Employment relationships and work engagement predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to determine if there are any significant relationships between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships. It also aims to ascertain if employment relationships and work engagement predict the performance management systems in South Africa's public sector.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative research approach and cross-sectional research design were employed. A total of 400 employees at Levels 1-12 were invited, from which 355 responses were received. This study's participants were selected using non-probabilistic and purposive sampling.

Findings: The results demonstrated that employment relationships and work engagement are predictors of performance management systems in the workplace.

Recommendations/value: Based on this study's findings, we recommend that the South African public sector implement a transparent, objective, and equitable performance management system that is perceived as being fair.

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Managerial implications: This study has the potential to provide organisations with more knowledge concerning the link between employment relationships and work engagement, as well as the key predictors of performance management systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employees are vital to the success of any organisation. More specifically, their skills and competence are crucial for the organisation's success (Tiwari & Shah, 2021). In particular, a pleasant working environment is essential for the organisation to survive in this competitive working environment (Li & Cao, 2020). Also, there is no doubt that the goals and objectives of an organisation can only be accomplished by effectively utilising other resources, such as human capital (Tiwari & Shah, 2021). At present, the South African government is experiencing several problems with providing public services. As a result of the government's inability to improve its service performance, widespread protests could become a possibility in South Africa (Masiya *et al.,* 2019).

Despite some progress, the public sector in South Africa continues to function poorly. According to Mughal (2020), the employees' contribution is crucial to determine the success or failure of an organisation. Protests and unhappiness have already erupted in South African communities due to the government's broken promises and delays in providing basic services (Masuku & Jili, 2019). This is a genuine concern since South Africa, like many other developing countries, has a troubled public sector and public sector reforms have generally failed (Poggenpoel, 2017). Therefore, as mentioned above, employee contribution is essential for an organisation's success (Tiwari & Shah, 2021).

Success in today's competitive workplace can be attributed to a combination of healthy employment relationships, while work engagement may lead to an effective performance management system. As a result, initiatives aimed at improving quality are gaining prominence and acceptance (Khan *et al.*, 2021). Businesses today, in an environment where everyone is expanding, must emphasise and require employee performance that contributes to organisational objectives (Samal, 2019). Generally, organisations strive to achieve goals, objectives, and targets over time or within a specific period of time (Adesubomi, 2018). According to Nduati and Wanyoike (2022), an organisation can improve their ability to reach

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its long-term objectives by instituting performance management systems that motivate and inspire its employees. Many factors must be addressed to enhance performance management systems in the public sector (Abane & Brenya, 2017). This is crucial since integral systems such as performance management systems affect performance (Samal, 2019). Moreover, organisations are realising the need for effective performance management systems to ensure stability and success in today's more competitive marketplaces; as a result, interest in adopting a performance management system has increased (Owais, 2021).

Moreover, the human resources (HR) department is essential to the performance management system, which is designed to measure employees' overall performance (Samal, 2019). HR managers in any organisation are responsible for monitoring and managing employee performance (DeNisi *et al.,* 2021). According to Lakshmi and Sireesha (2019), if organisations want to boost employee performance, they need to inform themselves about possible factors that can contribute to enhanced performance. The most important aspects influencing employee performance are as follows: the quality of the performance management system in place; the working relationships between employees and employers; and the level of work engagement. Organisations require motivated, engaged employees since their success depends on them (Fillipus & Pieters, 2022). Hence, increasing work engagement has become an essential factor for organisations (Knight *et al.,* 2019). The importance of employment relationships is, incidentally, recognised by South African law (Mzangwa, 2015). Overall, strong working relationships are built and established upon open lines of communication between employees and employers (Smith & Diedericks, 2016). Constant pressure is placed on targets in order to meet higher performance standards and ensure their work contributes to and supports the organisation's goals (Nikoli *et al.,* 2020).

This article focuses on performance management systems (De Waal, 2004), work engagement (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2006), and employment relationships (Ehlers, 2016) as measuring instruments. Accordingly, these instruments are utilised to investigate whether employment relationships and work engagement influence or predict the performance management systems in South Africa's public sector. No similar study was detected in the literature that focused on determining if employment relationships and performance management systems predict work engagement. This study fills this literature gap.

1.1   Problem statement

The South African government must innovate to remain competitive. Its public sector has a solid performance management system, yet several performance management systems have

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simply never been implemented. However, due to lacking an understanding of the fundamentals, performance management systems have fallen short of their expectations (Owais, 2021). Currently, the public sector is struggling to strengthen and improve poor employee performance, which was prompted by negative employment relationships. Numerous studies have investigated employment relationships and their impact on employee performance; however, the public sector in South Africa has paid little attention to the topic. Among 148 nations, this sector performed the worst in 2018. Dissatisfaction with employment relations is currently very high in the public sector in South Africa (Ntimba *et al*., 2021). Generally, healthy employment relationships arise when positive relationships are prevalent within the workplace (Smith & Diedericks, 2016). According to Ntimba *et al.* (2021), employment relationships in South Africa's public sector have historically been hostile. Work engagement is another problem in the South African public sector, and worker enthusiasm in this field needs to improve (Worldbank, 2020). Overall, employment relationships and work engagement are essential for performance management systems since managers and supervisors can apply performance management systems to ensure that their employees' efforts and workloads are actually contributing to achieving organisational objectives (Al-Jedaiaa & Mehreza, 2019). This study's overarching goal is to establish if there are any significant relationships between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships and whether or not employment relationships and work engagement predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector. No similar research has been conducted to confirm whether employment relationships and work engagement predict performance management systems in the South African context. The current study addresses these research gaps.

1.2 Research questions

- Is there a significant relationship between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships?

- Do employment relationships and work engagement predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector?

1.3 Research objective

Research aims are defined in terms of both primary and secondary data (Clow & James, 2014 as quoted by Sekhu, 2017). The objectives of this research are to determine if there are any significant relationships between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships. Moreover, this research aims to ascertain if employment

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relationships and work engagement can predict the outcome of performance management systems in South Africa's public sector.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

For this section, the researchers combed through theoretical research on work engagement, performance management systems, and employment relationships so as to determine the correlation between employment relationships and work engagement, and relationships between performance management systems and work engagement.

2.1   Work engagement

In order to give each organisation a competitive advantage over other human capital, work engagement is crucial (Sopiah *et al.,* 2020). Nowadays, recruiting qualified and dedicated employees is a top priority for any organisation (Mughal, 2020). Puspitasari and Darwin (2021) posited that work engagement is beneficial to both employees and organisations, because it affects how employees work and fulfil their duties. Vigour, devotion, and absorption are the three components of labour engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), work engagement is a condition associated with employees' vigour, dedication, and absorption in their work or job responsibilities. The first part of vigour refers to strong levels of energy, mental fortitude, and a commitment to put forth the highest level of effort possible. Moreover, dedicated employees who are actively involved and happily immersed in their work are examples of absorption.

Overall, the presence of work engagement in the workplace has a significant effect on the performance of the organisation, which, in turn, influences the way employees work and complete a wide variety of tasks (Puspitasari *et al.*, 2021). Kaparkova *et al.* (2018) postulated that positive work engagement leads to better work outcomes. Moreover, employees who are enthusiastic about their jobs are more committed to excellent work engagement (Amjed *et al.,* 2021). Work engagement reflects the personality that employees bring to their work, which, in turn, can make them more enthusiastic and enhances employee performance (Puspitasari *et al*., 2021). To be fully engaged in one's work is to have a positive, affective-motivated state that is characterised by enthusiasm, hard work, and concentration (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Also, employees with high levels of work engagement are more innovative, productive, and eager to put in extra effort in their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). A person who is engaged in their work takes on an active role, derives meaning from their work, and has faith that doing so will lead to better results in their professional life (Amjed *et al*., 2021).

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2.2 Performance management systems

Globally, organisations can benefit from performance management systems as they contribute to and sustain organisational strategy (Almohtaseb *et al.,* 2020). In this sector, success hinges on the efforts of the workforce. It is also common knowledge that HR management is responsible for the public sector's performance management systems (Madlabana *et al*., 2020). Overall, there are a variety of definitions of performance management systems in the literature. Systems that have been developed to monitor employee performance in the public sector have been shown to foster a more engaged and collaborative work environment and increase morale (Almohtaseb *et al*., 2020). Employees' performance should also be monitored regularly to assist an organisation in reaching its goals (Nduati *et al.,* 2022).

In South Africa, a public sector performance management system is in place to monitor employees' performance, promote growth in their abilities, and enhance morale through public acknowledgement and rewards (Madlabana *et al*., 2020). According to Samal (2019), researchers found that using a performance management system aided in the creation of a development plan that targeted employee skill sets, attitudes, and abilities. In order to be effective, an organisation's performance management system must ensure that all operations are aligned with the organisation's overarching goals (Nikoli *et al.*, 2020). Currently, the government of South Africa is under increasing pressure to invest in a system that will enhance employees' performance. Even more importantly, all of the elements that increase the performance management systems' value to the public sector are interconnected (Abane *et al.,* 2017). Therefore, deliverables, methods, and objectives must be communicated to employees (Nduati *et al*., 2022).

Performance management systems are not new, but they have gained in popularity in the competitive business environment (Owais, 2021). Employee and team growth represent key aspects of a performance management system that boosts organisational performance (Tahiri *et al*., 2020). It is a strategy that factors in aspects of the organisation's HR approach, culture, communication channels, and guiding principles (Nduati *et al*., 2022). This method is useful for assessing employees' competence, knowledge, and efficiency on the job (Lakshmi & Sireesha, 2019). This also encourages employees to do their best and live up to the organisation's expectations (Dizon *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, Nduati *et al*. (2022) ascertained that employee performance management increases organisational performance through the successful implementation of strategic goals. As an integral aspect of any HR management system, performance management directly impacts employee and organisational performance (Dizon *et al*., 2018). A performance management system disseminates the organisation's

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objectives, instils a sense of personal responsibility for their accomplishments, and monitors and assesses progress toward achieving those objectives (Lakshmi & Sireesha, 2019).

2.3   Employment relationships

Employees are the driving force behind any successful business (Hagenimana *et al*., 2018). Formerly known as "industrial relations," the term "employment relationships" now describes the relationship between employers and employees (Hagenimana *et al*., 2018). As such, employees and employers work together in partnerships to achieve mutual goals (Omuya, 2018). Therefore, all organisations need to prioritise open lines of communication between employees and managers as well as between managers and other staff members (Ntimba *et al.,* 2021). According to Omuya (2018), trust in management and employee growth are mediated by procedural justice. Here, employers and employees form the basis of the employment relationship (Business Bliss Consultants FZE, 2018), while both the employees and employers benefit from having close bonds with one another (Ntimba *et al.*, 2021). Healthy employment relationships help establish the creation of a pleasant environment that retains the motivation of employees and consistently motivates them so as to maintain commitment towards achieving the organisations' objectives (Business Bliss Consultants FZE, 2018). Also, employment relationships are perceived as paying attention to both individual and collective relationships in the working environment to assist managers in establishing trust-based relationships with employees (Hagenimana *et al.,* 2018). The rules of the constitution, common law, and statutes of employment are, therefore, binding on both employers and employees.

Maintaining a workplace that is conducive to both employees' and employers' needs is a broad concept, but it is essential to fostering productive employment relationships and increasing productivity (Hagenimana *et al*., 2018). Employment relationships are critical to the success, growth, and sustainability of any organisation (Samwel, 2018). In other words, for there to be effective employment partnerships, the workplace must encourage employees to contribute to the success of the organisation (Hagenimana *et al.*, 2018). Generally, employees are motivated by salary, social standing, and career advancement opportunities. However, the employer-employee relationship represents the most crucial factor, which also has a direct influence on employee performance (Business Bliss Consultants FZE, 2018). Employees who have strong relationships with their employers tend to be more devoted, enthusiastic, and loyal to the organisation (Samwel, 2018). Additionally, healthy employment relationships tend to have a positive effect on employee performance (Hagenimana *et al.*, 2018). HR practices must be utilised and improved if organisations are to remain competitive and enhance workplace interactions (Omuya, 2018). Samwel (2018) determined that negative employment

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relationships in the workplace are not conducive to the success of a business. Contrariwise, a positive employment relationship can help the organisation improve results and promote the well-being of its employees (Hagenimana *et al*., 2018). Hence, management has a responsibility to foster and sustain positive relationships throughout the workforce (Samwel, 2018).

Ntimba *et al*. (2021) proffered that employer and employee relationships affect employees' levels of job satisfaction. Managers are, thus, obligated to manage employment relationships (Hagenimana *et al*., 2018). Overall, organisations can benefit from improved employee-employer relationships when appropriate HR management protocols are implemented (Omuya, 2018). A well-developed employment relationship programme is key to establishing and maintaining healthy relationships within the workplace (Hagenimana *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, managers must promote positive employment relationships and comprehend the diverse types of employment relationships that are aligned with employee job performance (Dlamini *et al*., 2022). Similarly, the quality of the employment relationship is crucial, as it affects how happy the clients are with the service they receive from the organisation (Hagenimana *et al.*, 2018). Subsequently, the role of employment relationships should never be underestimated, especially since this has a direct influence on organisational performance (Dlamini *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the South African public sector needs to address issues related to employment relationships and how they influence both employees and organisational performance.

2.4   Relationship between the employment relationship and work engagement

According to Rana *et al.* (2019), the individual consequences of employee engagement are crucial for the employer-employee relationship and, more importantly, for the organisation as a whole. Employees who are highly engaged at work tend to develop excellent and dependable relationships with their superiors (Hamzah *et al*., 2022). However, in order to improve employee engagement, there must be an employment relationship (Ahmed *et al*., 2017). Also, Alshurideh *et al* (2023) discovered that all organisations must have a successful working relationship to achieve annual growth. According to Doghan and Zakariya (2023), engagement has been viewed as a factor that has an impact on the employment relationship. Employee relations also significantly improve employee engagement, according to Ahmed *et al.* (2017).

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2.5 Relationship between performance management systems and work engagement

A performance management system is described as an approach the organisation can use to describe, assess, implement, and constantly improve organisational performance (Shaaban & Badway, 2022). The study of Isimoya *et al*. (2020) discovered a favourable and very significant association between the development of the performance evaluation system and work engagement. Higher levels of work engagement are, therefore, a result of positive experiences with the corporate performance evaluation system—most notably, perceptions of equity and fairness (Hamzah *et al*., 2022). No company can succeed in today's fast-paced, international business environment without employees who are deeply engaged in their work, which is aligned with upholding the organisation's standards and outperforming their competitors (Bilal *et al.,* 2020). To ensure that employees are happy, a fair evaluation system and an unbiased approach are crucial (Hamzah *et al*., 2022). According to Ahmed *et al*. (2020), when employees are pleased with their performance reviews, they reflect this by expressing more enthusiasm and absorption in their work. This will, in turn, increase work engagement.

3. METHODOLOGY

A research methodology represents the technique or procedure used by the researcher to collect data for the study (Saleem, 2016). This section provides a summary of the research on how this study was conducted. The research approach, design, research participants, data collection and analysis methods are all outlined below.

3.1 Research approach and design

In order to address the research questions and achieve the study's goals, a quantitative research methodology was used. This research methodology was appropriate for this study mainly because quantitative research methodologies are more suited for large populations through the process of generalising numerical data, according to Mohajan (2020). This study employed a cross-sectional research design. This research design was deemed to be an appropriate method to address the research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2008).

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3.2   Research population and sample size

As pointed out by Burns and Bush (2010), a sample plan should include the following six steps: identifying the relevant population; selecting the sampling frame; choosing the sampling method; determining the sample size; choosing the sample elements; and collecting the data from the sample elements. The respondents in this study were employees from eight public service national departments based in Pretoria, Gauteng Province. A total of 400 respondents, who had been permanently employed for more than five years and were at Job Levels 1-12, were targeted from a population of 10 660. The inclusion of this criterion was based on their long-standing relationship with the performance management system; therefore, these employees were more likely to respond to questions listed in the questionnaire. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select participants from eight national departments. A total of 400 questionnaires were issued, of which 355 questionnaires were fully completed. Thus, 355 were usable and included in the data analysis, obtaining a response rate of 88.75%.

3.3   Data collection and measuring instrument

Data collection can be defined as the process the researcher follows to acquire the data from the respondents to learn more about the research topic (Taherdoost, 2021). Primary data for this study were gathered by utilising a self-administered method. The questionnaire is actually deemed a popular data collection method to secure answers from the respondents and to acquire the data needed for the study (Taherdoost, 2021). Data were collected by the use of three existing structured research questionnaires in the study as the instrument for gathering data. The questionnaire was composed of four sections, which had 74 questions. The questionnaire was designed using the four-point Likert scale for employment relationships by Ehlers (2016), a four- and five-point Likert scales for performance management systems by De Waal (2004), and a seven-point Likert scale for work engagement by Schaufeli *et al.* (2006).

3.4   Data analysis

Wiid and Digginies (2015) highlighted that thorough data analysis is necessary for accurate information interpretation and conclusion-making. Only the completed questionnaire was used in this study's analysis and resulting interpretation. The questions were coded per the quantitative research method. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to assist with the analysis of the descriptive analysis to obtain precise results. Cronbach's alpha was performed to evaluate the internal consistency of the measuring instrument. A

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multiple regression model was performed to explore how employment relationships and performance management systems contributed to variations in the level of work engagement. Lastly, the Pearson correlation coefficient was performed to measure the strength of the relationship between employment relationships, the performance management system, and work engagement.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a comprehensive data analysis of the data collected from 355 respondents. It covers Cronbach's alpha, demographic information, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. These aspects are discussed in detail below.

4.1 Reliability of the measuring instrument

As a first step, Table 1 presents a summary of Cronbach's alpha results of the employment relationships, the performance management system (PMS), and work engagement subscales, which indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instrument.

Table 1: Summary of Cronbach's alpha

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Vigour	0.789
Dedication	0.848
Absorption	0.811
Compliance	0.873
Fairness	0.827
Good faith	0.814
Trust	0.944
Understanding of PMS	0.828
Attitude towards a PMS	0.786
Performance management alignment	0.872
Performance management culture	0.803
Performance management focus	0.726

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Cronbach's alpha coefficients, as well as the work engagement scores and employer-employee relationship scores, are all presented in Table 1. The researchers ran an internal consistency reliability analysis in order to examine how accurately each scale item gauged the questionnaire's overall internal consistency. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), if the three scales (performance management systems, employment relationships, and work engagement) have a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7, it suggests that they are reliable. As can be observed in Table 1, the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship measures can be considered reliable, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.726 to 0.944. In fact, it was determined that all 12 items utilised to examine the dependability and validity of the measuring instrument's independent variables and dependent factors were valid and reliable.

4.2   Demographic analysis

The sample consisted of 355 responses (n= 355). The results of the demographic information are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	%	Cumulative %
1. Gender			
Male	151	42.5	42.7
Female	203	57.2	100.0
Did not answer	1	0.3	
Total	355	100.0	
2. Race			
Asian	6	1.7	1.7
Black	268	75.5	78.1
Coloured	29	8.2	86.3
White	48	13.5	100.0
Did not answer	4	1.1	
Total	355	98.9	

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Variable	Frequency (n)	%	Cumulative %
3. Marital status			
Never married	97	27.3	28.2
Married	193	54.4	84.3
Living together	38	10.7	95.3
Divorce/separated	14	3.9	99.4
Widowed	2	0.6	100.0
Did not answer	11	3.1	
Total	355	96.9	
4. Educational level			
Lower than grade 12	13	3.7	3.8
Grade 12	28	7.9	11.8
Certificate	27	7.6	19.7
Diploma	99	27.9	48.3
Bachelor's Degree	104	29.3	78.3
Honours Degree	52	14.6	93.4
Doctoral Degree	23	6.5	100.0
Did not answer	9	2.5	
Total	346	97.5	

Authors' compilation

According to Table 2, female employees made up 57.2% of the workforce, while male employees comprised 42.5%. The majority of the participants were women. According to O'Neill (2022) there were 30.48 million females and 29.56 million males in the population of South Africa at the time. These results are consistent with those of Hanaysha (2016), who found that women accounted for 73.1% of the respondents, while men comprised 26.9%. Given that women make up 51% (29.5 million) of South Africans, the findings of this study are reliable (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Moholola (2016) also reported consistent findings. Furthermore, Mbonambi (2016) found that females outnumbered males by 57% to 43%. According to Table 2, the majority of respondents (75.5%) were black, followed by (13.5%) whites, (8.2%) coloured and (1.7%) Asians. These findings are in line with South African population statistics. In Makamu's (2016) survey, 70% of the respondents were black, 20% European, and 10% were Indian. Currently, an overwhelming majority (81%) of South Africans are black (49.1 million).

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Furthermore, only 27.3 % of those polled had never been married, while 54.4% were married. Additionally, 10.7% were living together while 3.9% were divorced. Table 2 reveals that out of 355 respondents, 29.3% had a Bachelor's degree (104 out of 355), and 27.9% had a diploma (99 out of 355). Also, 52% of respondents had an honours degree, whereas 28 had a Grade 12 qualification. Respondents' levels of education ranged from 3.7% with no formal education beyond high school to 6.5% with doctoral degrees. All ages from 18 to 65 were represented in the responses, with a mean age of 39.61 years. The distribution was slightly positively skewed because of the right-skewed tail. This is indicative of a younger demographic of respondents. Since the mean was only a fraction over the median (39.6 vs. 39.0), it was not necessary to consider the skewness. The average tenure, which ranged from 5 to 45 years in service, was 12.54 years. A positive skew was represented by a tail that was slanted to the right. More respondents had fewer years of service than more since the mean was higher than the median (mean = 12.54, median = 9.00). Having greater working experience was necessary for this study, because it has been shown that experienced workers boost public sector performance.

4.3   Correlation analysis

According to Gogtay and Thatte (2017), a correlation analysis assesses the association or relationship between two (or more) quantitative variables. In the current study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength of the relationship between work engagement, employment relationships, and the performance management systems in the public sector in South Africa. A summary of the results from the correlation analysis between the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship is shown in Tables 3 and 4 below. Pearson's rho test was employed to examine the correlation between the variables. According to Polonsky and Waller (2005), a p-value of more than 0.05 indicates a stronger association between the two variables, whilst a p-value of 0.05 or less indicates a weaker relationship between the two variables. According to Cohen (1988), an r-value between 0.10 and 0.29 denotes a small relationship, a medium correlation is identified by an r-value between 0.30 and 0.49, and an r-value between 0.50 and 1.0 denotes a significant relationship. The intensity and direction (positive or negative) of the correlation are shown by the letters r, whereas the likelihood that the given r-value is the result of chance is indicated by the letter p, as per Mokwena (2016). A perfect positive correlation is indicated by an r-value of 1, a perfect negative correlation by r=-1, a moderate positive correlation by r=0.5, a moderate negative correlation by r=-0.5, and no correlation by r=0.

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The following table shows Pearson's R statistic and a sig. (1-tailed) value for the correlation between the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship totals.

TABLE 3:   Correlation analysis

Variables		PMS	Work engagement	Employment relationship
Pearson correlation	PMS	1.000	0.423	0.503
	Work engagement	0.423	1.000	0.387
	Employment relationship	0.503	0.387	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	PMS		0.000	0.000
	Work engagement	0.000		0.000
	Employment relationship	0.000	0.000	0.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Authors' compilation

The following table shows Pearson's R statistic and a sig. (2-tailed) value for the correlation between the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship.

Table 4:   Correlation analysis

Variables		Work engagement	PMS	Employment relationship
Work engagement	Pearson correlation	1	**0.423**[**]	**0.387**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
Performance management system	Pearson correlation	0.423[**]	1	**0.503**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
Employee relationship	Pearson correlation	0.387[**]	0.503[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Authors' compilation

With a significance threshold of 0, the connection between the performance management system and work engagement was 0.423. Based on Cohen's (1988) recommendations, this corresponds to a moderate correlation. With a significance threshold of 0, the correlation

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between employment relationships and work engagement was 0.387. Polonsky and Waller (2005) rated this association as a moderate correlation. The employment relationships and the performance management system are also shown to be significantly positively correlated (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.0001), with a correlation of 0.503 indicating a large association. This indicates that the employment relationship is likely to considerably improve when the performance management system is used effectively by supervisors. Rahman and Taniya (2017) asserted that strong relationships between employees and employers are essential for fostering productivity, motivation, and improved performance. The results show that the correlation ranged from moderate to large, which could be regarded as a high level of correlation. The smallest correlation level was 0.387 and the greatest was 0.503, respectively.

4.4 Regression analysis

Regression analysis predicts dependent variables using independent variables (Shabane *et al.*, 2017). It is commonly known that there are two types of regression analysis, namely, simple and multiple regression analyses. The multiple regression analysis model is used when researchers desire to test several predictor variables that may explain the diverse attributes of the response variables (Salleh *et al.,* 2017), while simple regression analysis consists of two variables: a dependent variable and an independent variable (Tyrrel, 2009). In the current study, the performance management systems, employment relationships, and work engagement subscales were examined using multiple linear regression. The results of the multiple linear regression are tabulated below.

The results of the model summary obtained from regression analysis are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Model summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0.568[a]	**0.323**	0.309	0.40055	0.323	23.454	7	344	0.000
a. Predictors: (constant), trust, absorption, dedication, vigour, compliance, fairness and good faith. b. Dependent variable: performance management system total.									

Author's compilation

Table 5 reveals that seven independent factors (trust, compliance, fairness and good faith in the workplace, as well as absorption, dedication, and vigour) accounted for 32.30% of the variance in the dependent variable. This could mean that if employees and management in

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the public sector can improve employment relationships and work engagement, it could have the potential to affect the performance management system by 33.3%.

As shown in Table 6, an ANOVA was also conducted to determine whether the model worked in explaining the relationship between variables as assumed in the theoretical model.

TABLE 6:   ANOVA

ANOVA						
Model		**Sum of squares**	**Df**	**Mean square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	26.341	**7**	3.763	**23.454**	**0.000**[b]
	Residual	55.191	**344**	0.160		
	Total	81.531	351			
a. Dependent variable: performance management total b. Predictors: (constant), trust, absorption, dedication, vigour, compliance, fairness and good faith						

Authors' compilation

The ANOVA table generated in this test shows an F-value of 23.454 with a significance level of 0.000, which is far lower than the confidence level of 0.05, hence establishing a significant relationship. This signifies that trust, absorption, dedication, vigour, compliance, fairness, and good faith significantly explain the performance management system's efficacy at a significance level of $p<0.05$. This means that each independent variable (trust, absorption, dedication, vigour, compliance, fairness and good faith) contributed significantly to changes in the dependent variable (PMS), and the relationship was positive. This further demonstrated that the model worked and thus accounted for significantly more variance in the dependent variable than would be anticipated by chance. This can, therefore, be interpreted to imply that the overall results were significant ($F (7.344) = 23.454$, $p = 0.000$). As shown by the findings above, the one-way ANOVA, therefore, concluded that both variables were significantly correlated to the performance management system as per the correlation analysis.

The results of the coefficients of regression are presented in Table 7.

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TABLE 7:   Coefficients (included variables)

Coefficients							
Model		**Unstandardised coefficients**		**Standardised coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**	**Overall model significant**
		B	**Std. error**	**Beta**			
1	(Constant)	1.424	0.127		11.258	0.000	Practically important
	Vigour	0.031	0.041	0.070	0.747	0.455	
	Dedication	0.073	0.033	0.185	2.200	**0.028**	
	Absorption	0.007	0.040	0.016	0.172	0.863	
	Compliance	0.014	0.069	0.019	0.200	0.842	
	Fairness	0.124	0.067	0.187	1.863	0.063	
	Good faith	-0.040	0.069	-0.060	-0.580	0.562	
	Trust	0.206	0.099	0.276	2.071	**0.039**	
a. Dependent variable: performance management total							

Authors' compilation

Each independent variable's estimated beta is presented in Table 7 (work engagement and employment relationship). The analysis resulted in two regression models displaying distinct sets of characteristics that predicted the performance management framework. The results indicate that employment relationship (= -0.298; p = 0.000) and work engagement (= 0.119; p = 0.000) were significant predictors of the performance management system. The coefficient demonstrated that employee-employer relationships and work engagement were strongly significant predictors of the performance management system. Consequently, since both of the p-values for the predictor variables, "work engagement" and "employment relationship," were 0.000, it is evident that they were both significant.

5.   DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The current study set out two main objectives: The first objective was to determine if there are any significant relationships between the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship, while the second objective was to ascertain if employment relationships and work engagement subscales predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector. The study's results led to several conclusions, of which the most vital research results will be listed here in light of the study background and discussion that was presented.

First objective: to determine the relationships between the performance management system, work engagement, and employment relationship:

In order to test the strength of the relationship between work engagement, employment relationships, and the performance management system, the researcher used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The research observed that the performance management system and work engagement had a moderate relationship. This implies that an improvement in any of the

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performance management system factors is likely to enhance employment relationships and vice versa. There is evidence that employee attitudes toward the performance management system are substantially associated with the performance management system process (Alshaikhi, 2020).

In a similar vein, the current research discovered that employment relationships and work engagement also had a moderate relationship. This suggests the following: if employment relationships are transformed, either positively or negatively, the level of employee work engagement will change accordingly (Shabane *et al*., 2022). This infers that when employees experience healthy employment relationships, their work engagement is likely to increase and vice versa. Arimie (2020) claimed that employees' condition of disengagement is brought on by their lack of happiness, as passion and energy are required to elicit or produce the effort necessary to be productive. Therefore, organisations must ensure that employee relations are harmonious and strategically planned to positively impact employee job satisfaction levels and foster engagement at work (Shabane *et al*., 2022). According to the study, managers who inspire, respect, and appreciate their staff members and those who foster an interesting work environment are more likely to keep them engaged (Arimie, 2020). This result implies that creating a pleasant work environment based on value, mutual respect, appreciation, and acknowledgement of employees' abilities and competencies plays an essential role in encouraging work engagement (Abdullahi *et al*., 2023).

Accordingly, this research also revealed a significant and strong relationship between employment relationships and the performance management system. In other words, the result implies that when employees are satisfied with the performance management system, they are more likely to develop healthy employment relationships. This could also imply that the performance review process is beneficial to employees and further strengthens their employment relationships. Generally, employment relationships are viewed as a vital type of social relations, and also an influential factor when improving the business' long-term performance (Zhang, 2021). Moreover, both employees and managers frequently have unfavourable opinions involving the results of the performance management system, because, in most cases, managers base their employee evaluations on their personal experiences; thus, the process lacks impartiality (Alshaikhi, 2020). This is an essential result and consistent with the literature that the performance management system is considered an essential element to improve the quality of employees' work and the interaction between employees and employers (Almohtaseb *et al*., 2020). Additionally, it is a tool for managers to gauge how well their employees are performing concerning their overall objectives (Kumar, 2019). In summary, the

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result highlights that there is a relationship between employment relationships, work engagement, and the performance management system.

Second objective: to determine if employment relationships and work engagement influence the performance management system:

The second objective of this study aimed to ascertain if employment relationships and work engagement influence the performance management system. In our study, employment relationship consisted of four factors (i.e., compliance, fairness, good faith, and trust), while work engagement comprised three factors (.i.e., vigour, dedication, and absorption). These variables were included in the regression analysis to determine the effect of the employment relationship and the work engagement subscales on the performance management system. Forthwith, multiple linear regression was used to examine the effect of the independent variables (employment relationship and work engagement subscales) on the dependent variables (PMS). Our research observed that the independent variables: employment relationship and work engagement subscales (vigour, dedication, absorption, compliance, fairness, good faith, and trust) accounted for 32.30% of the variance in the dependent variable (PMS) according to the multiple linear regression impact results. The results in Table 7 indicate a significant association, because the F-value is 23.454 and the significance level is 0.000, which is much lower than the confidence level of 0.05. Additionally, the results of this study identified a strong and positive association between each independent variable (vigour, dedication, absorption, compliance, fairness, good faith, and trust) and changes in the dependent variable (PMS). According to these findings, it is evident that both trust and dedication were very significant predictors of the performance management system (p 0.05). Thus, these results serve as confirmation that employment relationships and work engagement are significant predictors of the performance management system. This further suggests that any changes, either positive or negative, to work engagement and employment relationship factors will shape the performance management system.

In conclusion, no previous research could be identified in the literature to explain the relationships between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships, as well as whether or not employment relationships (compliance, fairness, good faith, and trust) and work engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption) predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector. From a practical perspective, to boost performance management systems, interventions should be focused on work engagement and employment relationships.

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6.   MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This study has the potential to provide organisations with more knowledge concerning the link between employment relationships, performance management systems, and work engagement and the key predictors of work engagement. Organisations need to realise that they can influence their performance management systems by addressing employment relationships (compliance, fairness, good faith, and trust) and work engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption). In order to improve work engagement at the place of employment, managers should focus on developing numerous employment relationship protocols as soon as possible (Shabane *et al*., 2022). In other words, management must strengthen work engagement and employment relationships in order to boost performance management system relationships.

7.   LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Regardless of the importance of the results of this study, it should be noted that the sample size was made up of only eight national government departments in South Africa; thus, not all South African government departments were represented. Furthermore, the results cannot be generalised to the private sector since the study was conducted in the public sector. Secondly, the theory demonstrates that several factors influence work engagement; however, this study only focused on employment relationships and performance management systems.

8.   RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the study results, it was discovered that employment relationships and work engagement were significant predictors of the performance management system. The following recommendations were identified during this research study:

- According to the study's findings, there is a positive relationship between employment relationships, work engagement, and performance management systems. Therefore, management should pay equal attention to all three factors to enhance organisational success.

- The management in the South African public sector should pay attention to the process of employment relationships and work engagement, because they both have a positive influence on performance management systems.

- A qualitative study can be performed to obtain rich data involving the three variables: work engagement, employment relationships, and performance management systems in this study.

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- A study can be conducted to include more contract and permanent employees as well as other geographical areas around South Africa.

- Finally, a comparative study could be conducted between public sector employees and private sector employees concerning employment relationships and work engagement and performance management systems.

9. CONCLUSION

The above study emphasised the importance of a performance management system and also revealed that employment relationships and work engagement have a significant impact on work performance. This also demonstrated the relationship between performance management systems, work engagement, and employment relationships. Additionally, the regression analysis revealed that employment relationships and work engagement are predictors of performance management systems, especially since these had a significant t-value. This implies that work engagement and employment relationships do influence performance management systems. Thus, the South African government should invest extensive time and effort in fostering a working environment that is conducive for employees and promotes healthy employment relationships and strong work engagement.

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