaining governance and ethical practices, ensuring that all departments contribute to the organisation's adherence to its governance framework and ethical commitments. The emphasis on collaboration by Participants 3 and 4 aligns with Cummings and Worley's (2019) assertion that interdepartmental cooperation promotes a unified approach to governance and ethical standards. Collaboration also fosters accountability and

ensures that ethical considerations are integrated into decision-making, as highlighted by Armstrong and Taylor (2020) and Burnes (2020).

Formulation and Implementation of Policies and Procedures

Formulating and implementing policies and procedures are critical mechanisms through which HR ensures that governance and ethical standards are maintained (par 4.2.5). According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), the development of clear policies, coupled with the delegation of authority, helps ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and accountable. These frameworks guide employee behaviour and ensure that ethical considerations are incorporated into all operational processes.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and policies serve as the organisational roadmap for ethical behaviour (par 3.4). As Burnes (2020) argues, adherence to these frameworks ensures that organisations operate in compliance with both internal governance frameworks and national legislation. Regular reviews and updates to these policies, as Participant 6 mentioned, are essential to adapting to evolving governance requirements and ensuring that ethical standards remain relevant (Ulrich, 2018).

The formulation and implementation of policies and procedures are crucial in ensuring adherence to governance and ethical standards at the Railway Safety Regulator. Participant 11 highlighted that the delegation of powers and the structuring of approval processes promote transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour within the organisation:

So, first of all, I think it is by developing or implementing the governance or ethical tools aligned with your ethical tools. So, we have to ensure that all our processes, policies, and procedures almost protect individuals in terms of allocating certain powers or restricting certain powers. So, you would have, for example, a delegation of authority that will distribute certain powers to certain people; and in doing that you able to almost control, you know, for example, something getting approved because you have all these steps that you need to follow before something is eventually approved or implemented. So, I think from an HR point of view, just setting those or, developing

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those systems in terms of your code of conduct that guides how we would want individuals to behave. Having your delegations and your policies and SOP in place that also guide or almost distribute responsibilities to certain people ensures that, you know, there's that control in implementing certain processes, so. Yeah, you guide how you want people to behave, but you also almost implement rules or set limitations to protect how people should behave. (Participant 11)

Participant 9 emphasised that adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs) and policies ensures ethical behaviour and accountability, which contributes to successful audits:

I think it's something that it is happening. It is a practice. Yes, and we do follow the policy because we do have the policies, we do have the SOPs as well. So, we do follow the policies, we follow the SOPs exactly as they are, and hence, at the end of the day, we will then get to be audited for such processes. And we do not even get the finding for such processes, because we do follow our processes until the end. So, that's how we are following our processes through our policies, also the SOPs. (Participant 9)

In addition, Participant 13 noted that HR policies and operational procedures align with national legislation, reinforcing governance and ethical standards:

Our policies and procedures ensure that everything we do is aligned with national legislation. That's what HR can do to ensure adherence to governance and ethical standards (Participant 13).

Participant 6 highlighted that HR regularly reviews and updates policies and procedures to stay current with changing governance requirements and ethical standards:

Continuously reviewing and updating policies, procedures, and training programs to stay abreast of changing governance requirements and ethical standards. (Participant 6)

These policies and procedures, aligned with national regulations and regularly updated, serve as the foundation for ethical behaviour and governance adherence within the organisation. The emphasis on delegation of authority and structured processes by Participant 11 aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that well-developed policies ensure transparency and accountability. Participant 6's point about continuous policy review aligns with Ulrich's (2018) view that policies must be regularly updated to reflect evolving governance standards.

Fostering a Culture of Ethical Behaviour

Fostering a culture of ethical behaviour is essential for ensuring that an organisation adheres to governance and ethical standards. According to Ulrich (2018), HR departments are responsible for promoting ethical behaviour and accountability by setting the tone for the organisation's values and ensuring that these values are communicated across all levels of the organisation. When employees understand the importance of ethical behaviour, they are more likely to comply with governance frameworks and ethical guidelines (par. 6.3.5).

Burnes (2020) argues that fostering a culture of ethics requires continuous communication and reinforcement, particularly regarding the consequences of non-compliance. By educating employees about the potential repercussions of unethical behaviour, HR departments can reduce the risk of governance breaches and promote long-term ethical conduct within the organisation.

The clean audits highlighted by Participant 2 reflect the broader impact of fostering a culture of ethical behaviour. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) note that external audits and positive performance reviews are often indicators of strong governance and ethical practices, suggesting that HR's efforts to promote ethics are yielding tangible results.

Participants emphasised that the Human Resource (HR) department has played a key role in fostering a culture of ethical behaviour, which in turn influences adherence to governance and ethical standards at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). Participant 3 highlighted HR's role in promoting accountability through ethical behaviour:

Encouraging a culture of ethical behaviour and accountability. (Participant 3)

Participant 6 elaborated on how HR ensures that employees are fully aware of the importance of adhering to governance processes and ethical standards, as well as the consequences of non-compliance:

Ensuring that employees understand the consequences of non-compliance with governance processes and ethical standards. (Participant 6)

Participant 2 highlighted the Railway Safety Regulator's commitment to good governance and ethical practices, as validated by consistently clean audits from the Auditor General. This success is seen as a reflection of the effective collaboration between HR and operations:

In terms of ethics, I think RSR if we check in terms of the values of the organisation, I will say RSR it's one of the organisations that believes in good ethics and governance. And I would think that for the past three years RSR has achieved clean audits from the Auditor General, which is a true reflection of the good functioning of the organisation, which obviously also reflects on how the interface or the cooperation between HR and operations is working. That good governance and the ethical conduct of the organisation. So, I think HR is playing a good role in ensuring that we achieve good governance and ethics. (Participant 2)

The participants' insights emphasise that fostering a culture of ethical behaviour is integral to ensuring the organisation's adherence to governance processes and ethical standards, further demonstrated by external validation through successful audits. The emphasis on fostering ethical behaviour and accountability, as noted by Participants 3 and 6, aligns with Ulrich's (2018) view that HR is responsible for setting and promoting ethical standards. Additionally, the clean audit results, mentioned by Participant 2, serve as evidence of effective governance, supporting Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that external audits validate ethical practices.

Providing Training and Development Initiatives

Training and development initiatives are critical for promoting adherence to governance and ethical standards in any organisation. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), regular training programs help employees understand the importance of governance processes and ethical behaviour. These programs are essential for maintaining organisational integrity and ensuring that employees are well-informed about their responsibilities.

In addition, Noe *et al.* (2021) argue that training initiatives focused on ethics and compliance help prevent governance breaches by educating employees about the consequences of unethical behaviour. Regular awareness sessions, as highlighted by Participant 12, play a crucial role in reinforcing the importance of adhering to legal and organisational guidelines.

Managing external development initiatives, such as bursaries, also reflects HR's broader role in upholding ethical standards. Ulrich (2018) suggests that HR's role in overseeing development programs extends to ensuring compliance with organisational expectations for employees and external beneficiaries. *Monitoring and ensuring academic success*, as noted by Participant 9, *aligns with governance practices that promote accountability and transparency*.

The data analysis revealed that the Human Resource (HR) department at the Railway Safety Regulator adheres to governance processes and ethical standards by providing training and development initiatives. Participant 4 emphasised the role of HR in educating employees about governance and ethical requirements:

Providing training and awareness programs for employees on governance and ethical requirements. (Participant 4)

Participant 12 elaborated that HR ensures regular governance and ethics awareness training sessions, encouraging employees to take personal responsibility for adhering to policies and procedures that govern the organisation:

Awareness sessions are done with employees on an ongoing basis; but also, I think each employee on their own, I think, does comply with let's say, with the legislation in the country, labour relations; maybe also that one that relates to revenue services. (Participant 12)

Participant 9 highlighted that HR manages the external bursary program offered by the organisation, ensuring that bursary recipients comply with the set academic standards. The department monitors the progress of students and ensures their adherence to the conditions of the bursary:

I think our processes mainly, I would just touch on the learning and development, which is the bursaries, the external bursaries, that we are currently doing within the organisation. So, what we are doing is we are offering bursaries to the students out there. So, it's something, it's an initiative that happens every single year. So, we would award over 15 or 20 students, sometimes. It will obviously depend also, in terms of the response, how the response is, and how we are getting the response. But that's what we are doing. We are awarding the bursaries to the students that are in need out there. We don't only pay for their tuition fees, but we'll go above and beyond to pay for the allowance. We also pay for the accommodation for the academic year, which is one year. So, it's something that we are doing, we are visible, by doing that, as human resources. So, what also can... Well, it can't happen, but it's something that is a practice that when we have paid for those learners, it's important that HR, goes back to those learners to ensure that they are passing. We are in contact with them throughout the year to check how they are studying, and they need to give us also or produce their results. And their results obviously are a confirmation of whether they are passing or not. But so far, the learners that we have been paying for they have been doing so well. They are passing. (Participant 9)

These initiatives, ranging from employee training on governance and ethics to managing bursary programs, demonstrate HR's commitment to fostering adherence to governance processes and ethical standards within the organisation. The emphasis on ongoing training and awareness sessions, as noted by Participants 4 and 12, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) view that regular training ensures employees

understand governance and ethical responsibilities. Participant 9's reference to the external bursary program supports Ulrich's (2018) argument that HR's role in development initiatives ensures adherence to ethical standards.

7.4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Operations Management's Adherence to Governance and Ethics

This section examines the role of Operations Management (OM) in supporting adherence to governance and ethical considerations within the organisation. As OM is integral to ensuring compliance with regulations and implementing operational standards, it directly impacts the organisation's ethical standing and accountability. OM practices establish the structures and processes needed to uphold regulatory compliance and industry standards, which are essential for maintaining a trustworthy and sustainable organisation.

OM's adherence to governance and ethical considerations encompasses a range of practices, including robust risk management processes, clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, and the establishment of governance policies. OM also promotes sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, aligning operational activities with broader societal and environmental expectations. To reinforce these efforts, OM provides training and raises awareness among employees, ensuring they understand and meet governance expectations.

In addition, OM sets standards for employee conduct, fosters transparency, and promotes organisational integrity. Through regular audits and monitoring, OM evaluates policy adherence and identifies areas for improvement. By embedding these practices into daily operations, OM plays a critical role in upholding governance and ethical principles, supporting a culture of accountability and sustainability across the organisation.

Figure 7.11: OM's Adherence

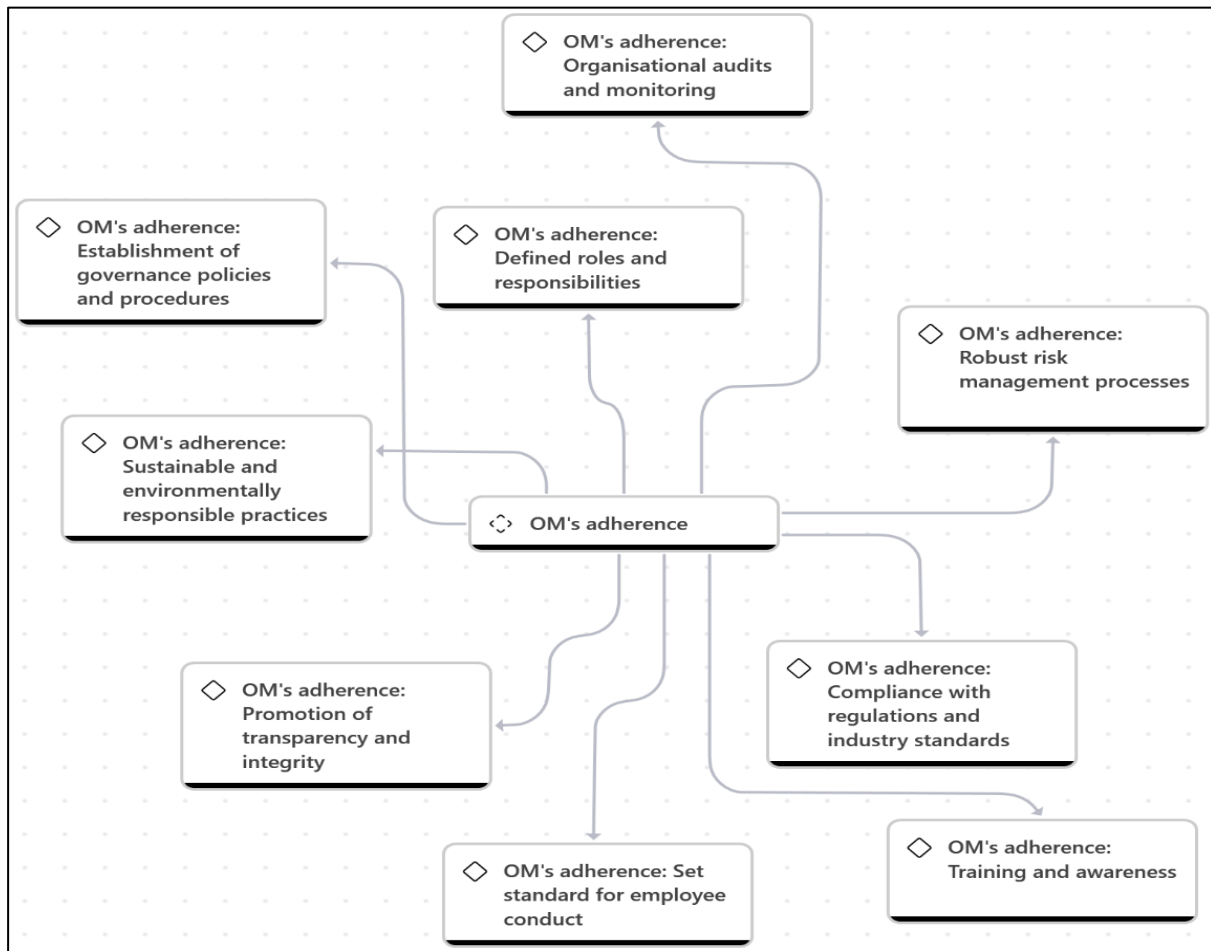


Table 7.7: OM Adherence

	Operations Functions	Support Functions
Compliance with regulations and industry standards	2	3
Defined roles and responsibilities	1	2
Establishment of governance policies and procedures	6	9
Organisational audits and monitoring	7	7
Promotion of transparency and integrity	4	3

Robust risk management processes	2	2
Set standards for employee conduct	5	2
Sustainable and environmentally responsible practices	2	0
Training and Awareness	4	2

Compliance with Regulations and Industry Standards

Compliance with regulations and industry standards is a key factor influencing adherence to governance and ethical standards in operations management. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), ensuring that operations align with national regulations and industry standards is fundamental to maintaining legal and ethical accountability. Operations management, especially in regulated industries like engineering and finance, must comply with various standards to ensure the organisation functions efficiently and ethically.

Burnes (2020) also argues that adherence to financial regulations is critical for promoting good governance, as it prevents wasteful expenditure and maintains fiscal responsibility. Operations management's role in ensuring that financial decisions align with governance frameworks helps reinforce the organisation's commitment to transparency and accountability.

The collaboration between departments, as highlighted by Participant 14, is another crucial aspect. Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest that interdepartmental collaboration ensures that different areas of an organisation work together to meet compliance requirements, promoting a unified approach to governance and ethical behaviour.

Participants working in the regulator's support and operations functions emphasised that operations management's adherence to governance and ethical standards is strongly influenced by their compliance with regulations and industry standards. Participant 14 highlighted the interconnected nature of operations management, noting

that collaboration with other departments, such as engineering, ensures that operations adhere to all relevant laws and standards:

Well, as far as operations management, we will have to understand that operations management does not merely work in isolation, and they work hand in hand with the engineering department. So, compliance thereof to the engineering standards, laws, and regulations of the country will ensure that all the plans that are put forward by operations management will adhere to the law. (Participant 14)

Participant 2 further remarked that operations management places a strong emphasis on adhering to financial regulations, which ensures that the organisation avoids wasteful or fruitless expenditure (Participant 2):

We ensure that in terms of financial regulations, we are in line with that; we don't contribute to wasteful and fruitless expenditure that is just to ensure that we will remain in terms of good governance.

By adhering to both engineering and financial regulations, operations management ensures that the regulator maintains high governance standards, remains legally compliant, and operates ethically, preventing issues such as unnecessary costs or safety violations. The emphasis on regulatory compliance in both engineering and finance, as noted by Participants 14 and 2, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that adhering to national regulations and industry standards is critical for maintaining legal and ethical accountability. The avoidance of wasteful expenditure supports Burnes' (2020) view that financial compliance is essential for good governance.

Robust Risk Management Processes

Risk management is a critical aspect of ensuring that operations management adheres to governance and ethical standards. According to Hillson (2019), robust risk management processes allow organisations to identify potential risks early and develop mitigation strategies that align with governance principles. By addressing

these risks, operations management can prevent governance breaches and ensure ethical conduct across all operational activities.

Burnes (2020) highlights that structured risk management frameworks are essential for maintaining transparency and accountability in operations. Effective risk management involves regular assessments and the implementation of strategies that not only address current risks but also anticipate future challenges. This approach helps organisations maintain a strong governance structure and ethical standards.

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) argue that risk management processes must be continuously reviewed and updated to stay relevant in a rapidly changing environment. For operations management, having a robust risk management system in place ensures that the organisation can respond quickly to governance and ethical challenges, maintaining the integrity of its operations.

The data analysis revealed that operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator adheres to governance and ethical considerations by employing robust risk management processes. These processes help identify and mitigate governance and ethical risks that may arise in operations. Participant 4 emphasised the importance of implementing structured risk management strategies to ensure compliance:

Implementing robust risk management processes to identify and mitigate governance and ethical risks. (Participant 4)

Participant 4's emphasis on robust risk management aligns with Hillson's (2019) argument that early identification and mitigation of risks are essential for maintaining governance and ethical standards. Additionally, the need for structured frameworks, as highlighted by Burnes (2020), reinforces the importance of risk management in ensuring transparency and accountability. The use of these processes ensures that potential risks, whether operational or ethical, are proactively addressed, safeguarding the regulator's adherence to governance frameworks and promoting accountability in operations.

Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Defined roles and responsibilities are fundamental to effective governance and ethical compliance. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), establishing clear roles ensures that employees understand their responsibilities and the governance standards they must follow. This clarity reduces ambiguity in decision-making and promotes accountability across departments.

Burnes (2020) argues that assigning specific roles related to governance and ethics fosters a sense of ownership among employees, ensuring that everyone understands their part in maintaining ethical conduct. By clearly outlining responsibilities, organisations can ensure that governance frameworks are effectively implemented and monitored.

Hillson (2019) also emphasises that well-defined roles are crucial for implementing effective risk management strategies, as each employee is aware of their specific responsibilities in identifying and mitigating risks. This contributes to stronger compliance with governance standards and ethical principles.

Participants emphasised that clearly defined roles and responsibilities are crucial for enabling operations management to adhere to governance and ethical considerations at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). Established roles allow employees to understand their specific duties related to governance and ethical compliance. Participant 4 emphasised the importance of this clarity:

Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for governance and ethical compliance.
(Participant 4)

Participant 17 further explained that having well-defined responsibilities not only guides employees but also provides a structure for accountability:

Having defined roles ensures that everyone knows their responsibilities, which promotes accountability and compliance with governance standards. (Participant 17)

Similarly, Participant 19 highlighted that operations management benefits from these assigned roles as they help ensure that ethical standards are upheld throughout the organisation:

Clear role definitions make it easier for operations management to ensure that ethical standards are followed consistently across departments. (Participant 19)

Participant 4's emphasis on establishing clear roles aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that well-defined responsibilities promote accountability and governance compliance. Additionally, Participant 19's reference to role clarity in upholding ethical standards reflects Burnes' (2020) view that clearly defined responsibilities foster a culture of ownership and accountability. These defined roles and responsibilities create a structured environment where employees understand their duties, contributing to an overall culture of governance and ethical adherence.

Establishment of Governance Policies and Procedures

The establishment of governance policies and procedures is central to ensuring adherence to ethical standards and promoting governance compliance in operations management. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), creating well-defined policies provides a clear framework for employees to follow, helping them understand the organisation's governance expectations. This ensures that ethical behaviour is embedded into the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Burnes (2020) argues that regularly reviewing and updating policies is essential for keeping governance frameworks aligned with changing organisational goals and regulatory requirements. Operations management's role in continuously reviewing and improving these policies ensures that governance standards remain relevant and effective.

Additionally, Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest that providing training on governance and ethical policies is crucial for ensuring that employees understand and adhere to these frameworks. This aligns with Participant 13's point about regular

training and the monitoring of policy implementation, which reinforces consistency in applying governance standards across the organisation.

Participants agreed that the establishment of governance policies and procedures promotes adherence to governance and ethical standards, as operations management plays a crucial role in their implementation. Participant 7 emphasised that operations management's responsibilities extend beyond policy creation to include training, monitoring, and enforcing these governance frameworks:

Operations management plays a critical role in promoting and maintaining adherence to governance processes and ethical standards within an organisation by implementing policies, providing training, monitoring compliance, enforcing rules, fostering accountability, driving continuous improvement, and leading by example. (Participant 7)

Additionally, Participant 4 remarked that operations management ensures the continued relevance of these policies by regularly reviewing and updating them to align with organisational goals and objectives:

Continuously reviewing and updating governance and ethical processes to ensure alignment with organisational goals and objectives. (Participant 4)

Participant 13 further elaborated that adherence to governance and ethical standards is driven by clear policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs), which are frequently reviewed and supported by continuous training for employees. This ensures that policies are consistent with legislation and effectively implemented:

So what is currently ops is doing, we've got a number of SOP's, your safe operations procedures and policies, that we're looking at and we ensure that the review of even those policies are led by certain departments that are involved to ensure that they are documented to ensure consistency and are also in line with legislation. And we having regular trainings in terms of those standards, those SOPs, regulations, we also included a target as well in our operational plans to ensure how we monitor these implementations of this standard regulation and whatever policies and processes that

we have and. As we discover a need for a particular regulation or standard, we also issue out technical policies just to alert employees in the ops space. Then that is followed by the training and then we also include the monitoring of the implementation of those in the original space. So, in so doing, we ensure that we are first consistent in applying those. (Participant 13)

The role of operations management in promoting governance adherence, as highlighted by Participants 7 and 13, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that well-defined policies are crucial for ensuring ethical behaviour. The continuous review and training processes mentioned by Participant 4 reflect Burnes' (2020) and Cummings and Worley's (2019) views that governance frameworks must evolve with organisational goals and that training is essential for compliance. This proactive approach to establishing, reviewing, and enforcing governance policies helps operations management maintain high ethical standards and ensures the organisation's processes align with legal and ethical expectations.

Sustainable and Environmentally Responsible Practices

The integration of sustainable and environmentally responsible practices in operations management is crucial for ensuring that organisations meet both ethical and regulatory standards. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), adopting sustainable practices demonstrates an organisation's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and long-term environmental stewardship. This aligns with Participant 5's emphasis on implementing environmentally responsible operations.

Cummings and Worley (2019) argue that sustainability is no longer an optional component of business strategy but a necessity for maintaining ethical governance. By incorporating sustainable practices into operations, organisations can minimise their environmental impact while ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, as highlighted by Participant 7.

Burnes (2020) further suggests that sustainability in operations management should be integrated into long-term planning, ensuring that future growth aligns with environmental goals. This aligns with Participant 10's remark that sustainable

practices are now part of operations management's strategic decision-making processes.

Operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator is influenced by the need to adhere to sustainable and environmentally responsible practices. Participant 5 emphasised the importance of integrating sustainability into operational processes:

Implementing sustainable and environmentally responsible operations practices. (Participant 5)

Participant 27 further elaborated on how operations management has embedded sustainability into daily operations, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and reducing the organisation's ecological footprint:

We have a mandate to ensure that our operations meet legal standards and contribute to sustainability efforts. This involves adopting eco-friendly practices that minimise waste and energy consumption. (Participant 27)

Participant 10 also pointed out that sustainable practices are increasingly being incorporated into long-term planning and decision-making within operations management to ensure future growth aligns with environmental responsibilities:

Sustainability is now a core part of how we plan for the future. Our long-term strategies incorporate environmental considerations, ensuring we grow responsibly and maintain our commitment to ethical and sustainable operations. (Participant 10)

Participants 5, 10, and 27's emphasis on sustainable operations aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) argument that sustainable practices are essential for CSR and long-term environmental responsibility. Participant 10's focus on incorporating sustainability into strategic planning reflects Burnes' (2020) view that sustainability must be embedded into long-term business strategies. This commitment to sustainability ensures that operations management complies with governance and ethical standards, contributing to the broader goal of environmental stewardship.

Training and Awareness

Training and awareness are essential components of maintaining adherence to governance and ethical standards within an organisation. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) suggest that ongoing training ensures employees remain informed about governance policies and ethical practices, which is critical in preventing non-compliance. This aligns with Participant 4's emphasis on the importance of training in promoting ethical behaviour.

Burnes (2020) highlights that training programs must be regularly updated to reflect new governance standards and ethical requirements. Participant 13's explanation of the feedback gained from monitoring efforts supports this notion, as training can be modified to address any gaps or issues identified through operational oversight.

Cummings and Worley (2019) argue that training programs are most effective when they include continuous learning opportunities, as this allows employees to adapt to changing standards and operational needs. Participant 13 mentions *that the regular review and updating of training programs ensures that employees are equipped to meet both current and emerging governance challenges.*

Operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator adheres to governance policies and ethical standards through continuous training and awareness programs. Participant 14 emphasised the role of these programs in ensuring that employees understand and follow governance and ethical guidelines:

Providing training and awareness programs for employees on governance and ethical standards. (Participant 14)

Participant 13 elaborated on the importance of training operations staff before they are deployed. Continuous monitoring of their performance allows operations management to identify gaps and, if necessary, update policies and provide additional training:

The training is just to make sure that everybody understands as they go out to the operators. And then in terms of the reporting and monitoring of implementation, so we

can highlight if there are any shortcomings, so that if there is a need for review or training, it can be directed based on the lessons learned from those engagements with ops and the operators. (Participant 13)

The role of training and awareness in promoting adherence to governance standards, as noted by Participants 13 and 14, aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that ongoing training is critical for ensuring ethical compliance. Additionally, the feedback-based training approach mentioned by Participant 13 supports Burnes' (2020) argument that training programs must be regularly updated to reflect new governance requirements. This feedback loop ensures that operations management remains up-to-date on the latest governance and ethical standards, enabling continuous improvement and ensuring that employees are adequately equipped to adhere to these standards.

Set Standards for Employee Conduct

Setting clear standards for employee conduct is a key responsibility of operations management in fostering adherence to governance and ethical standards. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), creating benchmarks for behaviour and performance helps employees understand their responsibilities and expectations within the organisation, ensuring that governance and ethical guidelines are followed. *Performance management systems*, as noted by Participant 8, *reinforce these standards by rewarding compliance and addressing non-compliance.*

Cummings and Worley (2019) argue that creating a culture of adherence to ethical standards requires consistent communication of the organisation's values and goals. By using policies and procedures to guide behaviour, operations management ensures that employees are aligned with the organisation's ethical framework. This aligns with Participant 8's emphasis on the importance of creating and communicating a unique organisational culture.

Additionally, Burnes (2020) highlights the importance of collaboration and feedback in promoting a culture of ethical adherence. Participant 6 mentioned that *operations management's role in soliciting employee feedback helps ensure that governance*

standards remain relevant and that employees feel engaged in the organisation's ethical practices.

The data analysis revealed that operations management at the Railway Safety Regulator sets the standard for employee conduct in terms of governance and ethical standards within the organisation. Participant 8 emphasised the role of operations management in creating a benchmark for how employees are expected to behave and work:

Ops management creates a benchmark of how people are supposed to act and work. Making them aware of how they should work, following specific ethical guidelines to ensure adherence. Performance management will assist. (Participant 8)

Furthermore, Participant 8 noted that operations management has fostered a culture of adherence to governance and ethical standards by recognising and rewarding good behaviour and performance:

Yes, the use of policies and procedures. Making employees aware of the organisation's values and goals. Creating a unique RSR culture and communicating this. Rewarding and acknowledging good behaviour and performance. (Participant 8)

Participant 3 added that collaboration with various stakeholders is an important aspect of ensuring that governance and ethical standards are consistently met:

Collaborating with stakeholders to ensure governance and ethical standards are met. (Participant 3)

Participant 6 highlighted how operations management encourages employee feedback and suggestions for improvement, further embedding a culture of adherence to governance and ethical standards:

Encouraging employee feedback and suggestions for improvement. (Participant 6)

Participant 8's focus on setting benchmarks for employee conduct aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) assertion that creating clear behaviour expectations

promotes adherence to governance standards. Participants 3 and 6 note that the role of collaboration and feedback in reinforcing these standards supports Burnes' (2020) view that employee engagement is crucial for maintaining ethical practices. By setting a clear standard for employee conduct, operations management promotes a culture of compliance, accountability, and continuous improvement within the organisation.

Promotion of Transparency and Integrity

Transparency and integrity are foundational principles for maintaining strong governance and ethical practices within organisations. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), promoting transparency in decision-making and operations helps build internal and external trust, as it demonstrates a commitment to ethical behaviour. This aligns with Participant 6's emphasis on fostering a culture of integrity and honesty (par 0).

Burnes (2020) argues that integrity is critical to organisational success, as it guides employees to act ethically, even when faced with challenges. Participant 2's remarks about living by the RSR's values reflect the broader importance of embedding integrity into everyday operations, ensuring that employees at all levels are committed to ethical standards.

Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest that organisations that prioritise transparency and integrity are more likely to sustain long-term success, as these values create an environment of accountability and trust. This approach not only ensures compliance with governance frameworks but also enhances the overall reputation and ethical standing of the organisation.

The promotion of transparency and integrity is a key factor influencing adherence to governance and ethical standards at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). Participants in the research emphasised the importance of cultivating a culture of integrity and openness in operations management. Participant 6 highlighted the role of operations management in supporting and fostering this culture:

Supporting and promoting a culture of integrity, honesty, and ethics. (Participant 6)

Participant 2 elaborated on how the values of integrity and transparency guide operations management, ensuring that their activities are conducted ethically and align with the core values of the RSR:

RSR we remain ethical to ensure that we live according to our values, that is excellence, to ensure that everything that we do we achieve the excellency, we are fair in the manner in which we conduct our activities or our operations, in terms of ensuring that we are there when we are required and we execute our work time and in a fair manner basically to live within our values of the RSR that is how we remain ethical and also to ensure that the integrity of the RSR remains good and to ensure that in terms of operations, not only the management they are living according to their values but the whole operations we live in those values.

Participant 2's focus on promoting transparency and living by the organisation's values aligns with Armstrong and Taylor's (2020) view that transparency fosters trust and supports adherence to ethical standards. Additionally, Participant 6's emphasis on integrity is consistent with Burnes' (2020) argument that integrity is central to ethical decision-making. This emphasis on transparency and integrity fosters trust within the organisation and with external stakeholders, ensuring that the operations are consistently aligned with governance and ethical standards.

Organisational Audits and Monitoring

Organisational audits and monitoring are crucial for ensuring that operations management adheres to governance and ethical standards. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) argue that regular audits provide a structured way to assess an organisation's compliance with internal and external governance frameworks (par 6.3.8). By identifying areas where processes may fall short, audits enable timely corrective action, as noted by Participant 6.

Burnes (2020) highlights that continuous monitoring is equally important, as it allows organisations to adapt to changing governance and ethical standards. This ensures that processes remain aligned with legal and regulatory requirements, as well as

organisational values. Participant 5's emphasis on updating processes aligns with this perspective, reflecting the need for flexibility in governance practices.

Additionally, Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest that accountability mechanisms, such as audits, strengthen an organisation's ethical standing by promoting transparency and responsibility. Regular audits, as mentioned by Participant 9, help maintain a high level of trust between the organisation and its stakeholders, further reinforcing the organisation's commitment to governance.

Participants highlighted the role of organisational audits and continuous monitoring in operations management's adherence to governance and ethical standards at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). Participant 5 emphasised that ongoing audits and process monitoring are essential to maintaining alignment with evolving governance frameworks:

Continuously monitor and update processes to align with changing governance and ethical standards. (Participant 5)

Participant 16 also noted that regular audits provide an opportunity for identifying areas of non-compliance and rectifying them promptly:

Organisational audits help to pinpoint governance and ethical shortcomings, allowing us to address issues before they escalate into larger problems. (Participant 16)

Participant 9 remarked that the audit process serves as a mechanism to hold departments accountable and ensures that both internal and external stakeholders can trust the organisation's commitment to ethical practices:

Regular audits ensure that all departments remain accountable and transparent in their operations, fostering trust within the organisation and with external stakeholders. (Participant 9)

Participant 5's focus on continuous monitoring reflects Burnes' (2020) view that monitoring is essential for keeping governance processes current with evolving standards. Additionally, Participant 9's emphasis on accountability through audits

aligns with Cummings and Worley's (2019) argument that audits promote transparency and build trust. Through these audits and monitoring activities, operations management ensures that the organisation consistently adheres to its governance policies, ethical standards, and regulatory requirements.

7.4.4 Theme 4: Strategic collaboration between OM and HR functions

7.4.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Value and Contribution of HRM to Operations

The next theme that emerged was the participants' perceptions of the value that HRM should add and the contribution that HRM makes to the success of the operations function within the organisation.

In today's competitive and complex organisational environments, Human Resource Management (HRM) is increasingly recognised as a strategic partner in enhancing operational success. HRM's potential to add value extends beyond traditional administrative functions, encompassing roles that directly support and optimise operational activities (par 2.5.1.3). Within the Railway Safety Regulator, participants indicated that HRM's contribution could significantly impact the effectiveness of operations by aligning HR practices with the organisation's goals and objectives, enabling a streamlined and efficient workforce.

HRM's role in operations can be instrumental in several key areas: workforce planning, talent management, training and development, and employee engagement (par. 4.5). According to Becker and Huselid (2018), "HRM adds value to operations when it aligns with the strategic needs of the organisation, focusing on delivering a workforce that meets operational demands and fosters continuous improvement". This alignment ensures that HR initiatives support and actively drive operational goals, creating synergy between HR and operations.

For instance, in the context of the Railway Safety Regulator, aligning HR initiatives with operational needs involves ensuring that recruitment and training programs are modified to develop the specific skills required for regulatory compliance and safety management (par. 0). By embedding operational priorities within HR practices, the

organisation benefits from a well-prepared workforce equipped to meet the demands of the regulatory environment.

Aligning HR with operations promotes a culture of collaboration, where HR practices such as performance management, incentives, and organisational development are focused on achieving operational excellence. Participant feedback highlighted that when HR initiatives support the organisation's core objectives, the entire workforce is better positioned to contribute meaningfully to the Railway Safety Regulator's mission.

Research by Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) suggests that HRM's strategic alignment with operational goals strengthens organisational resilience, especially in environments where compliance and risk management are critical (par. 4.4.2). Furthermore, Armstrong and Taylor (2020) argue that aligning HR strategies with business objectives fosters adaptability and enables organisations to respond effectively to dynamic industry conditions. This synergy between HRM and operations is essential for maintaining a motivated and productive workforce, ultimately driving organisational success.

Align Initiatives with Business Objectives

Aligning HR initiatives with business objectives is essential for ensuring that HRM contributes meaningfully to organisational success (par 4.2.1). Participant 14 emphasised that HRM can drive operational effectiveness by aligning its initiatives with the strategic goals of the organisation:

Aligning HR initiatives with business objectives, driving organisational success.
(Participant 14)

The literature supports the importance of aligning HRM with organisational objectives, highlighting that such alignment maximises the strategic impact of HRM. According to Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015), "HR alignment with business objectives ensures that HR practices are not only supporting but also propelling organisational goals forward".

Armstrong and Taylor (2020) further emphasise that this alignment fosters a collaborative and cohesive work environment, where all functions contribute towards shared objectives.

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator can add substantial value by aligning its initiatives with the organisation's business objectives (par. 4.4.2). This alignment ensures that HR functions, from recruitment to training, directly support the strategic goals, creating a unified approach that enhances organisational effectiveness and success. As Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) note, aligning HR initiatives with business objectives enables HRM to play an active role in driving organisational performance.

Ensure Compliance with Labour Laws

Ensuring compliance with labour laws and regulations is another way HRM can add value to operations. Participant 5 pointed out that HRM's role in regulatory compliance is essential for mitigating potential operational risks and protecting the organisation's interests:

Ensuring compliance with labour laws and regulations, and mitigating operational risks. (Participant 5)

The literature indicates the importance of compliance as a critical HRM function, particularly in risk-prone sectors. According to Marchington *et al.* (2016), "HRM's role in ensuring compliance with labour laws (par. 0) mitigates legal risks and promotes a stable work environment". Dessler (2020) also highlights that compliance with regulations reduces the likelihood of legal disputes and fosters a culture of integrity within the organisation.

In conclusion, by ensuring compliance with labour laws, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator helps mitigate operational risks and safeguard the organisation's reputation. This role protects the organisation from legal challenges and contributes to a trustworthy and ethical workplace. As Marchington *et al.* (2016) suggest, HRM's focus on compliance is crucial in maintaining operational stability and reinforcing ethical practices.

Educating and Raising Awareness of HR Processes

Educating employees and raising awareness of HR processes is another valuable contribution HRM can make to operations (par. 0). Participants highlighted the importance of HRM in supporting business units by ensuring employees understand and engage with HR processes.

Participant 23 emphasised that HRM can provide the necessary education to help business units function more effectively:

And I'm thinking also the education and awareness, HR can also assist the business units with those functions, so that they can then be able to operate with their functions within their units, because we would provide that education and awareness about all the processes within the HR department (Participant 23)

Research supports the role of HRM in educating employees on HR processes, noting that it fosters greater engagement and understanding of organisational policies (par. 0). According to Noe *et al.* (2017), "HRM education programs increase employees' awareness and adherence to HR policies, leading to better alignment between individual and organisational objectives". Furthermore, Becker and Huselid (2018) state that process awareness encourages employees to utilise HR resources effectively, enhancing organisational productivity.

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator can add value by educating employees about HR processes, thereby empowering them to engage with and effectively leverage HR functions. This increased awareness helps business units operate more cohesively and aligns employee actions with organisational goals. As Noe *et al.* (2017) suggest, raising awareness of HR processes fosters a more informed workforce that can contribute more effectively to the organisation's success (par. 0).

Encouraging Collaboration

Encouraging collaboration and effective communication across departments is a key way in which Human Resource Management (HRM) can add value to the organisation's operations (par. 6.3.6). Participant 15 emphasised that by fostering communication and teamwork, HRM enables departments to work more cohesively, enhancing organisational efficiency and effectiveness:

Facilitating effective communication and collaboration between departments and teams (Participant 15)

The literature emphasises the role of HRM in fostering cross-departmental collaboration as a crucial component of operational success. According to Baird and Meshoulam (2018), "HRM fosters a collaborative culture by creating channels for communication and encouraging teamwork, which enhances organisational agility and problem-solving capabilities". Schuler and Jackson (2017) also note that HRM practices that encourage interdepartmental collaboration can lead to improved decision-making and streamlined operations.

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator can add significant value to operations by fostering collaboration and communication across departments (par. 4.3.1). This collaborative approach promotes synergy within the organisation, supporting efficient operations and shared problem-solving. As Baird and Meshoulam (2018) suggest, HRM's role in facilitating teamwork contributes to organisational resilience and adaptability, which are critical for long-term success.

Ensuring a safe working environment

Another key contribution of HRM to operations is ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for employees. Participants noted that HRM plays a vital role in promoting employee well-being and safety, which is essential for maintaining a productive and engaged workforce. Participant 26 highlighted HRM's responsibility for workplace safety:

Participants remarked that HRM can add value and contribute to operations by ensuring a safe working environment for employees and promoting employee wellness.

Employee Safety and Well-being: Ensure a safe working environment and support employee well-being initiatives (Participant 26)

The literature highlights the role of HRM in promoting cross-departmental collaboration as an essential component of operational success. According to Baird and Meshoulam (2018), "HRM fosters a collaborative culture by creating channels for communication and encouraging teamwork, which enhances organisational agility and problem-solving capabilities". Schuler and Jackson (2017) also note that HRM practices that encourage interdepartmental collaboration can lead to improved decision-making and streamlined operations.

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator can significantly add value to operations by fostering collaboration and effective communication across departments. This collaborative approach promotes synergy within the organisation, supporting efficient operations and shared problem-solving. As Baird and Meshoulam (2018) suggest, HRM's role in facilitating teamwork contributes to organisational resilience and adaptability, critical for long-term success (par. 4.5.3).

Ensuring efficient use of Resources

Another key contribution of HRM to operations is ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for employees. Participants noted that HRM plays a vital role in promoting employee well-being and safety, which is essential for maintaining a productive and engaged workforce. Participant 6 highlighted *HRM's responsibility for workplace safety*:

Participant 15 suggested that ensuring the efficient use of resources will enable HRM to add value to the organisation's operations.

Ensuring efficient use of resources, reducing waste and optimising productivity.
(Participant 15)

The literature supports HRM's role in fostering a safe work environment, noting that employee safety and wellness are fundamental to operational stability and employee satisfaction. According to Dessler (2020), "HRM's role in managing workplace safety involves implementing safety protocols and wellness programs, which contribute to reduced workplace accidents and improved employee morale". In addition, Mathis *et al.* (2019) state that prioritising safety and well-being safeguards employees and supports a culture of care and accountability, enhancing organisational loyalty.

In conclusion, HRM at the Railway Safety Regulator can add value to operations by ensuring a safe working environment and promoting employee wellness. By focusing on safety and well-being, HRM helps maintain a productive workforce, reduces risks, and enhances overall organisational resilience. As Dessler (2020) emphasises, HRM's commitment to workplace safety contributes to both operational success and employee satisfaction, which are essential for sustaining a positive work culture.

7.4.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Proposed Collaborations for HR And OM Alignment with Organisational Goals

This section explores proposed collaborations between Human Resources (HR) and Operations Management (OM) to better align with the organisation's strategic goals. In modern organisational contexts, effective collaboration between HR and OM is critical to drive performance, streamline processes, and ensure that both departments work cohesively toward shared objectives. Such alignment enables the organisation to operate efficiently, adapt to changes, and meet its regulatory and operational commitments.

The proposed collaborations focus on integrating functions across both operational and support areas, enhancing coordination, and ensuring that HR and OM can effectively contribute to various departments within the organisation. Specific focus

areas include finance, IT, legal and compliance, procurement, and quality management, each playing a vital role in meeting strategic objectives and ensuring adherence to governance standards. By fostering communication and joint initiatives in these areas, HR and OM can address organisational needs more holistically, from talent management to process optimisation.

This section examines these proposed collaborations in detail, presenting a table that outlines the functions of both operations and support departments, along with the targeted collaborative efforts that can drive alignment. By adopting a unified approach, HR and OM can support sustainable growth, enhance operational performance, and foster a culture of accountability and efficiency across the organisation.

Table 7.8: Proposed Collaborations for HR And OM Alignment with Organisational Goals

	Operations Functions	Support Functions
All departments	3	3
Company Secretary	0	1
Engineering and Technical Services	0	1
Finance	2	3
Freight and logistics	0	1
Infrastructure and Asset Management	0	1
Internal Audit	0	1
ICT	2	2
Leadership and Senior Management	3	2
Legal and Compliance	1	4
Marketing, media and communications	4	7
Operations management	4	7
Procurement	1	2
Quality management	0	1
Research and development	2	1
Risk and strategy	1	2
Sales	0	2
Security and emergency response	0	1

Human Resources Collaborations

Table 7.9: HR collaborations

	Operations Functions	Support Functions	Totals
All departments	3	3	6
Company Secretary	0	1	1
CSI	1	0	1
Customer service	1	1	2
Engineering and technical services	0	1	1
Finance	2	3	5
Freight and logistics	0	1	1
Infrastructure and asset management	0	1	1
Internal audit	0	1	1
IT	2	2	4
Leadership and senior management	3	2	5
Legal and compliance	1	4	5
Marketing, media and communications	2	6	8
Operations management	4	7	11
Procurement	1	2	3
Quality management	0	1	1
Research and development	2	1	3
Risk and strategy	1	2	3
Sales	0	2	2
Security and emergency response	0	1	1

All departments

Human Resources (HR) plays a pivotal role in fostering interdepartmental collaboration, which enhances operational efficiency, strategic alignment, and workforce development. According to Boxall and Purcell (2020), HR must function as a strategic business partner, ensuring that employee management and development align with organisational goals. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) emphasise that cross-functional collaboration with HR leads to increased innovation, reduced employee turnover, and improved job satisfaction.

Participants highlighted the necessity of HR collaborating with multiple departments to strengthen internal cohesion:

Human Resources must collaborate with various functions, and departments, within the organisation to ensure alignment with organisational objectives. (Executive leadership team, line managers, finance etc. (Participant 7)

All departments and line managers. Direct contact with employees. (Participant 8)

Interdepartmental HR collaborations are particularly critical in the public sector and regulatory environments, where workforce policies must comply with stringent legislative frameworks (Cascio & Boudreau, 2021).

Company Secretary Department

HR's collaboration with the **Company Secretary department** is crucial for governance, compliance, and legal reporting. The Company Secretary department ensures that regulatory requirements are met, enabling HR to align employment policies with corporate governance standards (Hitt *et al.*, 2023). Effective integration of HR and Company Secretary functions can also enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring that workforce reporting aligns with board-level expectations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

So, even if you look at your company secretary department, ensuring that the correct reports are sent for the correct governance structures, because obviously, we have to

report on the mandate. Well, we have to, in compliance with certain legislation, report on certain issues, and that will require it to go through the relevant government structures of the organisation. (Participant 11)

In terms of internal order, we need to ensure that our environment is monitored and our controls are implemented adequately to ensure that we are not found wanting. (Participant 11)

Corporate Social Responsibility

HR also plays a growing role in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, ensuring that workforce policies align with sustainability and social impact goals. According to Gond *et al.* (2021), HR-driven CSR policies contribute to employee engagement, employer branding, and corporate reputation management.

Participant insights emphasised HR's role in integrating CSR into business strategy:

Corporate Social Responsibility: Integrate HR initiatives with organisational social responsibility and sustainability goals.

HR's involvement in CSR extends beyond internal workforce management to community engagement, ethical labour practices, and sustainable employment policies (Kim *et al.*, 2022).

Operations Management Collaborations

Table 7.10: OM collaborations

	Operations Functions	Support Functions	Totals
All departments	3	2	5
Compliance and Legal	2	2	4
Customer service	1	1	2
Finance department	2	3	5

HR	2	3	5
IT	1	1	2
Media and communications	1	1	2
Procurement	1	0	1
Quality assurance	1	1	2
Research and technical skills	3	2	5
Risk and strategy	0	2	2
Sales and marketing	1	1	2
Strategy and corporate planning	1	1	2
Supply chain management	1	1	2

All departments

Operations management (OM) thrives on cross-departmental collaboration, which enables efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and customer satisfaction (Stevenson, 2021). According to Heizer *et al.* (2022), OM's interdependence with support functions creates a networked business model, where each department contributes to operational success.

One participant described this integration as a “chain of collaboration”, linking different departments:

All departments, because I think especially on the support side - we are there to ensure that they can function, so from a Human Resources point of view, we have to ensure that they have the people. The Finance department has to ensure that they have the resources, the money, or yeah, that they need to conduct their work. Legal will assist them in terms of dealing with penalties and certain processes that they implement. (Participant 12)

The risk and strategy team is guided by the operations team, but they also assist them in putting a plan in place that we can deliver on. And then obviously within the operations department, the IT department. It's almost like a chain, so the one link

follows the other. You start in our case by issuing permits, then obviously monitoring and so forth. But yeah, I think the departments that would collaborate with ops are everyone in support to ensure that they have the necessary resources to implement what they need to. (Participant 13)

Compliance and Legal

Operations must comply with national and industry-specific regulations, making compliance and legal departments integral to OM's success. Legal teams guide contract management, regulatory compliance, and risk mitigation strategies (Hitt *et al.*, 2023).

Also, I think at the same time to create a strong legislative side in terms of legal services and also be able, let's say, to have other resources or tools to carry out the duties, like the facilities, must assist. (Participant 12)

Research shows that companies with robust compliance frameworks reduce legal risks, avoid financial penalties, and enhance operational integrity (Hillson & Murray-Webster, 2020).

Risk and Strategy

Risk and strategy integration within OM enhances business resilience and adaptability (Sadgrove, 2021). Operations teams that collaborate with strategic planners are more proactive in addressing market changes, operational risks, and supply chain disruptions (Hitt *et al.*, 2023).

As well as the risk and strategy department. I think those departments would work best with the operations as a core department. Participant 9

Quality Assurance

Quality management is a critical component of OM, ensuring that products and services meet industry standards (Oakland, 2020). Integrating lean operations and Six

Sigma principles into OM-Quality collaborations enhances process efficiency, reduces waste, and improves customer satisfaction (Stevenson, 2021).

Quality Assurance: To ensure compliance with quality standards and regulations.
(Participant 5)

Customer Service

Customer satisfaction is a direct outcome of effective operational strategies (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2021). OM teams must collaborate with customer service to enhance responsiveness, resolve customer complaints, and improve service delivery standards (Kotler & Keller, 2022).

Customer Service: Align operations with customer needs, feedback, and satisfaction goals. (Participant 6)

Procurement

Procurement supports OM by ensuring efficient sourcing of materials, supplier management, and cost control (Christopher, 2021). Integrating supply chain technology and digital procurement tools enhances operational efficiency (Monczka *et al.*, 2021).

Procurement: To source materials, equipment, and services. (Participant 5)

Supply Chain Management: To manage procurement, logistics, and supplier relationships. (Participant 5)

Finance Department

Operations teams require financial planning to support project implementation, manage budgets, and optimise resource allocation (Hitt *et al.*, 2023).

I think together with finance, so that at least they have all the equipment and tools needed to do that. However, I suppose that at the same time, the permit side must

also be enforced, because we don't want to carry out our functions if those people are not adhering or don't have a legitimate payment. (Participant 12)

Human Resources (HR)

HR ensures that OM teams receive the necessary training and talent development (Boxall & Purcell, 2020).

Human Resources: Develop and deploy talent, skills, and training to support operational excellence. (Participant 6)

Information Technology

Technology integration within OM enhances efficiency, process automation, and data analytics (Heizer *et al.*, 2022).

Information Technology: Leverage technology to enhance operational efficiency, data analytics, and automation. (Participant 6)

Marketing and Media Collaboration

Marketing strategically aligns operational output with market demand (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Additionally, media and communications departments play a crucial role in building brand awareness and enhancing corporate visibility (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Sales and Marketing: To align production and delivery with customer demand and market requirements. (Participant 5)

Marketing and communications play a crucial role in ensuring public awareness and fostering positive stakeholder engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Then the communications department, in terms of raising awareness of the RSR as well as the educational aspect, looks at the South African environment where people don't seriously consider the rail reserves. So, I think those two become critical in achieving our mandate. Then the other department, like your reviews now in terms of

maybe reviewing the new projects and the technologies that are coming to the industry, you see those for me, I think they are critical departments that should be collaborating with the operational department for them to feature although reviews still inside the office department, but I think... And it's also one like outside in terms of looking at those technological advancements out there. (Participant 13)

Research and Development (R&D)

R&D collaborations foster operational innovation and technological advancements (Lysons & Farrington, 2022). Organisations investing in R&D improve production processes, reduce costs, and increase market competitiveness (Monczka *et al.*, 2021).

In our organisation, I would say the operations need to focus more on research and technical skills development. And where those colleagues will have to go deeper in terms of the technological advancement, different technologies that are used countrywide, is to do a literature review on the rail system and put those systems back into our processes so that we can influence and improve our rail system. (Participant 14)

Strategy and Corporate Planning

Strategic planning ensures that OM remains aligned with broader corporate goals (Slack *et al.*, 2022).

Strategy/Corporate Planning: Align operations with organisational goals and objectives. (Participant 6)

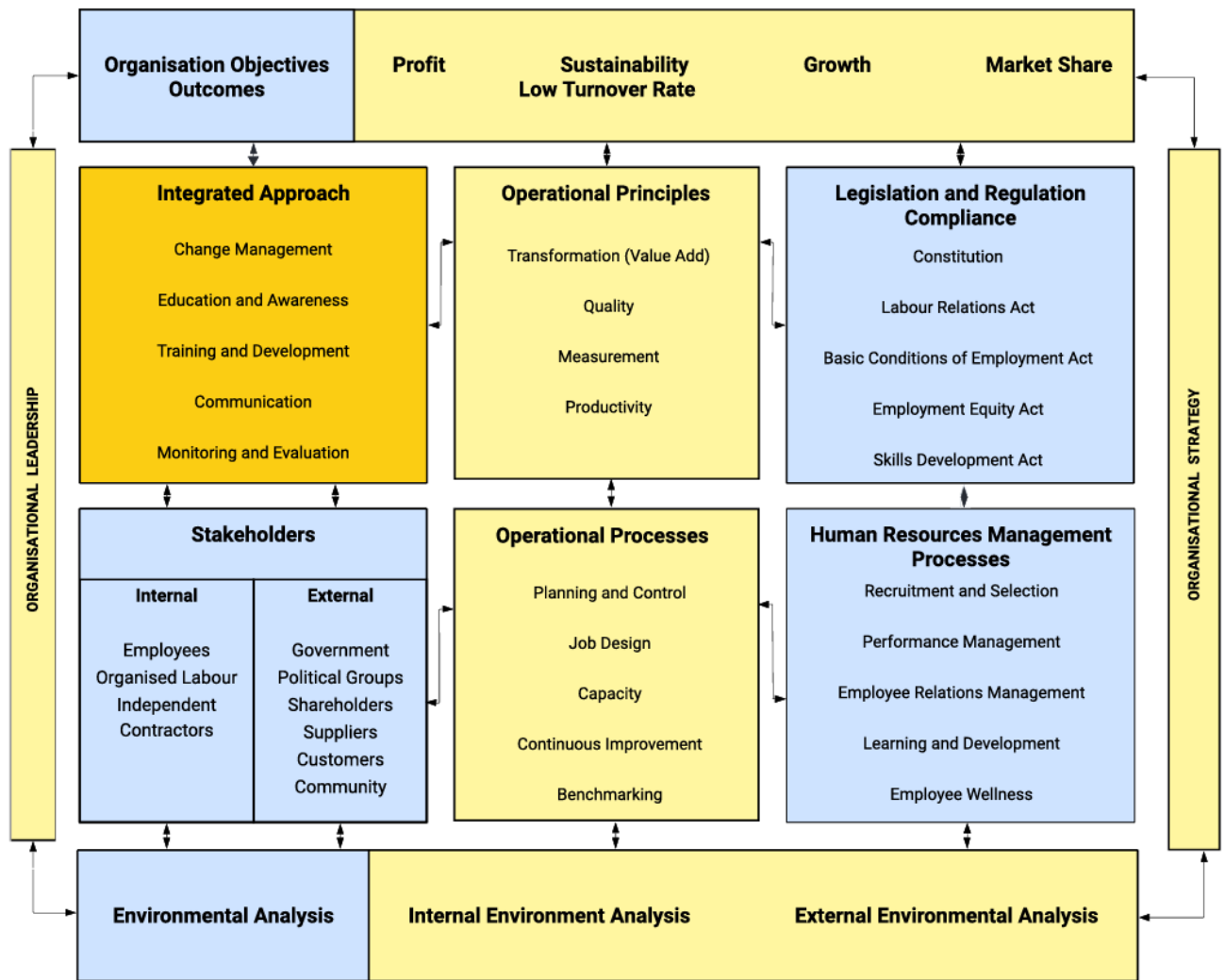
7.5 Modified Proposed Human Resources and Operations Management Integrated Framework

The initial framework has been revised and adapted to include several contributions and concepts emanating from the research. This is with specific emphasis on the contributions of the participants through the interviews conducted. Through these

contributions, the researcher was able to gather theoretical and empirical data that effectively illuminated the integration of operations management principles with human resources management. The integration of operations management principles with human resources management at RSR enables a more efficient and effective approach to human resources management.

The diagram below outlines the integrated operations management principles in conjunction with the human resources management framework, which will be articulated to highlight the various elements and factors considered within the framework. The modified framework integrates the conceptual and modified aspects of the framework as previously detailed in Chapter 6 of the research.

Figure 7.13: Modified Proposed Human Resources and Operations Management Integrated Framework



The integration of Operations Management (OM) principles with Human Resources Management (HRM) is found to be a critical approach, as indicated by input from research participants. This approach is perceived to be an emerging strategy aimed at improving organisational efficiency, productivity, and sustainability. Operations Management focuses on optimising processes, resource allocation, and workflow efficiency, while Human Resources Management is concerned with workforce development, employee engagement, and strategic talent management. The integration of these disciplines is crucial in creating a work environment that strikes a balance between operational demands and human capital capabilities.

In the evolving business environment, organisations are under increasing pressure to enhance operational effectiveness, adapt to regulatory changes, and implement technology-driven innovations with the sole objective of streamlining and improving their organisations' bottom line. This necessitates a shift from traditional HRM and OM silos to a more integrated, strategic approach that aligns human capital management with process optimisation.

This research explored how organisations can integrate HRM with OM principles to enhance decision-making, governance, and sustainability. Through an empirical investigation, the study identified key themes that influence the effectiveness of this integration, including corporate governance, ethics, policy development, education, training, communication, change management, and continuous monitoring. The study provides valuable insights into how organisations can optimise both human resources and operational management processes to create a synergistic work environment that promotes efficiency, innovation, and long-term success.

As businesses navigate digital transformation and globalisation, they must adopt strategies that combine workforce adaptability with operational agility (Stone & Deadrick, 2021). This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on strategic HRM-OM integration, emphasising the importance of developing governance frameworks, refining policies, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. By adopting a holistic approach, organisations can achieve sustainable growth, enhanced employee performance, and superior service delivery.

These sections of the research outline the key themes identified through participant responses, demonstrating how corporate governance, policy frameworks, workforce education, and strategic communication play a crucial role in strengthening the interface between operations management and human resource management.

7.5.1 Corporate Governance and Ethics

Corporate governance refers to the set of policies, processes, and controls that define how an organisation is managed and directed. It establishes clear decision-making mechanisms, outlines leadership responsibilities, and ensures alignment with strategic objectives. Corporate governance and ethics play a pivotal role in ensuring that an organisation operates efficiently, transparently, and in compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks (par 6.3.5). Effective governance structures are essential for maintaining accountability, mitigating risks, and fostering a culture of ethical business practices. Organisations that prioritise strong governance and ethical conduct are more likely to gain stakeholder trust, improve operational performance, and sustain long-term business success (Pucheta-Martínez & Gallego-Álvarez, 2020).

The role of governance and ethics is to ensure operational oversight, which defines accountability for operational decisions, thereby ensuring that management adheres to regulatory and ethical standards. The other crucial role of governance is risk management, which identifies potential risks associated with resource allocation, financial management, business continuity and ethics. One of the key aspects of governance and ethics is transparency, which fosters a culture of openness through regular performance reviews, transparent financial disclosures, and effective compliance monitoring.

Governance and ethics also encourage stakeholder engagement that aims to enhance relationships with investors, employees, and regulatory bodies by demonstrating ethical conduct and best practices in governance. Business ethics is also a Cornerstone of Governance as it is fundamental to corporate governance, shaping the values, behaviours, and decision-making processes within an organisation. Ethics is important in an organisation as it contributes to the development of organisational culture. A strong ethical framework fosters integrity, accountability, and professional conduct across all levels of the organisation (Governance at Work, 2023).

Ethical and governance compliance encourages organisations to adhere to legal obligations and industry-specific standards, reducing the risk of legal disputes and

reputational damage. Employees who work in strong ethical and governance environments tend to exhibit higher morale, increased job satisfaction, and commitment to organisational goals (Natsir *et al.*, 2024).

The integration of human resources management, corporate governance, ethics, and operations management strengthens the foundation for effective decision-making. Organisations with robust governance structures can implement standardised policies and procedures that guide operational efficiency and encourage a culture of continuous improvement and ethical leadership (Mwangi & Kiambati, 2015).

The King IV Report on Corporate Governance emphasises ethical leadership, stakeholder inclusivity, and sustainable business practices as key pillars for governance excellence (Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, 2016). Organisations that implement corporate governance and ethical principles effectively experience fewer compliance breaches, improved operational efficiencies, and stronger stakeholder confidence.

7.5.2 Policy Development and Legislative Compliance

The development and implementation of policies are crucial for ensuring regulatory compliance, effective risk management, and operational consistency. Policies serve as a blueprint for how organisations conduct their business, manage their workforce, and ensure alignment with legal obligations (Stone & Deadrick, 2021). Well-defined policies provide organisations with a structured framework for decision-making and operational processes. Legislative compliance provides and enhances regulatory compliance by ensuring adherence to local and international laws.

Effective and efficient policies ensure Consistency in operations by standardising practices across departments and providing workforce clarity on expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Effective policy frameworks also contribute to business continuity, helping organisations navigate industry disruptions, technological advancements, and evolving compliance requirements. Organisations must consider the following key elements when embarking on policy: legislative and regulatory alignment, which

ensures compliance with labour laws, industry-specific regulations, and data protection guidelines (Marchington *et al.*, 2022).

The development of policies must also consider operational applicability, which refers to policies being practical and relevant to day-to-day organisational functions. Policy development must also encourage employee participation to increase acceptance and adherence among the workforce. Organisations must regularly review and update their policies to continuously evaluate and keep pace with legislative changes and industry best practices. Organisations must adhere to national and international regulatory frameworks to mitigate legal risks and ensure ethical governance.

Organisations must engage key stakeholders, including employees, legal advisors, and compliance officers, for effective policy development and implementation. It is also important for organisations to prioritise training and awareness programs to educate employees on new policies and legislative changes through structured training sessions and workshops (Betterworks, 2024).

Organisations should conduct regular audits and compliance checks to assess the effectiveness of their policies and identify areas for improvement. A robust policy development process, aligned with corporate governance and legislative compliance, enhances an organisation's ability to manage risks, streamline operations, and build a sustainable future. Organisations that integrate regulatory policies with operational strategies can encourage a work environment that is compliant, ethical, and conducive to long-term success.

7.5.3 Education and Awareness

Education and awareness are fundamental to ensuring that employees understand organisational policies, ethical standards, and operational procedures. A well-informed workforce enhances compliance, reduces risks, and fosters a culture of continuous learning and adaptability (Stone & Deadrick, 2021).

The Role of Education and Awareness in Organisational Success helps employees understand organisational policies and their implications, adapt to new business processes and technological advancements, and align their actions with corporate governance principles and ethical standards. Education and awareness play a crucial role in enhancing decision-making skills and ensuring adherence to best practices and regulatory requirements. With adequate education and awareness, it is perceived that there could be fewer compliance violations and increased productivity due to reduced misunderstandings and operational errors (Jabbour *et al.*, 2021).

Through education and awareness, an organisation could experience stronger employee engagement as workers understand the rationale behind policies. The intrinsic aspects of education and awareness include aspects such as policy Education, wherein employees are educated on the organisation's policies, covering HR, operations, safety, and ethics. Education and Awareness should also encompass aspects such as workshops and seminars to keep employees informed about regulatory changes and operational shifts. Organisations should consider interactive Learning Tools, such as e-learning platforms, webinars, and simulation-based learning, to enhance their approach. To ensure the effectiveness of education and awareness, organisations must regularly conduct knowledge assessments to ensure that employees fully understand the relevant policies and procedures. Key to the effectiveness of education and awareness, it is essential for organisations to establish platforms and processes for continuous feedback, allowing employees to have channels for asking questions and clarifying doubts.

Education and Awareness not only improve compliance with policies by ensuring employees understand them, but also ensure that they comply with them. Education and Awareness also contribute to reducing operational risks, as employees who are aware of the policies avoid errors and inefficiencies in processes, which could manifest in a stronger organisational or corporate culture.

7.5.4 Training and Development

Training and development are critical for ensuring that employees remain skilled, knowledgeable, and aligned with the organisation's strategic goals. Organisations that invest in continuous professional development see improvements in productivity, employee retention, and overall operational efficiency (Natsir *et al.*, 2024). Training within an organisation is perceived as important, as it serves to formally and intentionally address skills gaps by upskilling employees in alignment with industry changes and the requirements of their functions. Through formal and structured training, organisations can enhance employee performance, reduce workflow inefficiencies, and support career progression by preparing employees for leadership roles.

When employees are trained or developed, they become more productive as they are confident in their work, which leads to increased productivity and higher profit margins (Marchington *et al.*, 2022). The effects of training and development are perceived to lead to increased employee engagement and retention, reducing turnover rates while improving operational efficiency and contributing to higher customer satisfaction.

There are several training and development approaches or types that organisations can undertake to address and positively impact the organisation. This includes aspects such as onboarding training, which is most often used to introduce new employees to the organisational culture, policies, and operational processes. Another effective training approach is technical skills training, which ensures that employees are updated on industry-specific tools and technology. Another progressive training and development approach is leadership and management training.

This form of training or approach aims to equip potential leaders with strategic decision-making and governance skills to serve the organisation better and contribute to its growth and sustainability. Training and development also provide opportunities for soft skills development, enhancing communication, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities within employees in the organisation. It is essential for training and

development to be personalised, and employees should receive training modified to their job roles (Betterworks, 2024).

The undertaking of training and development should not just be about implementation but must incorporate aspects such as regular assessment and monitoring progress to ensure effectiveness. Investing in education, awareness, and training programs is not just beneficial for compliance; it strengthens an organisation's ability to innovate, adapt, and remain competitive. Organisations that integrate continuous learning with strategic workforce planning create an environment that fosters efficiency, engagement, and long-term success.

7.5.5 Communication Strategies

Effective communication strategies are essential for organisational efficiency, employee engagement, and the seamless implementation of change. Clear communication fosters transparency, trust, and alignment with corporate governance principles, ensuring all stakeholders understand organisational goals and expectations (Pucheta-Martínez & Gallego-Álvarez, 2020).

A well-structured communication strategy for an organisation ensures that employees are informed about policy changes, governance updates, and operational shifts. The strategy or approach further ensures that the organisation's leadership can effectively convey its strategic objectives and expectations. Through the communication strategy and approach, the organisation can communicate with all stakeholders, including employees, investors, and regulators, and receive consistent and accurate information (par. 6.3.8).

Organisations must ensure that their communication strategies and approaches have several key elements to ensure effectiveness. Some of the key elements include information transmitted with clarity and consistency. This information should be concise, relevant, and aligned with the organisational goals. The other key element in a communication strategy is a multi-channel approach wherein the organisation

utilises various platforms to reach employees effectively (Betterworks, 2024). It is also key for the strategy to include feedback mechanisms. These are commonly open channels for employees to ask questions and provide input to foster inclusivity.

A communication strategy should contain a crisis communication plan. This will enable strategic, timely, and transparent communication during the organisation's operational disruptions or crises (Marchington *et al.*, 2022). It is also important for the organisation to adopt a top-down and bottom-up communication strategy and approach. This will encourage leadership-driven messaging while also gathering employee feedback. Regular training and updates are critical to the communication strategy, as they provide ongoing engagement between all stakeholders, including managers and employees, specifically on policies and organisational goals.

Communication strategies that are well implemented enhance governance, reduce misunderstandings, and support organisational change initiatives. The role of communication in the organisation is deemed to be significant, as it provides a structured and coordinated flow of information.

7.5.6 Change Management

In an organisational setup, change management refers to structured approaches for transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. As organisations adapt to new regulations, technological advancements, and market dynamics, effective change management frameworks become essential for smooth transitions (Jabbour *et al.*, 2021). Change is inevitable in today's business landscape. However, poorly managed change can result in resistance, productivity losses, and operational inefficiencies. Successful change management strategies enable organisations to minimise disruptions by preparing employees for transformations. Through change management approaches, organisations can reduce resistance to change by implementing structured training and effective communication. Change management further enhances employee buy-in by clearly demonstrating the benefits of change.

Popular Change Management Models, such as Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, aid in establishing urgency, building a guiding coalition, developing a strategic vision, communicating the vision, empowering action, generating short-term wins, and sustaining acceleration for organisational change. This approach instils culture change and fosters acceptance and support for change.

On the other hand, the 2. Lewin's Change Model helps prepare employees and systems for change, implement new processes and structures, and reinforce change through ongoing support. The ADKAR Change Model focuses on creating awareness through recognising the need for change and stimulating desire by building motivation among employees. It also encourages the enhancement of knowledge by providing training and education for the stakeholders involved in the change process. This process also ensures that there is adequate ability to enable the successful implementation of the change provision, as well as promoting the sustainability of the change in the long term.

An organisation's change management approach must be multifaceted to enable effective change undertaking and implementation. Adapting various change management models enables the organisation to customise its change management approach to address its specific needs.

A well-implemented change management approach is beneficial to the organisation, and it can be evaluated by assessing various aspects. These aspects include ascertaining the leadership's commitment to change management. This refers to senior executives championing the change and providing direction, which can also be ascertained through the level of involvement of various stakeholders, including the early engagement of employees, which helps increase acceptance. The success of change management requires robust Training Programs to be put in place to support new skills, technologies, and workflows (Stone & Deadrick, 2021).

The most critical element in change management is continuous feedback and monitoring of change initiatives. This addresses the regular evaluation and measurement of the approach's impact and effectiveness, as the objectives of

improving operational efficiency, increasing employee satisfaction and adaptability to technology, and reducing resistance to change due to structured training should always be priorities.

When change is managed effectively, change can drive innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness while minimising disruptions. Effective communication strategies and change management approaches are crucial for enhancing governance, facilitating seamless transitions, and maintaining a flexible workforce. Organisations that integrate structured communication and change management processes experience higher employee engagement, increased operational efficiency, and sustainable growth.

7.5.7 Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) play a critical role in assessing the effectiveness of policies, governance structures, training programs, and operational processes. M&E ensures that an organisation remains accountable, compliant, and adaptive to changing business environments (Pucheta-Martínez & Gallego-Álvarez, 2020).

M&E in an organisation is deemed critical as it ensures Policy and Governance Effectiveness through the assessment of corporate governance policies, ethical standards, and HR strategies and whether they are achieving their intended outcomes. Through an effective M&E process, the organisation can enhance operational efficiency by identifying inefficiencies and making data-driven improvements to its business processes (Jabbour *et al.*, 2021).

Another positive aspect of effective M&E in an organisation is that it promotes accountability, whereby employees and managers are held accountable for achieving key performance indicators (KPIs) and meeting strategic objectives. M&E further supports Continuous Improvement. This requires Regular evaluations to foster a culture of learning and adaptation to new challenges (Stone & Deadrick, 2021).

Effective M&E requires various implementations, such as performance metrics and KPIs. An organisation should define clear, measurable objectives, including financial, operational, and HR-related performance indicators (par 2.5.3). Other aspects of M&E include data collection and reporting, enabling organisations to utilise established data-driven monitoring systems to track progress in governance, operations, and compliance (Marchington *et al.*, 2022).

An M&E approach also needs to bolster aspects such as stakeholder feedback mechanisms. This refers to continuous feedback from employees, management, and external partners to ensure that policies remain effective and relevant. Other aspects, such as regular audits and external assessments of the governance process, must be conducted to align with industry best practices and legal requirements.

Effective M&E not only promotes the monitoring and evaluation of processes and systems but also helps reduce operational inefficiencies and enhance compliance with international laws and corporate governance standards. It further contributes to increased transparency and accountability across the organisation, drives performance excellence, ensures compliance, and promotes transparency in governance.

In conclusion, the integration of operations management principles into organisational governance, combined with human resource management, is critical for any organisation's success. Operations management plays a crucial role in ensuring that corporate governance structures align with strategic objectives, resource optimisation, and regulatory compliance.

Effective Operations management principles enhance decision-making, streamline business processes, and improve efficiency (La Rocca *et al.*, 2023). The key operations management Principles, including Governance, resource allocation and optimisation, are essential as they ensure that financial, human, and technological resources are efficiently allocated to support governance and operational goals. Through operations management, organisations can ensure process standardisation, which involves establishing uniform policies and procedures that align with legal

requirements and industry best practices. Principles such as risk management and Compliance enable the organisation to anticipate governance and operational challenges. This is also clear from performance management as a principle that defines and tracks operational KPIs to measure productivity, compliance, and strategic alignment. The role of Supply Chain and Procurement Governance as a principle also ensures that procurement and supply chain decisions adhere to governance and ethical standards.

Operations management and corporate governance intersect in areas such as decision-making processes, wherein operations management principles provide a systematic approach to making governance-related decisions, ensuring alignment with financial and operational goals. A structured operations management approach reduces uncertainties in corporate governance by providing predictive analytics and scenario planning. Aligning human resources management, operations management, and finance teams to create governance policies that support operational objectives is crucial for the organisation's success, as it enhances risk mitigation efficiency and operational transparency, while also ensuring compliance with laws and regulations.

Through the integration of continuous monitoring, evaluation, and operations management principles, organisations can achieve higher efficiency, compliance, and governance transparency. A structured operations management-driven governance approach enhances decision-making, risk management, and operational effectiveness, ensuring sustainable business success.

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 7 revealed that HRM and OM practices at RSR play complementary roles in supporting organisational objectives, operational efficiency, and employee engagement. HRM practices have been effective in areas such as wellness, safety, and employee development, contributing to a positive work environment and fostering a supportive culture. Similarly, OM practices have

contributed to productivity and operational performance through streamlined processes, cross-functional teamwork, and continuous improvement.

However, the analysis also identified several areas where RSR's HRM and OM practices could be enhanced. Specifically, OM practices would benefit from improving communication channels, increasing employee empowerment, and addressing rigid organisational structures to foster a more adaptable and collaborative culture. Aligning HRM initiatives more closely with OM processes could strengthen inter-departmental cohesion, optimise resource use, and support strategic objectives more effectively.

The insights gained in Chapter 7 indicate the importance of a coordinated approach to HRM and OM, where both functions are aligned with the organisation's goals and responsive to employee needs. This alignment is crucial for cultivating a high-performance culture and ensuring RSR fulfils its regulatory and operational obligations. The findings from this chapter lay the groundwork for the strategic recommendations in Chapter 8, which aim to optimise HRM and OM practices at RSR to enhance its operational effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

7.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter 7 presented a comprehensive analysis of stakeholder experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Operations Management (OM) practices within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) (par 3). The chapter began by providing a demographic overview of the participants, laying a foundation for understanding their insights. The data analysis process was then outlined in detail, including the steps taken to clean, code, and organise the data using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), leading to the identification of key themes that emerged from the data.

The analysis examined the roles and contributions of HRM and OM, emphasising HRM's responsibilities in workforce management, policy communication, compliance, and employee wellness. The analysis demonstrated how OM practices at RSR support

process optimisation, operational efficiency, and resource management. Through participants' experiences, the study revealed that both HRM and OM practices play essential roles in fostering organisational growth and aligning operational activities with strategic objectives.

The chapter also assessed the effectiveness of HRM and OM practices through specific indicators. Participants reported that HRM's current practices in wellness services, training, safety prioritisation, and accessible support have positively impacted their work experiences. In contrast, some OM practices faced challenges related to communication, rigid structures, and underutilised employee development, indicating areas needing improvement. Nevertheless, OM practices were recognised for contributing to operational performance through effective communication, skills development, cross-functional teamwork, and streamlined processes.

Another critical aspect explored was the value of performance feedback and employee engagement, with HRM practices playing a key role in fostering employee motivation and job satisfaction. Participants expressed that regular feedback, employee involvement, and supportive work-life balance initiatives were beneficial, promoting a more engaged and committed workforce. Areas for improvement included enhancing employee empowerment and addressing inconsistencies in OM practices better to meet employees' needs and the organisation's objectives.

In summary, Chapter 7 provided a rich understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in HRM and OM practices at RSR. This comprehensive analysis highlighted the importance of aligning HRM and OM to build a cohesive organisational culture and operational effectiveness, setting the stage for the recommendations provided in Chapter 8.

8. CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

8.1 Chapter Synopsis

Chapter One introduced the study's background and problem statement, focusing on the strategic role of Human Resource Management (HRM) within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in the South African railway sector. It highlighted the significance of the railway industry in South Africa's economic development and the pivotal role of the RSR in ensuring safety and compliance within the sector. The chapter discussed the historical legacy and current challenges facing the railway industry, emphasising the need for a proactive approach to HRM practices within the RSR.

It outlined the research problem, stating the lack of strategic integration of HRM practices within the RSR and its implications for operational effectiveness and compliance. Additionally, it presented research questions and objectives to explore existing HRM practices, propose a strategic HRM framework, and address challenges specific to the South African railway sector. The chapter also discussed the ethical considerations, rationale, significance, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and theoretical foundations of the study, providing a comprehensive overview of the research context and scope.

Chapter Two provided a comprehensive overview of operations management, focusing on its history, critical elements, and current practices. It reviewed the concept of operations management, its transformation over time, and the significant trends that had impacted the field. The chapter examined operations management principles, including supply chain management, performance measurement, and quality management, outlining their importance in optimising resource utilisation and ensuring efficient production or service systems.

It emphasised the integration of operations management with other business domains like supply chains, marketing, finance, and HR. It discussed the strategic design and control of production processes to meet customer demands.

Chapter Three examined the significance of the railway industry in South Africa, tracing its historical development, modern infrastructure, and diverse operations. It examined the establishment of national rail networks, the challenges faced, and the industry's transformative evolution in the 20th century.

The chapter provided a contemporary overview of South Africa's rail landscape, highlighting the interconnectedness of major cities through rail and its contribution to economic development. It discussed the role of the RSR in ensuring rail safety, compliance, and operational excellence, detailing its responsibilities, regional presence, and commitment to diversity and empowerment within the railway industry.

Chapter Four defined human resources management (HRM) from both traditional and strategic perspectives. It examines the literature reviewed for the study, articulating various human resources pillars or functional areas outlined by the South African Board of People Practice (SABPP). The chapter outlined critical elements in the HR competency model within the SABPP context. It explored the role of HRM in overall business operations, highlighting its impact on efficiency and effectiveness.

This chapter laid the foundation for constructing the study's conceptual framework by defining HRM, reviewing its history, analyse different elements, and differentiating between traditional and strategic HRM approaches. It examined the evolution of HRM, its essential functions, and its strategic role in shaping an organisation's success, particularly in employee retention and commitment.

Chapter Five outlined the research methodology adopted for the study, focusing on qualitative methods to gain in-depth insights. It discussed data collection techniques, and the sampling methods used, including semi-structured interviews . The chapter emphasised ethical considerations, ensuring participant confidentiality and data security.

It provided a detailed description of the study's geographical context, research design, and steps taken to maintain rigour and reflexivity. The chapter concluded with a summary of the methodological approach and its alignment with the study's objectives.

Chapter Six presented the development of an integrated operations management and human resource framework. It outlined the elements of the conceptual framework, emphasising the strategic alignment of HRM and operations management practices. The framework was designed to be adaptive and comprehensive, considering internal and external environmental factors influencing organisational objectives and outcomes.

The chapter provided a detailed articulation of how the framework was developed and integrated, aiming to enhance operational effectiveness and efficiency through robust HR processes.

Chapter Seven offered a comprehensive report on the qualitative analysis conducted in the study. It examined the relationships between research theory and the proposed model, dissecting conceptual frameworks with practical applications. The chapter provided valuable insights into the study's findings and implications, offering a holistic perspective on integrating HRM with operations management within the RSR. It discussed the challenges encountered during the study and presented recommendations for addressing these issues.

Chapter Eight concluded the study, summarising the key findings and providing final recommendations. It emphasised the importance of integrating strategic HRM with operations management to enhance the RSR's operational effectiveness and compliance with safety standards. The chapter discussed the study's theoretical and practical contributions, highlighting its significance for the South African railway sector.

It also outlined recommendations for future research to build on the study's findings and explore new avenues for improving HRM practices in regulatory environments.

8.2 Research Objectives Revisited

The study aimed to address the research objectives effectively. This section outlines each objective and the progress thereof.

8.2.1 Identify and analyse the key operations management principles

The primary objective of the study was to ascertain how operations management principles could be adapted to provide adequate human resources management at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). This objective was achieved through a varied dimensional approach that combined theoretical insights, empirical data collection, and practical application. The study reviewed extensive literature on operations management and HRM, identifying key principles that could enhance HRM practices. These principles were then adapted to the unique context of the RSR, ensuring alignment with its regulatory and safety requirements. By doing so, the study developed a modified HRM framework that effectively integrated operations management principles, thereby enhancing the RSR's operational efficiency and effectiveness.

8.2.2 Examine the pivotal role of human resources management

The evaluation of existing HRM practices was conducted through qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews . These methods provided detailed insights into the current HRM practices at the RSR. Participants, including management and employees, shared their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices. The analysis revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the existing HRM framework, highlighting areas that contributed positively to operational performance and those that hindered it. The evaluation process provided a comprehensive understanding of how current HRM practices impacted the RSR's ability to fulfil its mandate.

8.2.3 Identify essential components and factors crucial for the development of a comprehensive integration framework

Based on the insights gained from evaluating existing practices, the study proposed a strategic HRM framework designed to address identified challenges and enhance operational efficiency. This framework was grounded in both theoretical foundations and practical considerations. It included components such as talent acquisition and retention strategies, employee engagement initiatives, performance management systems, and mechanisms for supporting organisational change. The proposed framework was designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing for continuous improvement and alignment with the evolving needs of the RSR.

8.2.4 Develop a modified integration framework that addresses the unique regional and local dynamics

The successful integration of the proposed HRM framework required strategies that addressed potential resistance and promoted a collaborative organisational culture. The study identified key stakeholders within the RSR and emphasised the importance of their involvement in the implementation process. Comprehensive training programmes, workshops, and continuous feedback mechanisms were recommended to facilitate smooth integration. Additionally, transparent communication and engagement with employees at all levels were highlighted as crucial for fostering a collaborative environment. These strategies aimed to ensure that the new HRM framework was effectively adopted and supported by all members of the organisation.

8.2.5 Provide an in-depth analysis of the railway sector in South Africa

Recognising the unique regional and local dynamics of the South African railway sector, the study modified the HRM framework to address specific challenges and

leverage local opportunities. This involved thoroughly analysing regional variations in infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and economic conditions.

The modified integrated framework incorporated regional best practices and addressed local issues identified during the research. By doing so, the study ensured that the proposed HRM framework was theoretically sound, practically relevant, and effective in the specific context of the RSR. A thorough review of existing literature on operations management and HRM provided a strong theoretical foundation for the study. This review identified key principles and best practices that could be adapted to the RSR's context. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather detailed data from RSR employees and management.

This empirical data provided valuable insights into the current HRM practices and highlighted areas for improvement. The proposed HRM framework was developed based on both theoretical insights and empirical data. It included specific components designed to enhance talent acquisition, retention, employee engagement, and performance management. The study developed a strategic plan for implementing the HRM framework. This plan included detailed strategies for addressing potential resistance, fostering collaboration, and ensuring smooth integration of the new practices.

8.2.6 Investigate the correlation between the strategic incorporation of specific operations management principles and the enhancement of human resources management effectiveness

The HRM framework was modified to address the unique regional and local dynamics of the South African railway sector. This involved incorporating regional best practices and addressing specific challenges identified during the research. The study successfully developed a strategic HRM framework modified to the RSR by systematically addressing each research objective. This framework integrated key operations management principles, enhancing the RSR's operational effectiveness and compliance with safety standards. The comprehensive approach, combining

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theoretical insights with empirical data and practical considerations, ensured the study's objectives were effectively achieved. The proposed HRM framework promises to improve HRM practices within the RSR, contributing to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the South African railway sector.

8.3 Methodological Conclusion

The methodological approach of this study was grounded in qualitative research methods, which provided in-depth insights into the integration of human resource management (HRM) and operations management principles at the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR). The study employed semi-structured interviews to gather detailed and varied data from participants, including RSR management and employees. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of existing HRM practices and their impact on operational effectiveness.

The qualitative data collection methods were chosen for their ability to capture the complexity and context-specific details that quantitative methods might overlook. The interviews facilitated open-ended discussions, enabling participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for improvement. The self-administered interview guide complemented the interviews by providing structured responses to specific questions, ensuring that key areas of interest were systematically covered.

The methodological rigour was maintained through several strategies:

- **Sampling:** A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who were knowledgeable about the HRM practices and operational processes at the RSR.
- **Ethical Considerations:** The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality and informed consent. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant research ethics committee.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes within the qualitative data. This method allowed for a detailed

examination of the relationships between HRM practices and operational outcomes.

Overall, the methodological approach provided rich, contextualised data that informed the development of a modified HRM framework for the RSR. The findings demonstrated the value of integrating qualitative insights with theoretical and practical considerations to enhance HRM practices in a regulatory environment.

8.3.1 Further Quantitative Analysis

While the primary methodological approach of the study was qualitative, the research also highlighted the potential benefits of incorporating further quantitative analysis to validate and expand upon the findings. Quantitative methods could provide additional insights and enhance the robustness of the proposed integrated framework.

Further quantitative analysis could include:

- **Surveys:** Administering large-scale surveys to a broader sample of RSR employees and stakeholders to quantify perceptions of HRM practices and their impact on operational efficiency.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Employing statistical techniques to analyse survey data, identifying significant correlations and causal relationships between HRM practices and key performance indicators such as employee satisfaction, productivity, and compliance with safety standards.
- **Benchmarking:** Comparing the RSR's HRM practices and performance metrics with those of similar organisations in the railway sector or other regulatory bodies to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

By integrating quantitative analysis, future research could provide more generalisable findings and offer a stronger evidence base for the proposed integrated framework. This mixed-methods approach would ensure a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices, operations management, and their impact on organisational outcomes.

8.3.2 Time constraints

The study faced several time constraints that impacted the depth and breadth of data collection and analysis. One significant limitation was the restricted timeframe available for conducting interviews, which may have limited the number of participants, and the comprehensiveness of the data collected. Additionally, scheduling interviews and obtaining responses from busy RSR employees and management posed challenges, potentially affecting the representativeness of the sample. The limited availability of participants made it difficult to gather as much detailed information as initially desired.

The time allocated for analysing the qualitative data and integrating the findings into a coherent framework was constrained. This necessitated a focused and efficient approach to data analysis, which may have limited the opportunity for a more extensive and detailed examination of the data. Despite these time constraints, the study successfully achieved its primary and secondary objectives by employing a systematic and rigorous methodological approach.

However, future research could benefit from extended timelines to allow for more extensive data collection and analysis. This would enable deeper exploration of HRM practices and their impact on operational effectiveness, thereby providing further insights to refine and enhance the proposed integrated framework.

8.4 Conclusion

The study explored the integration of human resource management (HRM) and operations management principles within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), with the primary objective of enhancing operational effectiveness and compliance with safety standards. The study successfully addressed its research objectives through a

comprehensive review of the literature, empirical data collection, and the development of a modified integrated framework.

The research outlined the critical role that strategic HRM plays in regulatory environments, particularly within the dynamic and safety-critical context of the South African railway sector. The findings revealed that existing HRM practices at the RSR had strengths and areas for improvement. The study further outlined some of the selected operations management principles and the role they play in the integration of the two functions to allow for effectiveness and efficiency in the organisation. The proposed integrated framework, grounded in theoretical insights and practical considerations, aimed to address these challenges by enhancing functions and approaches undertaken by the organisation. This includes aspects such as communication, monitoring and evaluation, training and development, and change management.

The study's methodological approach, which primarily employed qualitative methods, provided rich, contextualised data that informed the development of the HRM framework. Semi-structured interviews facilitated in-depth insights into the perceptions and experiences of RSR employees and management. Despite time constraints and the challenges associated with participant availability, the data collected offered a comprehensive understanding of the impact of HRM practices on operational effectiveness.

One of the significant contributions of the study was the development of a tailored, integrated HRM framework, which incorporated operations management principles adapted to the specific needs of the RSR. This framework was designed to be flexible and adaptive, considering the unique regional and local dynamics of the South African railway sector. By aligning HRM practices with the regulatory and operational requirements of the RSR, the framework aimed to enhance safety, efficiency, and overall organisational performance.

The study also highlighted the potential benefits of further quantitative analysis to validate and expand upon the findings. Incorporating quantitative methods, such as

large-scale surveys and statistical analysis, could provide additional insights and enhance the robustness of the proposed HRM framework. Future research should consider a mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices and their impact on organisational outcomes.

In conclusion, the study successfully achieved its primary and secondary objectives, providing valuable theoretical and practical contributions to the field of strategic HRM within regulatory bodies. The proposed integrated HRM framework promises to improve HRM practices at the RSR, contributing to enhanced operational effectiveness, safety compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction. The study offers a robust foundation for improving HRM practices within the South African railway sector and beyond by addressing existing challenges and proposing actionable strategies. Future research should build on these findings, exploring new avenues for enhancing HRM practices and ensuring continuous improvement in regulatory environments.

8.5 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to human resource management (HRM) within regulatory environments, particularly in the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in South Africa. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, the research advances our understanding of how strategic HRM, and the integration of selected operations management principles can enhance operational effectiveness and compliance in regulatory bodies.

The study uniquely integrates Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Resource-Based View (RBV), Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, Governance Theory, and the HR Business Partner model to provide a comprehensive framework for analysing HRM practices in a regulatory context. This multi-theoretical approach offers a more holistic understanding of the interplay between HRM practices and organisational effectiveness, moving beyond traditional single-theory analyses. The study contributes to Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) literature by demonstrating how HRM practices can strategically align with organisational goals to

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enhance performance and compliance. It emphasises the importance of viewing HRM as a strategic partner rather than a mere administrative function, highlighting the critical role of HRM in achieving regulatory objectives and operational excellence.

The application of RBV in this study highlights the strategic value of human resources as a source of competitive advantage. The research shows that effective human capital management can significantly enhance the capabilities and performance of regulatory bodies like the RSR. This contribution enriches RBV literature by extending its application to the regulatory sector, where human resources are crucial for maintaining safety and compliance standards. By incorporating Stakeholder Theory, the study highlights the importance of considering the interests and perspectives of various stakeholders in HRM practices. This approach ensures that HRM frameworks are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all relevant parties, including employees, trade unions, and regulatory authorities. This contribution broadens the scope of Stakeholder Theory in HRM literature, emphasising its relevance in regulatory environments.

The study's application of Institutional Theory provides insights into how external regulatory pressures, industry norms, and societal expectations shape HRM practices within the RSR. This theoretical contribution enhances our understanding of the importance of institutional alignment for maintaining organisational legitimacy and effectiveness.

It also highlights the importance of incorporating institutional considerations into HRM frameworks to ensure compliance and operational effectiveness. The integration of Governance Theory into the HRM framework highlights the importance of ethical standards, transparency, and accountability in HRM practices. This theoretical contribution stresses the role of governance processes in fostering a culture of accountability and trust within regulatory bodies. It provides a foundation for developing HRM practices that are not only effective but also ethical and transparent.

The study's comprehensive theoretical framework offers a multidimensional analysis of HRM practices, selected operations management principles, and their impact on

organisational effectiveness in regulatory bodies. Drawing on multiple theories, the research provides a robust foundation for understanding the strategic integration of HRM and operations management. This theoretical contribution addresses gaps in existing literature and provides valuable insights for future research on strategic HRM in regulatory environments.

In conclusion, this study makes significant theoretical contributions by integrating multiple perspectives to analyse and enhance HRM practices in regulatory bodies. The proposed integrated framework, grounded in these theoretical insights, promises to improve operational efficiency, compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction at the RSR. These contributions advance our understanding of strategic HRM and provide a valuable foundation for future research.

8.6 Practical Contribution

This study makes substantial practical contributions to the field of human resource management (HRM) and Operations Management (OM) within regulatory environments, particularly in the context of the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in South Africa. By proposing an integrated HRM framework modified to the unique needs of the RSR, the study offers actionable insights and practical solutions to enhance operational efficiency, safety compliance, and overall organisational effectiveness.

8.6.1 Development of a Modified HRM Framework

One of the most significant practical contributions of this study is the development of a modified integrated HRM framework explicitly designed for the RSR. This framework integrates key operations management principles with HRM practices, addressing the specific challenges and requirements of the railway regulatory sector. It provides a structured approach for enhancing HR practices such as talent acquisition, employee

engagement, performance management, and change management. The framework aims to improve the RSR's operational efficiency and effectiveness by aligning HRM practices with organisational objectives.

8.6.2 Improved Employee Engagement and Performance Management

The framework provides practical recommendations for enhancing employee engagement and performance management. The RSR can create a more motivated and productive workforce by adopting these practices. The study recommends implementing regular performance appraisals, feedback mechanisms, and recognition programs to acknowledge and reward employee contributions. These initiatives aim to improve job satisfaction, boost morale, and drive higher levels of performance across the organisation.

8.6.3 Support for Organisational Change and Development

The study offers practical insights into managing organisational change and development. The proposed HRM framework includes strategies for effectively communicating and implementing change initiatives, addressing potential resistance, and fostering a collaborative organisational culture. By following these recommendations, the RSR can navigate changes more smoothly, ensuring employees are engaged and supportive of new initiatives. This approach is crucial for maintaining operational continuity and achieving long-term strategic goals.

8.7 Practical Recommendations for Implementation

The study offers detailed practical recommendations for implementing the integrated HRM framework. These recommendations include specific steps for integrating the framework into the RSR's existing structures and processes. The study emphasises

the importance of stakeholder involvement, transparent communication, and continuous feedback throughout the implementation process. Following these practical guidelines, the RSR can ensure the successful adoption and integration of new HRM practices, leading to improved organisational performance and regulatory compliance.

8.7.1 Contribution to Policy and Decision-Making

The practical insights provided by this study can inform policy and decision-making within the RSR and other regulatory bodies. The proposed integrated HRM framework offers a structured approach for enhancing HRM practices, which policymakers and administrators can adopt to improve regulatory effectiveness and operational efficiency. The study provides valuable guidance for developing policies that support strategic HRM and operational excellence by translating research findings into actionable recommendations.

In conclusion, this study makes significant practical contributions by developing and proposing a modified HRM framework for the RSR. The framework addresses key areas such as talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, and change management, offering practical solutions to enhance operational efficiency and compliance. By providing actionable insights and detailed implementation guidelines, the study equips the RSR with the tools needed to improve HRM practices and achieve its regulatory objectives. These practical contributions benefit the RSR and provide valuable insights for other regulatory bodies seeking to enhance their HRM practices.

8.8 Recommendation for Future Research

The findings and contributions of this study highlight several areas where future research could further enhance our understanding of strategic human resource management (HRM) and selected operations management (OM) principles within

regulatory environments, particularly in the railway sector. The following recommendations are proposed for future research:

8.8.1 Longitudinal Studies

Future research should consider conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of the proposed integrated HRM framework on the RSR's performance. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into how HRM practices evolve and their sustained impact on operational effectiveness, safety compliance, and employee satisfaction. This approach would allow researchers to track changes and improvements, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the framework's effectiveness.

8.8.2 Comparative Studies

Comparative studies between different regulatory bodies within the railway sector or other similar industries could identify best practices and common challenges in HRM and OM. By comparing the HRM practices and performance metrics of the RSR with those of other regulatory organisations, researchers can gain insights into successful strategies and areas for improvement. Such comparative analyses can help refine the proposed integrated HRM framework and make it more universally applicable.

8.8.3 Role of Technology and Innovation

Exploring the role of technology and innovation in enhancing HRM and operations management within the railway sector would be a valuable avenue for future research. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced data analytics can significantly impact HRM practices, from recruitment and performance management to employee engagement and training. Future research could investigate

how these technologies can be integrated into HRM frameworks to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

8.8.4 Employee Well-being and Work-life Balance

Future research should also focus on the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being and work-life balance within regulatory environments. Understanding how HRM strategies influence employee health, satisfaction, and overall well-being can provide insights into creating a more supportive and productive work environment. Research in this area can help develop HRM practices that promote operational efficiency and the holistic well-being of employees.

8.8.5 Diversity and Inclusion

Investigating the role of diversity and inclusion in HRM practices within regulatory bodies is another important area for future research. Understanding how diverse and inclusive HRM practices can enhance organisational performance, innovation, and employee engagement is crucial. Future studies could explore strategies for fostering diversity and inclusion within the RSR and other regulatory organisations, examining their impact on overall effectiveness and compliance.

8.8.6 Impact of External Factors

Future research should consider the impact of external factors such as economic conditions, regulatory changes, and societal expectations on HRM practices and operations management principles in regulatory environments. Examining how these external factors influence HRM strategies and OM, and their effectiveness can provide a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by regulatory bodies.

This research can inform the development of more resilient and adaptive integrated HRM frameworks.

8.8.7 Mixed-Methods Approaches

Adopting mixed methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative research methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding of HRM practices and their impact. Future research could employ large-scale surveys, statistical analyses, and case studies to complement qualitative insights, ensuring a robust and multi-faceted analysis of HRM practices within regulatory environments.

8.8.8 Policy Implications

Research on the policy implications of strategic HRM practices within regulatory bodies can offer valuable guidance for policymakers. Future studies could explore how HRM frameworks can inform policy development and implementation, contributing to more effective regulatory practices and improved organisational performance. This research can bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing actionable recommendations for policymakers.

In conclusion, future research in these areas can build on the findings and contributions of this study, providing deeper insights into strategic HRM practices and the integration of selected operations management principles within regulatory environments. By exploring these recommended areas, researchers can further enhance our understanding of how HRM can contribute to operational effectiveness, regulatory compliance, and overall organisational success in the railway sector and beyond.

8.9 Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges that the sample selection process may present limitations due to time constraints and access to specific individuals within the RSR. The limited sample size may affect the generalisability of findings to the entire organisation.

The reliance on self-reported data through interviews and surveys may introduce the potential for response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable answers. Additionally, the study is limited to the availability and accuracy of existing organisational data, which may be subject to variations.

The study recognises that organisational dynamics, including changes in leadership, policies, or external factors, may impact the interpretation and applicability of research findings over time.

The study's constraints could be resource limitations, including time and financial constraints, which may affect the depth and breadth of data collection and analysis. The study's findings and proposed HRM framework are specific to the RSR and the South African railway sector. Generalising these findings to other regulatory bodies or industries may require caution due to each context's unique characteristics and challenges. Acknowledging these limitations enhances the reliability and validity of its findings, providing a transparent account of the potential constraints that may influence the interpretation and application of research results.

8.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has effectively outlined the core elements of the study, offering a detailed analysis of how the research objectives were achieved and the significant contributions made to both theoretical and practical aspects of human resource management (HRM) and operations management (OM) within regulatory environments, particularly in the context of the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in South Africa. The methodological approach, grounded primarily in qualitative research, provided deep insights into

existing HRM practices, selected OM principles and their impact on the RSR's operational effectiveness. Through semi-structured interviews, the study gathered rich, contextualised data crucial in developing a modified integrated HRM framework. Despite the time constraints and challenges in participant availability, the research methodology was robust, ensuring the study's objectives were met.

The proposed HRM framework integrates selected operations management principles with HRM practices, addressing specific challenges faced by the RSR. This framework is designed to enhance talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, and organisational change, ensuring that HRM practices are strategically aligned with the RSR's goals. The framework's adaptability to the unique South African railway sector ensures its practical relevance and effectiveness.

The study's theoretical contributions are substantial. It incorporates perspectives from Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), the Resource-Based View (RBV), Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, Governance Theory, and the HR Business Partner model. This integration provides a comprehensive and unique understanding of HRM practices within regulatory bodies, advancing scholarly knowledge and offering a robust foundation for future research.

On the practical side, the study provides actionable insights and detailed recommendations for implementing the integrated HRM framework within the RSR. These recommendations are aimed at improving operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction by enhancing HRM practices. The integrated HRM framework developed through this study promises to foster a more engaged and productive workforce, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the RSR.

The chapter has outlined several key areas for future research, including longitudinal studies, comparative analyses, and the exploration of technology's role in HRM. Additionally, research into employee well-being, diversity and inclusion, and the impact of external factors will further enhance the understanding and application of HRM practices in regulatory environments.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the study's achievements and contributions. By addressing the research objectives and integrating both theoretical and practical insights, the study has developed an integrated HRM framework that promises to enhance the RSR's operational effectiveness and compliance. The recommendations for future research highlight the ongoing need for exploration and development in this field, ensuring that HRM practices continue to evolve and improve in regulatory environments.

8.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive articulation of the study's key elements, focusing on the theoretical and practical contributions, the achievement of research objectives, and recommendations for future research. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, the study has developed an integrated framework for understanding the strategic role of human resource management (HRM) and operations management within the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) in South Africa. The research has outlined the importance of aligning HRM practices with organisational goals to enhance operational efficiency, safety compliance, and overall effectiveness.

The methodological approach employed in this study, primarily qualitative, allowed for in-depth insights into the existing HRM practices and their impact on the RSR's performance. Through semi-structured interviews, the study gathered rich, contextualised data that informed the development of a modified integrated HRM framework. Despite time constraints and challenges related to participant availability, the study successfully achieved its primary and secondary objectives. The proposed integrated HRM framework addresses key areas such as talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, and change management, providing practical solutions to enhance the RSR's operational efficiency and effectiveness. The framework is designed to be flexible and adaptive, considering the unique dynamics of the South African railway sector.

The study's theoretical contributions include integrating Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Resource-Based View (RBV), Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, Governance Theory, and the HR Business Partner model. These contributions offer a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices and selected operations management principles in regulatory environments, advancing scholarly knowledge and providing a foundation for future research.

Practical contributions of the study include actionable insights and detailed recommendations for implementing the integrated HRM framework within the RSR. The proposed strategies aim to enhance talent acquisition, employee engagement, and performance management, fostering a collaborative and supportive organisational culture.

Recommendations for future research highlight the need for longitudinal studies, comparative analyses, and the exploration of technology's role in HRM. Future research should focus on employee well-being, diversity and inclusion, the impact of external factors, mixed methods approaches, and policy implications to further enhance the understanding and effectiveness of HRM practices in regulatory environments.

In conclusion, this chapter has unpacked the study's key findings and contributions, providing a comprehensive overview of how the research objectives were achieved and outlining recommendations for future research. The proposed integrated HRM framework offers a robust foundation for improving HRM practices within the RSR, contributing to enhanced operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder satisfaction in the South African railway sector and beyond.

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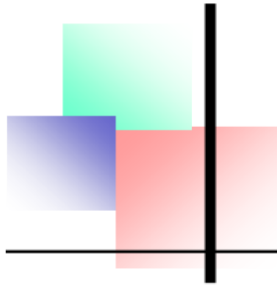
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