Investigating Employee Performance for Improved Learning Curve in the South African Construction Industry

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Abstract. Employee performance is one of the most critical factors that have an impact on organisational success. The quality and characteristics of an employee in the organisation are important attributes for success. It is not possible for an organisation to attain its goals and objectives without employees. Most construction projects in South Africa face several problems, including poor project performance and poor-quality project delivery, among others. These problems are mainly a result of a failure in employee performance. Improving employee's performance is key to its success in delivering completed projects on schedule. The study is mainly a literature review/survey on the effects of employee turnover, the various ways to enhance employee performance, factors affecting employee performance, and the measures to improve employee performance.

Keywords: performance, employee, employee performance.

1. Introduction

The South African construction industry faces several problems and challenges, such as poor performance of construction projects (Omran, Abdalrahman and Pakir, 2012:55 and Sibiya, 2015:1). A construction project’s success depends on its performance, which is measured based on timely completion, within the budget, required quality standard and customer satisfaction. Improving an employee’s performance is key to its success in delivering completed projects on schedule (Sadraei, 2019:2). The organization attains its goals by combining the employee’s expertise and skills when performing an action that results in the organization’s outcomes and improving productivity. Improved organizational performance indicates all the employee’s efforts,
skills, and capabilities to attain organizational goals (Dakhoul, 2018:12). For employees to perform according to the required corporate standards, it is essential for management to understand the employees' needs (Francis, 2018:3). Hence, the study investigates employee performance in South Africa's construction projects to help critical players in the construction industry overcome performance problems and improve employee performance in the South African construction industry. The study also explored the causes of poor employee performance in the South African construction industry.

2. Literature Review
Zhang (2012:16) defines employee performance as the record of the results achieved by the employee. Omran (2016:14) further describes employee performance as the level and quality of an effort. Cooperation, commitment, lateness, compliance with standard shown by an individual, and describes it as employee effort to do their best ability to achieve their work goals, resulting in good outcome and behaviour. Employee performance of great importance, and it is the core of the organisation's productivity. Companies' success relies on employee performance; hence employee performance is vital (Sadraei, 2019:3). Moreover, the organisation's goals are attained by combining employees' expertise and skills when performing an action that results in the organisation's outcomes and improving productivity. Improved organisational performance indicates all the employee's efforts, skills, and capabilities to attain organisational goals (Dakhoul, 2018:12). For employees to perform according to the required corporate standards, management needs to understand the employees' needs (Francis, 2018:3). Employees' performance indicates the organisation's level of competence and the individual's productivity towards organisational goal achievement. Organisations have realised that set goals cannot be achieved unless employees' performance is above board. Therefore, enhancing employee output is essential to accomplish organisational goals and increase organisational productivity (Tamunomiebi and Oyibo, 2020:2). Employee performance is measured through employee evaluations done annually, quarterly, semi-annually, depending on the organisation. (Francis, 2018:3 and Akinbowale, Lourens, and Jinabhai, 2014:345). Nandy (2016:2), Agrees that for an organisation to achieve its set goals, employee performance must be monitored or measured regularly.

2.1 Causes of poor employee performance
According to Amoah, Ahadzie, and Dansoh (2011:45), the causes of poor employee performance in the construction industry are many. Some of the elements are the unavailability of training proprietors and technicians, inability to delegate responsibility. Omran, Abdalrahman and Pakir (2012:61) outline the following as the factors affecting employee performance; adequacy of design and specification, cost progress monitoring, leadership skill of project team leader, adaptability to changes in a project plan, solving problems skill of project team leader, consultant's commitment to ensure construction work, according to specifications, team leader's responsibility to meet cost, time and quality, project team leader's working relationship with others, and unavailability of information.

2.1.1 Communication
Olanrewaju, Tan, and Kwan (2017:763) identified poor communication as the primary cause of poor employee performance in the Malaysian construction sector. Most construction disputes arise due to inadequate communication among the team members or stakeholders; therefore, communication is considered strategic. Adequate communication during the design stage is of
utmost importance because poor communication leads to delays. Communication is one of the most important processes of transferring information in any construction project. Poor communication has become a common problem among construction stakeholders. Poor communication negatively affects aspects that are important for the success of a project, such as a timeframe, employee performance resulting in time and cost overruns and ultimately leading to the project's failure (Hussain, Othman, Gabr, and Aziz, 2018:2).

2.1.2 Motivation

Employee motivation is an essential factor for employee performance, lack of motivation results in poor performance, among other things. Lack of recognition of employee good performance is demotivating, and as a result, the employee performance is badly affected (Muze, 2014:2). Bala lawal (2018:11) further adds that employee motivation can be achieved by understanding and acknowledging employees' needs, feelings, wants, and boosting their work abilities. When adequate measures are taken towards motivating employees, there is an increase in performance.

2.1.3 Lack of Resources

When an employee lacks the time, money, personnel, or supplies to complete a task, it affects completing the task at hand. Lack of resource is a great contributor to poor employee performance (Barr 2015). According to Mashwama and Aigbavboa (2019:112), failure to plan for resources in time or failure to scrutinise the work tasks or activities contributes to poor employee performance. Improper equipment selection and faulty equipment affect the employee's performance.

2.1.4 Skills

Performance problems include the lack of required skills. This might be the result of an employee promoted or an employee assigned new job duties (Talyor 2015). Mashwama and Aigbavboa (2019:111) urge that low skill levels among employees cause poor performance in a construction project. Unskilled employees' employment on a site project hinders the proper execution of work. Which leads to error or mistakes resulting in poor project performance. Also affecting the project specification and standards (Prokopet 2017).

2.1.5 Working Environment

Bushiri (2014:1) states that the working environment plays a crucial role in employee performance. Furthermore, the low working environment contributes to poor employee performance immensely. It can either have a negative or a positive consequence. According to Abrey and Smallwood (2014:429), Poor site conditions contribute to time delays. Because poor site conditions are a source of complications and unsafe working sites, which impose Health &Safety risks, an increased likelihood of incident accidents occurring, causing time delays.

2.1.6 Job Satisfaction

It is found that employees with higher levels of job satisfaction are physically and mentally fit, but employees who are dissatisfied with their job are often frustrated and uncertain. Job satisfaction is one of the most crucial factors for organisational behaviour because each organisation has specific goals representing the existential philosophy (Abdulkhalilq and Mohammadali, 2019:164). In conclusion, a satisfied employee is a happy employee, and a happy employee is an excellent performing employee (Alromaihi, Alshomaly, and George, 2017:4).
3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted as a systematic/narrative literature review on employee turnover’s impact on employee performance. The literature review was conducted from a collection of existing resources the library, online journal articles, hard-copy journal articles, textbooks, and conference papers published and unpublished. The study is a literature review on the effects of employee turnover on employee performance. A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. Mohajan (2018:2) state that qualitative research is suitable for a study that does not include statistical analysis and empirical calculation. Therefore, making it ideal for this study is part of a master’s thesis at a questionnaire distribution stage.

4. Lesson Learned

There are many causes of poor employee performance in the construction industry. Proper communication in any project because inadequate communication is one of the contributing factors of poor employee performance. A Healthy & Safety working environment is crucial for employee performance. Job satisfaction is one of the most crucial factors for organisational success because a satisfied employee is a happy employee, and a happy employee is an excellent performing employee.

5. Conclusion

The South African construction industry faces several problems and challenges, such as poor performance of construction projects. Companies’ success relies on employee performance; hence employee performance is vital. The organisation’s goals are attained by combining employees' expertise and skills when performing an action that results in the organisation’s outcomes and improving productivity. Improved organisational performance indicates all the employee's efforts, skills, and capabilities to attain organisational goals. The causes of poor employee performance in the construction industry are many. Some of the elements are the unavailability of training proprietors and technicians, inability to delegate responsibility. The causes of poor employee performance including lack of inadequate communication, lack of motivation and lack of resources. The work environment plays a crucial role in employee performance, poor site conditions contribute to time delays. Because poor site conditions are a source of complications and unsafe working sites, which impose Health & Safety risks, an increased likelihood of incident accidents occurring, causing time delays. Job satisfaction is another factor causing poor employee performance, an unsatisfied employee is an unhappy employee, which results in the employee performing poorly.

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