

# Factors influencing the performance of call centre employees

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## **Abstract**

When looking at factors that influence the performance of call centre employees there are many that can have an effect. The key is to identify the ones that can be managed by the employer and that can be utilized in order to be an advantage to the company. At first a comprehensive literature review was completed in order to establish these factors and next these factors were grouped in four main groups namely: system, employee, managerial and performance measurement factors.

The objective of this study was to identify the factors that influence performance of call centre agents. A questionnaire was compiled to test the different factors under four main themes, and then to compare the two sections of the questionnaire that deal with the expectation and the experience of the said employee.

A debt collecting company in Johannesburg was used in order to complete this research and the finding was that the following factors need to be looked at and addressed in great detail, ie the employee factors and managerial factors.

**Key Words: staff turnover, motivation, job satisfaction, incentives, repetitiveness, performance**

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## **Abbreviations and Definitions:**

**PA:** Performance Appraisal

The performance appraisal is the system that is used to evaluate the performance of all the employees within the company. This is done through a manual system where the person doing the rating evaluates the employee based on Key Performance indicators.

## **Chapter 1: Research Proposal**

Chapter one comprises the proposal for this study.

## **Chapter 1: Research Proposal**

### **Factors influencing performance of call centre employees**

**Key Words:** staff turnover, motivation, job satisfaction, incentives, repetitiveness, performance

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The call centre environment is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally (Abraham, 2008: 198). According to Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2003: 5) about two thirds of customer interaction takes place through call centres and most companies create and re-enforce relationships with clients through call centres (Batt and Moynihan, 2002: 16). Many companies in the South African context have outsourced their call centre functions. The problem that arises with outsourcing is the fact that the quality of service, thus the performance of the call centre agents, is difficult to manage. In the context of this study it can be managed if the correct Key Performance Areas are identified. The key performance indicators will indicate expected performance.

According to Abraham, (2008: 198) a fair amount of literature exists in respect of motivation and organisational factors, the impact employees' moods can have, job satisfaction, and the hygiene factors and how these aspects are connected to the staff turnover of a company. Research done so far does not show sufficiently yet the link between these factors and performance, thus the purpose of this study will be to further prove the link to which factors influence performance in a call centre environment.

##### **1.1 .1 Motivation and Performance**

Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005: 930-932) specify that much of the research started in the 1960s and 1970s when the attention turned to influencing employee behaviour, and that a lot of the recent work is focussed on the psychological aspects, with theories covering expectancy, equity, goal setting and reinforcement theories. Their studies were to authenticate Herzberg's two-factor theory, which proposed that two factors influenced motivation at work:

1. That hygiene factors (such as company policy and administration, technical and interpersonal supervision, financial reward and working conditions) acted as motivators when applicable, but could only motivate to a certain extent – and had the opposite effect (de-motivated) on employees when they were unsuitable, and

2. That motivators to endure effort went beyond hygiene factors, such as a sense of achievement, recognition, the work itself, the opportunity to take responsibility and prospects for advancement. The proposed research suggests that motivation alone does not guarantee that the motivated employee will perform well. This research intends exploring deeper than identifying motivators to link them to actual performance data for the research respondents.

According to Robinson and Morley (2006: 290-294), call centres are defined by telephone and visual display unit technologies, along with interactive voice response (IVR). Calls are distributed automatically to agents and sophisticated telephony systems provide an infinite collection of statistics, which form the basis of call centre metrics and individual work performance measures. Work performance measures that are looked at include the number of calls handled by each agent, adherence to schedules, time taken to wrap up after calls (thus after the call centre agent has finished his/her call with the customer). There is a concern that call centre managers are managing productivity over service quality because of the readily available system data.

### **1.1.2 Job satisfaction**

The critical aspect with job satisfaction is to understand how the effort put into the individuals job effects the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction (Christen, Iyer, and Soberman, 2006: 138). Job satisfaction links into the customer service satisfaction (Emery and Barker, 2007: 80). Taylor and Bain (1999: 104) are well-known for their definition of a call centre as an “assembly line in the head”, where the call centre agent always works under stress and is aware the whole time that when he/she finishes the current task, another one will follow immediately.

The fact that call centre agents are expected to work in a controlled environment that expects of them to give up all initiative and perform all their tasks in a specific manner as set up by their managers, thus they experience low quality and “Tayloristic” principles (Gorjup, Valverde and Ryan, 2008: 50 - 52). According to Holman (2003: 30) there are certain aspects of the job itself that should be looked at that can improve job satisfaction, and they include task identity (having a whole piece of work to do), having variety in their jobs, autonomy and receiving constant feedback.

The fact that call centres experience high staff turnover can be the cause that there is a lack of career growth as the call centre agents do not stay long enough with the organisation to be promoted, whereas call centre agents that go for job specific training are less likely to resign in a specific organisation to go and work at another (Sieben and de Grip, 2004: 258). This link is very important to retain high performing agents if the high performance is linked to job satisfaction and training. According to Robinson and Morley (2006: 290), there a lot of costs involved with a high staff turnover that can be split into direct costs (recruitment fees, training and induction) and then indirect costs (such as erosion of customer service).

Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006: 446 – 447) focus on role clarity as an aspect of job satisfaction that is important to guarantee the perceptions of frontline staff in respect of service quality. Call centre agents are the key interface between the service provider and the customer, and Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006: 446 – 447) indicate the link between poor customer satisfaction ratings with the absence of role clarity of call centre agents. They also show how the objectives of call centres to service at low cost clash with the combined objective to be customer orientated, therefore the role of the call centre agent to “go the extra mile” needs to be clarified. Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006: 446 – 447) further quote Korczynski, expressing concern that low levels of role clarity among call centre employees could have negative effects on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and service quality – important if linked to work performance.

### **1.1.3 Organisational identification / organisational commitment**

Organisational commitment can be seen as an employee's identification with a specific organisation, they share the organisation's values and beliefs, to go the extra mile for their organisation and to try to stay in the "membership" of the organisation (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979: 225).

Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, Wecking and Moltzen (2006a: 65) state that organisational identification seems to be even more important than work motivation for reducing turnover intentions or feelings of de-personalisation. They also suggest that some call centres should provide challenging work and constant opportunities for training, learning and development. Huang and Hsiao (2007: 1266) discuss the reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with job characteristics being the most important determinant of commitment. They suggest that the most important mechanism for managers to increase employees' commitment to the organisation is to re-design the job content and change in management strategy (involving increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job).

## **1.2. Problem Overview**

The factors that influence the performance of call centre employees is critical to any company, as this affects the outputs of the said company, thus it deserves the attention from the management of that company. That being said, managers do not pay special attention to these factors as they do not see the benefits of identifying these factors and establishing how these factors can be used to the advantage of the company, ie. improving the productivity of the call centre employees. The call centre environment is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally (Abraham, 2008: 198). According to Abraham (2008: 198), about two thirds of customer interaction takes place through call centres, and most companies create and re-enforce relationships with clients through call centres (Batt and Moynihan, 2002: 16).

### **1.3. Research objectives**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to determine the factors that influence performance of employees in a call centre environment within the South African context.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objective**

The specific objectives of this research is to:

- Explore the themes associated with factors influencing performance in call centre environments;
- To review the themes of factors influencing performance in a call centre environment through a literature study;
- Determine the factors influencing performance in a call centre environment;
- To determine the differences between the expectations and experience of ??

### **1.4. Research Methodology**

#### **1.4.1 Research Design**

The main focus of this proposed study is to explore the factors that influence performance of call centre employees. The proposed study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The research will be divided into two phases that would ultimately answer all the research objectives. The phases are as follows:

### **1.4.1.1 Phase 1: Qualitative research method (exploratory)**

#### **1.4.1.1.1 Research method**

The first phase of the study will use a qualitative approach to data gathering. For the purpose of this study interviews will be conducted that would assist in identifying the themes associated with the factors influencing the performance of call centre employees. This phase will be exploratory in nature due to the fact that there hasn't been much focus on this type of field.

A semi-structured interview will be used to gather information about the factors that influence the performance of call centre employees. The interviews will focus on the contents and state of the employee's feelings towards performance in their environment. From these interviews themes will be identified and confirmed by a literature review. For more information regarding the procedure and content of the interviews, refer to the interview guideline.

After the interviews have been transcribed and themes have been identified, a literature review will be conducted. The literature review will be based on the research of the relevant literature regarding the factors that influence the performance of call centre employees. This would provide an understanding of the dynamics of each construct, and how they can be linked together to form a new aspect of factors influencing performance, as well as establishing the validity of the themes identified in the interview. Primary and secondary research sources would include various publications such as textbooks, journals and previous studies related to this research topic. The databases that will be used are EBSCO host, Google Scholar and Sabinet-online. General keywords that will be used for literature search will include - but are not limited to – “staff turnover”, “motivation”, “job satisfaction”, “incentives”, “repetitiveness” and “performance”.

#### **1.4.1.1.2 Participants**

The research will be conducted at a debt collecting company in Johannesburg. The criteria for the theoretical populations will be that the candidates must be from designated and non-designated groups within South Africa and they must be employed by the debt collecting company as call centre agents. The study population will be derived from the theoretical population. A minimum of 20 interviews will be conducted (N>20) until the saturation point for information has been achieved.

#### **1.4.1.1.3 Data analysis**

In the qualitative analysis, the interviews will be transcribed by the researcher. A content analysis will be done with the transcribed data that would assist in determining the reliability and validity of the interviews. The responses from the qualitative data will be analysed by identifying the relevant efficacy items, as well as counting the number of occasions that the item emerges, in order to determine its importance. This would be achieved by coding process of the transcribed data. The interview guide will provide additional information regarding the qualitative analysis.

Phase one of research will focus on achieving the first and second specific objectives of the proposed study

#### **1.4.1.2 Phase 2: Quantitative research method (descriptive)**

A qualitative approach to data gathering would be used as part of the second phase of this research. A questionnaire, based on the structure of the Psycones Questionnaire, will be developed, based on the themes identified in the qualitative research phase. This newly developed questionnaire will be used to gather data from the participants.

Traditionally the questionnaire is comprised of three sections. The first section of the questionnaire, using Guttman scaling, focuses on the employer obligations. The second section of the questionnaire, using Likert scaling, focuses on emotions. The third section of the questionnaire, also using Likert scaling, focuses on the employee's expectations

in terms of performance. Scaling can be defined as the area of measurement that includes the formation of a measure based on a connotation of qualitative judgments regarding a construct with qualitative metric units (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008: 136). According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008: 136), Likert scaling can be defined as “the process of developing a scale in which the rating of the items is totalled to get the final scale score. Ratings are usually done using a one to five Disagree-to-Agree response format” (p.136). A Likert-type scale is usually linked to a number of statements to measure attitudes or perceptions and five-point or seven –point scales are often used (Struwig & Stead, 2004: 32).

The content of the questionnaire would include components such as biographical information, performance factors, state of the employee wellbeing as well as a component for establishing what effect perceived performance would have on staff turnover.

#### **1.4.1.2.1 Participants/Data Source**

The research will be conducted at a debt collecting company in Johannesburg. For the quantitative data gathering procedure the stratified random sampling method will be used to determine the study population. The criteria for the theoretical populations will be that the candidates must be from designated and non-designated groups within South Africa, and they must be employed by the debt collecting company as call centre agents. The study population will be derived from the theoretical population.

Phase two of the research will mainly focus on achieving the third and fourth specific objectives, as well as assisting in achieving the first and second specific objectives of the proposed study.

#### **1.4.1.2.2 Statistical analysis**

In the quantitative analysis, the statistical analysis will be carried out with the SPSS-program. Firstly factor analysis will be used to determine the validity within the questionnaire, by analysing the internal consistency between the themes identified in

the qualitative analysis. This would be achieved through a data reduction process. Secondly, descriptive statistics will be used to determine the experiences of the candidates. Descriptive statistics will provide the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) will determine the reliability of the questionnaire. According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008: 136) a questionnaire is considered reliable when the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is higher than 0.7 ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ). Further, the correlation coefficient will determine the relationship between different variables of the study. ANOVA will be used to determine the differences between the different variables.

#### **1.4.2 Ethical consideration**

A letter and research proposal will be sent to the Management team of the debt collecting company in Johannesburg requesting their approval for the research study. Once consent has been received from the Management team of such a company to proceed with the research study, I will continue with it.

#### **1.4.3 Division of Chapters**

The chapters of the proposed study will be arranged as follows:

Chapter 1: Research proposal and problem statement

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Discussion and Findings

Chapter 4: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations for future study

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The call centre environment is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally (Abraham, 2008: 199). According to Abraham (2008: 200), about two thirds of customer interaction takes place through call centres. Most companies create and re-enforce relationships with clients through call centres (Batt and Moynihan, 2002: 30). Many companies in the South African context have outsourced their call centre functions. The problem that arises with outsourcing is the fact that the quality of service, thus the performance of the call centre agents is difficult to manage. In the context of this study it can be managed if the correct Key Performance Areas are identified in terms of what performance would be expected of the specific call centre agents.

According to Abraham (2008: 200), a fair amount of literature exists in respect of motivation and organisational factors, the impact employees' moods can have, job satisfaction, and the hygiene factors and how these aspects are connected to the staff turnover of a company. Research done so far does not yet show sufficiently the link between these factors and performance, thus the purpose of this study will be to further prove the link to which factors influence performance in a call centre environment.

### **2.2 Literature review**

According to Pels (1999: 2), there are a few items to take into consideration when looking at performance in a call centre environment and the factors that influence this. The following items need to be looked at:

Does the call center simply offer access to account information and routine transactions? Is it a one-stop financial solution that also provides loan processing? Is cross-selling a strategic part of a call center agent's job? Is there an integrated voice

response system that can deliver account information and perform transactions? How integrated is the phone system with the company's database? Are agents encouraged to teach members how to use the voice-response system to complete routine transactions rather than use the call centre?

These factors can either ensure that a call is dealt with efficiently or can cause unnecessary delays if this information is not available to the call centre agent. Another way of measuring efficiencies would be to use a stop watch to measure the amount of time spent on each call, which is a more "old school" approach. That being said, if you take the average duration of phone calls, and divide that into the number of monthly calls, it does not really give you an accurate reflection of the real situation. There is also 'wrap-up' time that needs to be considered (Pels, 1999: 2).

According to Holman, Stride and Wood (2006: 103), stereo-typing call centres as the modern "sweatshop" has been outweighed by the fact that it gives an appreciation for diversity.

According to Valle., Varas, and Ruz, (2012:9940) employee turnover has been a productive ground for many studies that deal with, from a theoretical and empirical perspective, the causes of both, voluntary and involuntary turnover, as well as those that explain the tenure of employees. Particularly in call centers, employee turnover is a problem related to high turnover rates, which represents an important economic cost such as advertising, recruitment, testing, training and supervision at work to achieve, after a certain time, the employee's competence as to achieve adequate levels of productivity.

A lot of money is spent in recruiting and training people, but unfortunately, a large percentage of them leave the company before reaching some kind of reasonable performance. This can be seen as an indication that the recruitment and selection activities are not confronting or preventing the main problem: the high turnover rate. This problem results in 70% of the costs of operating a call center being related to personnel management (while a big part of that is the recruitment and training involved).

Employee turnover contributes to a high ratio of staff costs to operating costs (Valle, Varas and Ruz, 2012:9941).

Call centers represent a brilliant case of the service industry and labor of customer contacts, in which the mechanization of work has been installed as a form of “taylorism” to streamline production. Usually, this model of mass production is characterized by requiring instrumental competences, little opportunity for making decisions, and learning being limited to the repetition of tasks. In this case, it is assumed that the work is designed to be “turnover-proof”, where workers are like spare parts. From this perspective, one might assume that the management style of this model naturally attracts high turnover. In any country, the problem is exacerbated when market conditions remain competitive in the industry, resulting in the loss of many employees. The pressure to stay competitive in the industry, leads to call centers putting maximum effort into operational efficiency, using technology to centralize the calls at one location, and where labor costs are lower and resulting in more labor flexibility (Valle, Varas and Ruz, 2012: 9942).

The process should try to avoid a poor fit between the individual’s job expectations and the expectations that the organization has of the individual. The firm must pay attention and effort to the recruitment and selection process, from the perspective of where to look in relation to the skills and knowledge of the candidate, so that it can meet the requirements of the business (Stolletz and Helber (2004: 332).

Recruitment has been an important aspect of research in human resource and organizational psychology. The discovery of patterns and relationships in the personal data characteristics of people, can help to predict the behavior of individuals in terms of their performance. Research from these areas have produced important developments concerning the relationship between personality characteristics of individuals and their expectations, satisfaction and job performance (Valle, Varas and Ruz, 2012: 9941).

According to Higgs (2004: 443), personal skills and resilience are key regarding any call centre employee’s performance . This of course ‘talks’ to the role of the emotional

intelligence of employees, and how this would in return determine the performance appraisal system from the standpoint of expectations vis-à-vis reality .

Call centers have become a critical customer access channel as well as an important source of customer-related information. Frequently, call center employees experience role stress as a result of the conflicting demands of the company, supervisors, and customers. Thus any company needs to look at the consequences of role stress in a call center setting. Specifically there needs to be a focus on the forms of empowerment and leadership styles that decrease role stress and how this subsequently effects job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and turnover intentions. It can be said that the autonomy dimension of empowerment has a role-stress-reducing effect. Job satisfaction is found to be conducive to job performance. Furthermore, it can be said that job satisfaction reduces turnover intentions, directly and indirectly via organizational commitment (de Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001: 25).

According to Holman, Chissick and Totterdell (2002: 60-65) there are many factors that affect employee wellbeing in the workplace, but one that is quite prominent is that of employee performance monitoring. Performance monitoring or performance appraisal can be defined as those practices that involve “the observation, examination and or recording of the employee’s work - related behaviour”. This is critical to any business, as it ensures that employees are made aware of whether or not they are performing up to standard . Thus in this process it is important for the employees to understand what the performance appraisal system is all about, and what the outcome is expected to be, and that they are comfortable with the process. In call centers, performance monitoring occurs through the continuous electronic monitoring of quantitative performance indicators, such as length of call, number of calls, and amount of time logged on and off the system. In addition, a call can be listened to or recorded remotely (with or without the employee’s knowledge) in order to assess its quality. Performance monitoring is thus a highly prominent and pervasive feature of everyday life in call centers. Indeed, the pervasiveness of performance monitoring in call centers has led to them being labelled as “electronic panopticans” (meaning what??: there is no such word in the

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary!!)\*\*); it also makes call centers an excellent location in which to study performance monitoring.

## **Multiculturalism**

According to Cornelius (2002: 25-30) multiculturalism brings together the variety contained within a society, ie all the cultures and attributes contained within that society. Organisations which reflect this variety, from society at large, face a particular human resources management issue (Cornelius, 2002: 25-30). An organisation can either ignore the resource it has in having a multicultural workforce or use it to its own business advantage (Cornelius, 2002: 25-30). This is in line with Madood (2013: 30 - 40) which states that the political view of its multiculturalism in the USA, includes all the cultural differences between all groups of society, and also states that no one group is better inclined than the other. Madood (2013: 30 -40) also states that in Britain multiculturalism also includes the immigrating convergence of people from all cultures. According to Madood (2013: 30 -40) multiculturalism is a form of integration and is a much needed aspect for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which forms part of our understanding of equal citizenship. The view of Madood (2013: 30 -40) is that multiculturalism is a holistic political view, that is modified to suit contemporary democratic policies. He also states that multiculturalism is not the fundamental change of one view to another but rather, finding a common view point for the relevant parties.

Three problems that surface due to cultural differences (Linnehan & Konrad : 1999: 5) are:

Lack of attention to inequality as a source of dysfunctional intergroup conflicts;

Mislabelling as cultural some intergroup differences that arise from inequality and

Regulation of members of historically excluded groups to positions that interface with their communities.

## **Prevalence of multiculturalism in the workplace**

Multiculturalism is not easy to orchestrate. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2000 stipulated the vision of the Multi-Cultural Development Program (MCDP) to be the transformation of the practice into a business that truly represents South Africa in terms of race, gender and organizational culture. It is the responsibility of the MCDP to facilitate the attainment of this vision by ensuring that the practice has relevant, credible and measurable strategies in place, (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2000).

A few steps like the Scholarship Program, Diversity Workshops, Partner Development and Reward System, Bursaries (stipends), School Visits, Individual Learning and Development Program (ILDLP) and Partner Pairing, were projects that were initialised to start this enormous transformation in organisations. (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2000)

It is important for training companies to have a culture-centered focus, and to be behaviour- focussed to shape this culture (American Psychologist, 2003).

Through training and constant involvement of employees being aware of the different cultures, and how they can be used to contribute to the company's benefit, has had a positive outcome over the past decades (American Psychologist, 2003).

In the debt-collecting environment which was analysed; consisting of a very young group of participants (who completed the questionnaires) the cultures are mixed, and they don't seem to notice any difference in the treatment of the employees due to their cultures in this service sector.

## **Characteristics of multicultural workplace**

In the view of Louw, Mayer & Baxter (2012: 46-48) the success of a diverse organisation in a complex globalised world is largely dependent on the values of managers, their life-orientation and their level of job satisfaction. Managers and employees, in a multicultural and diverse South African organisational context, need to be aware of and manage their similarities and differences in these aspects to contribute to overall organisational success.

Multiculturalism can be expressed as respect for group diversity and autonomy. A certain Oxford dictionary defines multiculturalism as the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or as a nation. (Louw, Mayer & Baxter, 2012: 44-48)

*“A multicultural workforce is one in which a wide range of cultural differences exist among the employees in the organisation. While a number of major and minor traits are used to describe cultural differences, the most common traits used to identify the level of multiculturalism evident in a given workforce often boils down to "age, sex, ethnicity, physical ability, race and sexual orientation”, according to the "Encyclopedia of Business", as quoted by Neil Kokemuller from Demand Media. This previous statement has value for situations where different people with diverse backgrounds work together in various countries worldwide.*

In conclusion the characteristics of multiculturalism in the work place can be seen as the place where people with differences due to background, values and beliefs work together and bring forth a dynamic force based on these different views, to make an organisation successful. (Louw, Mayer & Baxter, 2012: 44-48).

### **Impact of multiculturalism in the work place on employees**

The impact of multiculturalism on employees in the workplace depends on the view of leaders on this issue and the example they set for their employees to follow regarding the treatment of fellow workers. (Louw, Mayer & Baxter, 2012: 44-48)

A few advantages of multiculturalism as mentioned by Jared Lewis:-

Employees who are exposed to others' ideas and points of view will learn to think 'outside the box' when faced with a problem. When a variety of viewpoints are thrown into the problem-solving mix, new and innovative solutions can be realised.

Companies that have a culturally diverse workforce may benefit (from such diversity) because they create a workforce with a larger social network than just one ethnic group. Businesses that offer goods and services that appeal to several ethnic groups are more

likely to benefit from a multicultural workforce whose members can communicate with people in those ethnic groups.

Employees exposed to different viewpoints and cultures in the office or workplace will be more likely to practice toleration. Employees who are tolerant of different views are more likely to co-operate with one-another or reach a compromise when differences exist. This can have a profound effect on employee relations, making it possible for employees of different cultures to not only co-exist, but also thrive.

A curiosity about someone else's culture can lead to a lifelong or a short-term pursuit of learning. Knowledge of another culture will stimulate tolerance in the workplace and also encourage workers to use knowledge of other cultures when they do their jobs.

The advantages of multiculturalism makes it a worthwhile issue to incorporate in South Africa's diverse rainbow nation in the workplace.

## **Trust**

According to Burker, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas (2007: 608), throughout the ages people have been making ultimate sacrifices and attaining perceivable impossible goals for their leaders. This can be for the better or worse for mankind, such as Hitler and George W. Bush to mention a few, and these leaders have led their followers to the fiercest of battles known to man to achieve unachievable goals (Engelbrecht & Chamberlain, 2005: 4). This is not only applicable to battles (in the conflict sense of the word) but also to sporting events, where coaches have led teams to become some of the most successful teams in the world (Surujlal & Zhang, 2009: 130). The question that is begged is how do these leaders do it? Trust from the subordinates/followers can be seen as one of the prominent factors that assist these leaders in obtaining these unachievable goals. The opposite is also true in this case, and that is when there is no trust from your followers/subordinates, which can have catastrophic effects for your team (Quader, 2011: 35). There are many constructs to look at when examining an organisation, and trust is one of them that is mostly examined (Bunker, Alban, &

Lewicki, 2004: 415) and thus there is a magnitude of definitions available. Trust is mostly examined as a relatively unchanging trait and process. According to Mayer (2005: 710), trust can be defined as the willingness of a person to be vulnerable to the actions of someone else, because this 'someone else' has an expectation that the other person will ensure the best outcome for him or her, and this trust is given without being able to monitor or control the other person.

According to Burker, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas (2007: 610) trust can be categorized in three ways, namely as a trait, as an emergent state, and finally as a process.

#### Trust as a trait

A trait is defined as an individual's characteristics, which are seldom changed by the environment and remain stable over the years. Every individual has a level of trust in them that they are willing to invest in almost anybody that they deal with on a daily basis (Burker, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007: 612).

#### Trust as an emergent state

Trust can be seen as an input and a proximal outcome depending on the situation, thus it is an attitude that can develop over time (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001: 360).

Trust can be established from historic behaviour, this means that if someone lets you down in a specific way then you will not trust that person regarding that specific issue, but if that same person delivered on a promise in another aspect, then you will trust the person regarding that aspect (Burker, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007: 609).

#### Trust as a process

Trust can either weaken or re-inforce relationships, behaviours and attitudes. Normally employees are willing to openly communicate with their managers, but can be limited at times due to the information being risky (thus not having the trust in their line manager that he/she will be able to deal with it correctly) (Burker, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007: 610).

According to Chatbury, Beaty & Kriek (2011:59), there is a positive and noteworthy relationship between the amount of trust that subordinates have in their line managers and the amount of productivity that they will produce. According to Kroukamp (2008: 671), in order to build the trust relationship between the subordinate and the line manager you need to take into consideration that trust manifests itself in certain behaviours that are aligned with the individual's beliefs and feelings concerning the performance and qualities of the superiors, thus if the subordinate does not believe in his/her superiors then that would obviously constitute a lack of trust in the superiors. There are components to trust that play a role in the degree of trust and they are: competence, loyalty, consistency, openness and integrity of that of the leader. All these factors will either positively or negatively affect the degree of trust that the subordinate has in his/her line superior (Hartog, Schippers, Koopman & Paul, 2002: 32). Transformational leadership does not necessarily instil trust in subordinates, but by making use of procedural justice it can assist to gain the required trust (Kraft, Engelbrecht & Theron, 2004: 14).

According to Schlecter, Strauss, & Jacoba (2008: 45-46), inter-personal trust and its significance for sustaining individual, team and organisational effectiveness is being recognised more and more. When a team has inter-personal trust this automatically promotes an environment where the team members feel free to express their ideas when dealing with certain problems. Trust in work relationships can minimise conflict, increase organisational commitment and build loyalty from your employees. An organisation's success can depend on the degree of trust that employees have in management (Doloi, 2009: 1099).

## **2. 3 Chapter Summary**

After completing this whole literature review and identifying numerous factors that influence performance in a call centre, the decision was made to group these factors under four main factors for the purpose of the study and specifically for the questionnaire. These four factors are namely system factors, employee factors, managerial factors and performance measurement factors.

System factors comprise the following sub factors:

Time, complexity, rating levels, calibration, rating, organisation, performance, equal pay, training, seriousness, confidentiality, credibility, thus all aspects related to the performance appraisal system itself.

Employee factors comprise the following sub factors:

These factors relate to the employee subject to the performance appraisal system, and who gets rated by someone else, these factors are: knowledge of the system, commitment to the process, value of the process, guidance, trust in the company and the person who rates the system .

Managerial factors comprise the following sub- factors:

This factor deals with the individual that rates the employees, and the sub-factors are knowledge of the employee's job, objectivity, commitment, experience, people skills, quality of feedback and whether the person has been officially trained.

Performance measurement factors comprise the following sub factors:

These are the factors that relate to that of performance goals which the person doing the rating aims to achieve within the rating period, and they are: are the goals realistic, are they measurable, worth achieving and whether they are clear in terms of priority.

All the above mentioned factors were incorporated within the questionnaire that was compiled in order to establish the objectives as set out in this study.

The next chapter deals with the survey questionnaire that was completed by call centre agents at a debt collecting company in Johannesburg and will measure what factors influence performance in this environment under the themes as identified.

## **Chapter 3: Discussion and Findings**

## **Chapter 3: Discussion and findings**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the literature review that was conducted, the method that was followed and the results that were attained through the measuring instrument, and it also goes into detail regarding the measuring instrument, the target populations and the way that the data was collected. The following aspects were set out to be achieved through this study:

- Explore the themes associated with factors influencing performance in the call centre environment;
- To review the themes of factors influencing performance in the call centre environment through a literature study;
- Determine the factors influencing performance in the call centre environment;
- To determine the differences between the expectations and experience of call centre employees regarding performance factors.

The call centre environment is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally (Abraham, 2008: 199). According to Abraham (2008: 200), about two thirds of customer interaction takes place through call centres. Most companies create and re-enforce relationships with clients through call centres (Batt and Moynihan, 2002: 30). Many companies in the South African context have outsourced their call centre functions. The problem that arises with outsourcing is the fact that the quality of service, thus the performance of the call centre agents, is difficult to manage. In the context of this study it can be managed if the correct Key Performance Areas are identified in terms of what performance would be expected of the relevant call centre agents.

According to Abraham (2008: 200) a fair amount of literature exists in respect of motivation and organisational factors, the impact employees' moods can have, job satisfaction, and the hygiene factors and how these aspects are connected to the staff turnover of a company. Research done so far does not yet show sufficiently the link

between these factors and performance, thus the purpose of this study will be to further prove the link to which factors influence performance in a call centre environment.

According to Pels (1999: 2) there are a few items to take into consideration when looking at performance in a call centre environment and the factors that influence this. The following items need to be looked at:

Does the call center simply offer access to account information and routine transactions? Is it a one-stop financial solution that also provides loan processing? Is cross-selling a strategic part of a call center agent's job? Is there an integrated voice response system that can deliver account information and perform transactions? How integrated is the phone system with the companies database? Are agents encouraged to teach members how to use the voice-response system to complete routine transactions rather than use the call centre?

These factors can either ensure that a call is dealt with efficiently or can cause unnecessary delays if this information is not available to the call centre agent. Another way of measuring efficiencies would be to use a stop watch to measure the amount of time spent on each call, which is more 'old school'. That being said, if you take the average duration of the call, and divide into the number of monthly calls, it does not really give you an accurate reflection of the real situation. There is also 'wrap-up' time that needs to be considered (Pels, 1999: 2).

According to Holman, Stride and Wood (2006: 103), stereo-typing call centres as the modern sweatshop has been outweighed by the fact that it gives an appreciation for diversity. According to Schlecter, Strauss, & Jacoba (2008: 45-46), interpersonal trust and its significance for sustaining individual, team and organisational effectiveness is being recognised more and more. When a team has interpersonal trust this automatically promotes an environment where the team members feel free to express their ideas when dealing with certain problems. Trust in work relationships can minimise conflict, increase organisational commitment and build loyalty from your employees. An organisation's success can depend on the degree of trust that employees have in management (Doloi, 2009: 1099).

### **3.2 Research Instrument**

A questionnaire that was previously used for another study with similar outcomes was adapted and used in order to establish the factors that influence performance in a call centre environment (Bann, 2009), looking at the expectation versus what employees actually experience when going through a performance appraisal at their company. Then taking the information in terms of the experience, versus expectation of the employees undergoing a performance appraisal, and then identifying factors that influence performance in a call centre environment. Another part of the data that was requested from the target group was that of their gender, age, race and also level in company and department which they are defined under.

The questionnaire was designed in such a way to look at different factors that could influence the performance of a call centre agent and to ascertain how this would rank compared to other factors (expectation versus experience). The literature study was done in order to establish these factors through an extensive investigation of how they would influence performance. The questionnaire is split into Section A and Section B. Section A measures the actual experience from the employee regarding a specific factor, whereas Section B measures their expectations regarding the same factor. The questions were sorted in such a way as to ensure that an accurate and honest response was given by the respondents, this was also done in order to ensure reliability and validity.

A ten-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire in order to ensure that is a proper distinction between low and high ratings.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The target population for this study consisted of call centre employees within a debt collecting company in Johannesburg. The debt collecting company has been in business for just over 10 years, and experiences a relatively high staff turnover. The target number of employees that were chosen was 200 employees, and 121 employees completed the questionnaire fully. The questionnaire was done through the NWU online questionnaire system, the link was then sent out to all employees to be completed electronically. The questionnaire was set up in such manner that it was compulsory for all fields to be completed, thus the chance for spoiled/incomplete questionnaires was zero. The study population is the 121 call centre employees that completed the questionnaire.

### **3.4 Demographic information**

This section will deal with all the demographic information related to the study population and will give a good indication of a number of aspects regarding this. The demographic information provides a telling story of whether these factors that influence call centre performance can also be applicable to certain age, race or gender groups. It will be discussed in the following sequence: Age, Gender, Race, Years of service, and Discipline. The factors that define this population are age, gender, years in service and discipline.

Table 2 represents the split of the respondents in terms of their age category. As much as 90% of the respondents are between the age group of 20 – 30 and the balance being in the age group of 31 – 40.

#### **3.4.1 Table 1: Age**

The demographic information below is that of the age distribution of the respondents that participated in the study and from this it can be concluded ~~come to the conclusion~~

that most of the information derived is applicable to the younger age groups, and that more younger people are employed in call centre environments.

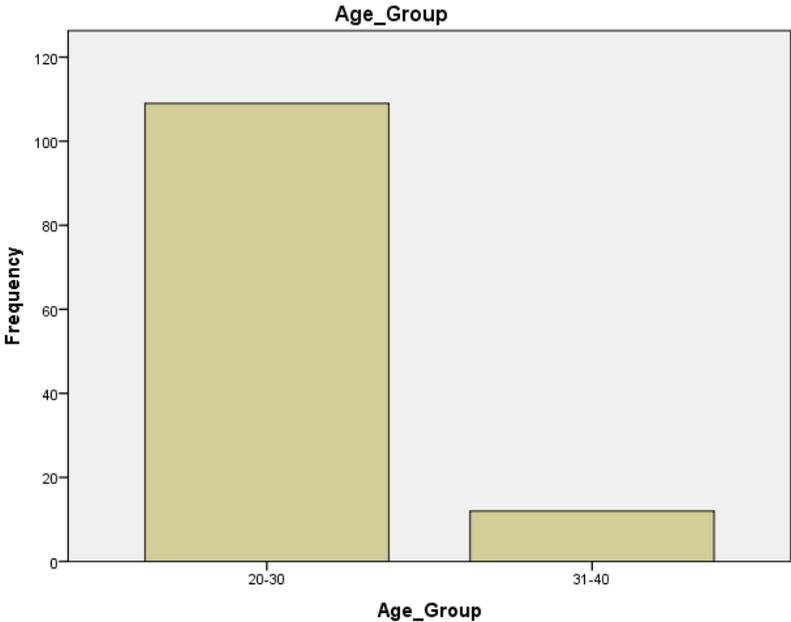


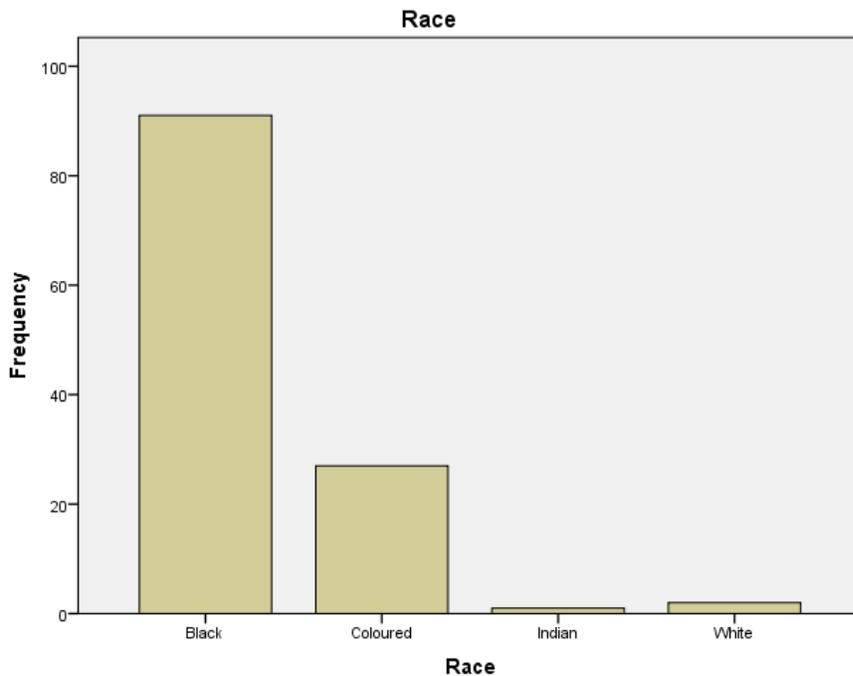
Table 2 represents the respondents split in terms of their gender into a male or female category. The gender of the respondents in Table 2 is split 76 % female and 24 % male, whereas the race groups are split 75.2 % for black, 22 % Coloured, 0.8 % Indian and 1.7 % white employees (see Table 3).

**3.4.2 Table 2: Gender**

| Gender |        |           |         |               |                    |
|--------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|        |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid  | Female | 92        | 76,0    | 76,0          | 76,0               |
|        | Male   | 29        | 24,0    | 24,0          | 100,0              |
|        | Total  | 121       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

### 3.4.3 Table 3: Race

This table indicates the race differentiation between all the respondents at the company, thus who is white, who is black etc. This table provides a clear picture in terms of the distribution of the races within this company, thus it can be said that the factors that have been identified through this study are more applicable to that of black respondents.



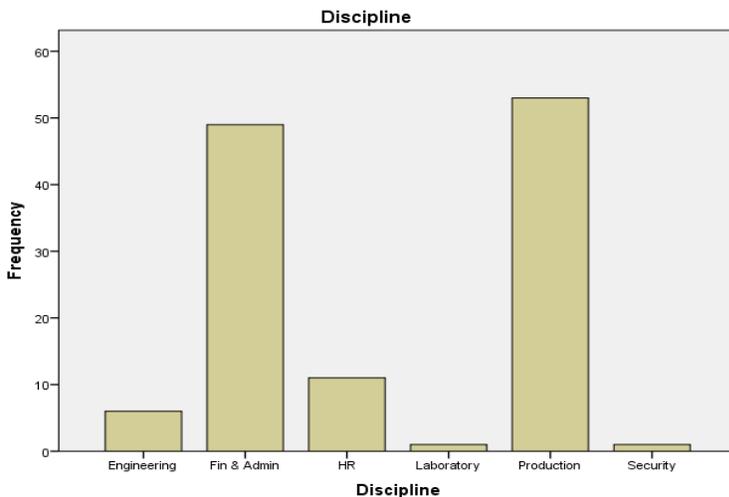
### 3.4.5 Table 4: Years in service

This table represents the amount of years the specific employees have been employed with the company. This has been defined in terms of years of service intervals for example 0-5 years. The reason for the 5 year intervals was to prove that within the call centre environment any service between 1 – 5 years is deemed long service, whereas in other industries it would be deemed long service if the employees service is between 6 – 10 years.

| years_service |       |           |         |               |                    |
|---------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|               |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid         | 0-5   | 113       | 93,4    | 93,4          | 93,4               |
|               | 11-15 | 1         | ,8      | ,8            | 94,2               |
|               | 6-10  | 7         | 5,8     | 5,8           | 100,0              |
|               | Total | 121       | 100,0   | 100,0         |                    |

In Table 4 it is quite evident to the reader that most current employees are new, because of the fact that 93.4 % only have years of service from 0 – 5 years in the company. These employees are divided in relation to the Departments as follows: Production at 43.8 %, Finance and Admin at 40.5 % and HR at 9% (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Discipline (department)**



This table represents the different departments within the company and the number of respondents that work within each department. This table is meaningful as the factors that are identified are not only applicable to the broader group of call centre agents, but more specifically to a Department within the company, thus in this case most of the performance factors can be applied to the Production and Finance Departments.

### **3. 5 Data Analysis**

The Statistical consultation services of the North-West University was used to perform the data analysis. An explorative factor analysis was done on section A and section B to determine which questions in the questionnaire could be used to identify the relevant questions that measure each of the four main factors that have been identified in the literature study. All questions that had a score below 0.4 (measuring communality) was excluded as not being meaningful for this study and all questions above this was identified and split per section into the four main factors. Section A's Kaiser-Olkin-Meier index was not very high.

**If we look at the four main factor themes then according to the explorative factor analysis the questions that had meaning are split as follows:**

#### **3.5.1 System Factors**

System factors are the factors related to how the performance appraisal process works and is administered. This includes the way that the performance appraisals are benchmarked, how committed the rater<sup>1</sup> is to the appraisal system, what the skills are of the rater to identify where there might be gaps pertaining to the particular call centre employee and how to address this with training, it talks about the credibility of the PA system, the rating levels between the levels on the rating scale and the effect that the PA system can have on the employees long term career growth aspirations.

The following questions below measured this factor in the questionnaire:

A12. How transparent do you expect the rating calibration process to be?

A17. How much difference do you expect there to be in merit pay between poor & good performers?

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<sup>1</sup> Rater: A rater is the line manager/or the assessor that has been appointed within the company as the person responsible to rate the specific employee.

A18. How committed should the rater be to the appraisal process?

A19. How accurately do you expect your rater to identify your training needs through the PA process?

A20. How much time do you expect the PA process to absorb?

A23. How credible do you expect the appraisal system to be?

A27. How open do you expect the rating process to be?

B8. To what extent is there a relationship between your appraisal rating and your pay?

B9. To what extent are your duties included as part of your performance goals?

B10. How large is the number of rating levels between good & bad performance?

B15. To what extent is everybody treated equally by the PA system (i.e. race,gender etc.)?

B17. How much is achieving your performance goals worth to you and to the Company?

B18. How much influence does the appraisal system have on your career development?

### **3.5.2 Employee Factors**

Employee factors are all the factors related to the employee. This can be many aspects like for example how committed the employee is to the PA process, what the employee should do to achieve his/her performance goals, the aspect of trust plays a major role here in terms of how the employee trusts this whole PA process and the accuracy of it. The factors that are part of this theme also relate to the faith and trust that the employee is expected to have for the rating Manager, whether the employee's role really has an impact on the achievement of the business goals, and lastly whether the employee gains from the self appraisal system, which is part of the PA process.

The following questions below measured this factor in the questionnaire:

A1. How committed do you expect the employee be to the PA process?

A5. How much should the employee's contribution add to the achievement of his/her performance goals?

A8. How seriously do you expect everybody to be taking the appraisal system?

A9. How much trust should the employee have in the company?

A15. How much do you expect the PA process to mean to you?

A16. To what extent should your career development be determined by the appraisal system?

A25. How much faith should the employee have in the performance appraisal system?

A28. How much trust should the employee have in the rating Manager?

B1. How much confidence do you have in the performance appraisal system?

B7. How much difference does your contribution make towards the achievement of your performance goals?

B12. To what extent is everybody devoted to the PA process?

B23. How much value do you get from self appraisal process?

### **3.5.3 Managerial Factors**

The managerial factors theme relates to the rater, this is the line manager that rates the employee and aspects associated with this are: the honesty in terms of feedback from the rater, whether the rater is objective as a line manager and does not get influenced by other aspects of the business, Is the rater a professional, which links into the fact that the line manager should be objective, can the rater listen effectively (meaning can the rater be able to identify through listening aspects that could be used during the PA

process). Another sub-factor to this theme is the quality of feedback that is received from the rater, this feedback can be used to the advantage of the company if this is utilized to its full potential.

The following questions below measured this factor in the questionnaire:

A2. How honest should the feedback from the rater be?

A6. How objective do you expect the rater be?

A22. How experienced do you expect your rater to be in performance appraisal?

B2. How professional is your rater's behaviour?

B6. To what extent does your rater demonstrate the ability to listen?

B16. What level of quality feedback are you getting from your rater?

B21. To what extent does your rater have a detailed understanding of your job?

B22. To what extent does your rater demonstrate the ability to work with people?

### **3.5.4 Performance Measurement Factors**

The performance measurement factors are the factors related to the performance of the employees being appraised, and how these are measured from a company perspective. The fact is that the rater needs to be focussed on people orientation, people orientation being the ability to be open and attentive to people within the company, another critical aspect to this theme is that the performance measurements should be obtainable, and whether they are clear, does the performance management system work in terms of being effective. Other aspects that need to be addressed are the training that the rater gets to conduct these performance appraisals, and where the link comes in between the expectations and the execution of the performance goals.

The following questions below measured this factor in the questionnaire:

A3. By how much do you expect your performance goals to be stretched?

A4. How difficult should it be to understand the PA process?

A7. How measurable should your performance goals be?

A10. How people orientated do you expect your rater to be?

A11. How difficult should it be to reach your performance goals in the allotted time scale?

A13. To what extent should your pay be related to your appraisal rating?

A14. To what extent should your performance rating be based on the entire rating period rather than on recent performance?

A21. To what extent should your duties be included as part of your performance goals?

A24. To what extent should your rater be officially trained to conduct a performance appraisal system?

A26. How much control do you expect the employee to have over the achievement of his/her performance goals?

A29. How much detailed knowledge do you expect the rater to have of your job?

B3. How clear to you are the priorities of your performance objectives ?

B4. How honest is the rater during feedback sessions?

B5. How valid is the performance Management system?(Does it really work?)

B11. To what extent is your rater officially trained to do performance appraisal?

B13. To what extent are your performance goals stretched?

B14. How difficult is it to understand all aspects of the PA process?

B19. How accurately are your training needs identified by your rater during the appraisal process?

B20. How measurable is your performance?

### 3.5.5 D-Values

An interpretation of the effectual size of this data is critical to this study, thus the effectual size ( $d$ ) is a measure of practical significance, which can be interpreted as a large enough effect to be used or deemed important in practice (Ellis and Steyn, 2003). The effectual size for differences in means for dependant groups was used namely:

$$d = \frac{\bar{x}_{\text{dif}}}{\sigma}$$

The following guidelines could be used, according to Cohen (1988:25-27):

$d = 0.2$  Small effect

$d = 0.5$  Medium effect

$d = 0.8$  Large effect and also of practical significance

### 3. 6 Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity will be looked at separately in terms of section A and B of the questionnaire as well as the four main factors. The system factor of section A had a

Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.739, which means that it has a high internal consistency, whereas Section B scored 0.829. The employee factor of Section A had a score of 0.751 and Section B 0.726. The managerial factor of Section A is low at 0.539, thus not usable for this study, whereas Section B is 0.841. The performance measurement factor in Section A scored 0.781 and in Section B 0.867.

### **3. 7 Results and discussion**

After the extensive research that has been conducted the following results came to light and it will now be evident as to which factors influence performance in a call centre environment. Cohen's d-values for section A versus section B of the questionnaire for the main factors are in Table 6. The interpretation of the results is as follows: 0.8 large, 0.5 moderate and 0.2 being small. The employee factor scored the highest and then second highest is the managerial factor. The factor that has a moderate effect size is performance measurement factor and the system factor has a low effect size. It can be said that the employee factor and managerial factor are the factors that have the most significant influence on call centre employees, thus from an employer's perspective these two factors are the most critical to ensure that they are managed correctly in order for it to have a positive influence on performance.

The aspects that need to be addressed are the following in order to ensure that the expectation versus the experience of the managerial factor is more aligned: the feedback should be honest and consistent; the rater needs to be objective and professional at all times; the rater should have done more than one performance appraisal in the past; the rater should have good listening skills; the rater needs to work on the level of feedback that he or she is giving to employees; the rater needs to ensure that he/she understands what the job entails regarding the rate, and also needs to have the ability to work with people.

The aspects that need to be addressed are the following in order to ensure that the expectation versus the experience of the employee factor is more closely aligned:

- the employee should be committed to the performance appraisal process,
- the contribution of the employee to the achievement of his/her performance goals is known and realistic,
- the trust that the employee has in the company and the rating manager,
- the expectation of the performance appraisal process from the employee,
- what career development the employee expects to get from the performance appraisal process.

The above mentioned aspects of the two main factors namely subordinate and managerial are what the company needs to pay special attention to in order to ensure that employees perform to their best of their ability, and to also ensure that the gap between what the employees expectation is and what they really experience from the performance appraisal system is minimised.

### 3.7.1 Table 6: D values

|        |                         | mean difference | SD      | d        |
|--------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| Pair 1 | System_A - System_B     | ,83648          | 1,94994 | 0,428979 |
| Pair 2 | Employee_A - Employee_B | 1,64463         | 1,71725 | 0,957708 |

|        |                                     |         |         |          |
|--------|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Pair 3 | Managerial_A -<br>Managerial_B      | 1,33444 | 2,03534 | 0,655634 |
| Pair 4 | Performance_A<br>-<br>Performance_B | 1,07363 | 1,82091 | 0,58961  |

Cohen’s d-values for section A versus section B of the questionnaire for the main factors are represented in table 6?

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion and recommendations**

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the findings of this study. In this chapter a conclusion will be drawn and recommendations will be made. The study was set out to explore the factors that influence the performance of call centre employees. The study has also sought to identify how these factors could be used to the advantage of the company in order to address these aspects with the employee.

### **4.2 Conclusion**

The general objective of this research is to determine the factors that influence performance of employees in a call centre environment within the South African context.

The specific objectives of this research was to:

- Explore the themes associated with factors influencing performance in a call centre environment;
- To review the themes of factors influencing performance in a call centre environment through a literature study;
- Determine the factors influencing performance in a call centre environment;
- To determine the differences between the expectations and experience of call centre employees regarding performance factors.

This was done by first doing a literature study in order to determine what the factors should be to be tested. These were then identified and grouped into four main factors, namely the system, employee, managerial and performance measurement factors. A debt collecting company was approached to test their call centre employees, where a potential 200 respondents were identified, 121 of them completed the questionnaire. This was determined as a significant representation of the study population.

The two main themes that were identified through statistical analysis of the data was that of the employee and managerial. These two factors need to be an important part of the way that performance is managed and measured within the call centre environment. Specifically looking at the confidence that the employees have in the performance appraisal system, the extent to what the employees are devoted to performance management and the value that the employees receive from the self-appraisal process.

The other specific aspects to look at under the managerial component is that of the professionalism of the rater, what listening skills the rater possesses , the level of quality feedback from the rater, whether the rater understands the job expectations of the specific employee, and to what extent the rater has the ability to work with people.

The aspects that need to be addressed are the following in order to ensure that the expectation versus the experience of the managerial factor is more aligned: the feedback should be honest and consistent, the rater needs to be objective and professional at all times, the rater should have done more than one performance appraisal in the past, the rater should be able to listen, the rater needs to work on the level of feedback that they are giving to employees, the rater needs to ensure that he/she understands what the job entails and also needs to have the ability to work with people.

The aspects that need to be addressed are the following in order to ensure that the expectation versus the experience of the employee factor is more aligned: the employee should be committed to the performance appraisal process, the contribution of the employee to the achievement of his/her performance goals, the trust that the employee has in the company and the rating manager, the expectation of the performance appraisal process from the employee, what career development the employee expects from the performance appraisal process.

The above mentioned aspects of the two main factors, namely employee and managerial, to which the company needs to pay special attention , in order to ensure that employees perform to their best of their ability, and to also ensure that the gap

between what the employees expectation is, and what they really experience from the performance appraisal system, is minimised.

### **4.3 Recommendations for future research**

There were a number of factors that were identified that influence performance in a call centre environment, thus I would recommend that these factors are looked at in more depth during the next research on this subject. Going forward, the performance appraisal system can also focus on less items. One of the aspects that came out was that of trust, and as stated in the literature review, trust is the basis of all systems, because without this factor it would fail.

There are many constructs to look at when examining an organisation and trust is one of the constructs that are mostly examined (Bunker, Alban, & Lewicki, 2004: 415) and thus there is a magnitude of definitions available. Trust is mostly examined as a relatively unchanging trait and process. According to Mayer (2005: 710), trust can be defined as the willingness of a person (“A”) to be vulnerable to the actions of someone else (Person “B”), and “A” has an expectation that “B” will ensure the best outcome for him or her, and this trust is given by “B” without being able to monitor or control “A”.

The company where the research was done is only one example of a business where call centre agents are employed. I would recommend that there should be a study done on a broader scale in terms of quite a number of companies that employ call centre agents.

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