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Strategic human resource management practices and organisational performance: A case of the Zambia national assembly of Zambia

Kenani Phiri ^{1*}, Jackson Phiri ², Bupe Getrude Mutono-Mwanza ³, Austin Mwanje ⁴

¹ MSc (Human Resources Management) Candidate, The University of Zambia, Graduate School of Business, Great East Road, Lusaka, Zambia

² Professor, The University of Zambia, School of Natural Sciences, Department of Computer Science Department, Great East Road Campus, Lusaka, Zambia

³ Senior lecturer, The University of Zambia, Graduate School of Business, Great East Road Campus, Lusaka, Zambia

⁴ Lecturer, The University of Zambia, Graduate School of Business, Great East Road Campus, Lusaka, Zambia

* Corresponding Author: **Kenani Phiri**

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Abstract

The premise of HRM practices is that an organisation's most important resource is its people, and that its performance depends heavily on them. For HRM to have a meaningful impact on organisational performance, an appropriate range of human resource policies and processes must be developed and effectively implemented. SHRM is an approach that defines how the organisation's goals are achieved by its employees through human resource policies and practices that are integrated with the human resource strategy. SHRM's growing popularity is primarily due to its clear commitment to improving organisational performance. However, studies on the linkage between SHRM practices and organisational performance that have been carried out in the African perspective, are very few especially in a public organisation. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance. The study was conducted at the National Assembly of Zambia which has its presence in all the one hundred and fifty-six (156) Constituencies through Parliamentary Constituency Offices. The study utilised quantitative research method. Data was collected from the study participants using a questionnaire. Collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics and statistical inference (Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used in order to find out the relationship between the variables and the Multiple Regression Analysis was used in order to find out the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. The hypothesis test results revealed that there was a relationship between all HRM practices and organisational performance at the National Assembly of Zambia. However, it was revealed that organisation and resourcing had a negative and weak, positive impact on organisational performance, respectively. Learning and development, performance and reward management and employee welfare had a significant impact on organisational performance. The study therefore concluded that SHRM practices have significant impacts on performance of the Zambia National Assembly. The study recommended the need for institutional transparency, employee engagement and access to information by employees. The study also recommended that the Zambia National Assembly should also have a deliberate policy on continuous professional development as well as a succession plan policy.

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1. Introduction

The supposition on the practice of Human Resource Management (HRM) is that the organisation's most important resources are the people working in the organisation and that organisational performance largely depends on them. For HRM to make meaningful impact on organisational performance, an appropriate range of human resource policies and processes

must be developed and implemented effectively (Armstrong, 2008) ^[5].

Lawler and Mohrman (2003) ^[33] also assert that HRM practices should be an integral part of the strategy of any large organisation. HRM practices are concerned with the management of people in an organisation from the time of recruitment until the time they separate from the organisation. Strategic human resource management (SHRM), knowledge management, organisation development, resourcing, performance management, learning and development, reward management and employee relations are some of the HRM practices (Armstrong, 2009) ^[6].

Strategic HRM is an approach that defines how the organisation's goals will be achieved through people by means of HR strategies and integrated HR policies and practices" (Armstrong, 2009) ^[6]. Regardless of the definition controversy, it can be clearly stated that the development of the concept of SHRM has led to a significant revival of academic interest in HRM functions and a strengthening of both the theory and practice of human resource management. For example, in the realm of theory, SHRM provided intellectual support for the idea that people in an organization and the HRM system could provide a long-term source of competitive advantage (Kaufman, 2007; Handema & Haabazoka, 2020; Yankovskaya *et al.*, 2021) ^[30, 25, 51].

The modern field of SHRM has received a lot of attention because it can affect the functioning of an organisation. The belief that companies need to acquire, develop and properly manage the skills and practices of world-class human resource in order to survive and compete in today's knowledge-based global economy is emerging. This belief led to research focusing on the impact of HRM / SHRM (also known as HRM Performance Link or HRM Performance Debate) on organisational performance (Darwish, 2013) ^[18]. The growing popularity of SHRM is primarily due to its clear commitment to improve the effectiveness of the organisation. This can be achieved by developing an internally consistent set of HR (Human Resource) practices and strategies that, according to the general model, are well-fitted or tailored to the context of an existing organisation (Dyer & Reeves, 1994) ^[20]. SHRM is not just about attracting, nurturing, and retaining potential individuals, but also creating a system that aligns your organisation's strategic plans with your organisation's HR strategy. Basically, it involves creating a strategy-centric organization. A consistent and integrated SHRM system can only be developed if an organization recognizes the strategic importance involved in managing people within the organization and moves forward (Bahuguna & Kumari, 2012) ^[10].

Since the mid-1990s, numerous studies have been conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom to establish a link between SHRM and organisational performance. In general, these studies are very positive about the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance, but give little explanation why certain HR practices can improve organisational performance (Millmore *et al.*, 2007; Handema & Haabazoka, 2020; Larina *et al.*, 2021) ^[25, 35, 31]. Armstrong (2008) ^[5] also observed that many scholars of human resource management try to establish that there was an apparent connection between HRM practices and organisational performance. For that reason, much research has been done in order to answer questions whether HRM practices have a positive impact on organisational performance and how this impact is attained.

Darwish (2012) ^[17] and Gituma and Beyene (2018) ^[22], made reference to other scholars who were of the view that most studies that have been carried out in order to find out the relationship between SHRM practices and organisational performance, have been carried out in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. "As a result, HRM researchers have commonly argued that it is still difficult to draw generalised conclusions from these results and that there was a need for further investigations in different contexts" (Darwish, 2012, p. 217) ^[17].

According to Gituma and Beyene (2018) ^[22] and Ilukena *et al.*, (2023) ^[27] SHRM is at the heart of all organizations, especially the public sector, helping people working in the public sector adapt to changing government roles. The need for public sector skills and knowledge in the areas of policy making, organisational management and public service delivery is more needed than ever. They were also of the view that studies on the linkage between SHRM practices and organisational performance that have been carried out in the African perspective, are very few. Hence, at the time of conducting this research, the researcher did not find any record of a study that had been carried out in Zambia on the research topic and specifically in a public sector organization. In addition, the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia has in place the Human Resource Department which spearheads the formulation and implementation of SHRM practices at the Institution such as organisation, resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward management and employees' welfare. However, the impact that these SHRM practices have on organisational performance at the Institution is not known. Therefore, the researcher tried to examine the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance (employee commitment, employee performance and service delivery) by making specific reference to the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia.

2. AIM and Objectives

The main aim of the study was to examine the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia. In line with the main aim, the study aimed to meet the following objectives:

1. To assess the SHRM practices and their impact on organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly
2. To make recommendations to National Assembly Management on the SHRM practices inadequacy revealed by the research.

3. Significance of the study

This examination on the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia is important because it may help relevant authorities in appraising whether SHRM practices have an impact on organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly. The research may also be useful for informing relevant authorities on the effectiveness of HRM practices. Further, the research will provide feedback to management at the Zambia National Assembly which may be used for evaluation and control.

Further, the study contributed to the body of knowledge on the topic of SHRM practices and organisational performance. Furthermore, the research was an academic requirement for the researcher, as a student of Master of Science in HRM.

4. Review of Related Literature

4.1. Concept of SHRM

According to O'riordan (2017) ^[42], textbooks and commentators have increasingly referred SHRM instead of HRM, Since the 1990s. One of the key characteristics of HRM is that, it is strategic. This means that human resource policies and practices are influenced by the organization's overall goals, which is great. However, the terms SHRM and HRM have often been used interchangeably and the difference between the two is primarily conceptual and academic. In essence, strategic HRM is a concept; it is a broad understanding of how to achieve integration or 'fit' between HR and business strategies, the advantages of taking a longer-term view of where HR should go and how to get there, and how to develop and implement coherent and mutually supportive HR strategies (Armstrong, 2014; Mwanumo *et al.*, 2020) ^[7]. O'riordan (2017) ^[42] described SHRM as an interface between HRM and strategic management. In other words, it explains how the future development of an organisation and the achievement of its goals are supported by its human resource policies and practices. According to Armstrong (2014) ^[7] and Handema & Haabazoka, (2020) ^[25], SHRM includes the application of policies and practices in the design and development of organizations, recruitment, learning and development, performance and compensation, and the provision of services that improve employee well-being.

4.2. Concept of organisational performance

Darwish, (2013) ^[18] cited Rogers and Wright (1998) who were of the view that organisational performance is one of the most widely used dependent variables in organizational studies today, but it is still one of the most imprecise and loosely defined. Over the years, researchers have struggled to find clear and concise meaning for organizational performance not only in the area of human resources management, but in many other areas as well. However, Universalia (2021) developed the Institutional and Organisational Assessment (IOA) Model which can be used to assess organisational performance. This model defines performance in the context of the organisation's effectiveness, efficiency, ongoing relevance and financial viability. Gituma and Beyene (2018) ^[22] made reference to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (2002) which states that depending on the nature of the organisation, various indicators such as effectiveness,

efficiency, customer satisfaction and financial leverage should be used to evaluate organisational performance. Satyendra (2020) ^[48] states that organizational performance is the process of enhancing both the effectiveness of the organization and the well-being of its employees through planned interventions. It refers to the actual output or results of the organisation as measured against its intended outputs, goals and objective. Further, Satyendra (2020) ^[48] states that there are four types of organisational performance measures namely; human resource outcomes, organizational outcomes, financial accounting outcome, and capital market outcomes. Human resource outcomes are related to change in employees' behaviour which includes employees' satisfaction, turn over, and absenteeism. For this study, organisational performance was operationally defined as the human resource outcomes in terms of employee commitment, employee performance and service delivery.

4.3. SHRM and Organisational Performance

According to (Millmore, Lewis, Saunders, Thornhill, & Morrow, 2007) ^[35], one of the main concerns of researchers in the past years has been to demonstrate that there was a cause-link between HR and organisational performance. However, Armstrong (2014) ^[7] was of the view that many studies have shown a link between HRM and performance, but it leaves uncertainty about the cause and effect. "HR practices seem to matter; logic says it is so; survey findings confirm it. Direct relationships between performance and attention to HR practices are often fuzzy, however, and vary according to the population sampled and the measures used." (Armstrong, 2014: p. 54; Ilukena *et al.*, 2023; Larina *et al.*, 2021)) ^[7, 31, 27] "After hundreds of research studies we are still in no position to assert with any confidence that good HRM has an impact on organization performance." (Armstrong, 2014: p. 54; Ilukena *et al.*, 2023; Larina *et al.*, 2021)) ^[7, 31, 27]. There was no consensus among researchers on what HRM practices should be or how many practices can improve the performance of an organization. Almost all studies of HRM-Performance Links use different combinations of HR practices. there was no standard or semi-standard list of HR practices that need to be considered and measured in terms of their relationship to organizational performance (Darwish, 2013) ^[18].

The summary of the empirical studies on SHRM and organisational performance is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of empirical studies

Author(s)	Country/region	Study title	Study results
Mohammad <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Jordan	Impact of HRM on organisational performance	HRM practices such as compensation management practices lead to high performance
Costas <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Cyprus	SHRM and organisational performance: A study of university administrators in Cyprus	SHRM has strong positive effect on organisational performance
Iqbal (2018)	New Zealand	The SHRM and organisational performance: The mediating role of creative climate	Managers need to design SHRM policies and practices that are aligned with creative climate and organisational performance
Al Adresi and Darun (2017)	Lybia	Determining relationship between SHRM practices and organizational commitment	Employees are more committed to the organisation when they get best SHRM
Hamid (2013)	Tunisia	SHRM and performance: the universalistic approach-case of Tunisia	The implementation level of certain SHRM practices positively influences firm performance
Subramaniam <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Malaysia	Linking HRM practices and organisational performance: Evidence from small and medium organisations in Malaysia	All dimensions of SHRM practices except job security showed positive relationships to organisational performance
Research Gap		The studies did not analysis organisational performance in terms of employee commitment, employee performance and service delivery. Further, none of the studies analysed SHRM practices and Organisational Performance using a case of the Zambia National Assembly. It must also be noted that very few studies have been done on SHRM and organisation performance in the African context. Further, no evidence of such a study was found to have been done in Zambia.	

5. Theoretical and conceptual framework

5.1. Theoretical Framework

The study was underpinned by the contingency theory. Contingency theories posit that for different levels of the critical contingency variable, the relationship between the relevant independent variable and the dependent variable will be different (Delery and Doty, 1996) ^[19]. Thus, the most important factor in the SHRM literature is considered to be the organizational strategy. The emphasis of the best fit approach is the importance of ensuring the appropriateness of HR strategies to the state of affairs of the organization including its culture, operational process and external environment. The needs of both the organization and its people have to be taken into account when formulating HR strategies.

However, Darwish (2013) ^[18] and Yankovskaya *et al.*, (2021) ^[57] states that the approach to contingencies is not without

criticism. This approach poses a variety of problems when it comes to instrumental and systematic questions. For example, the problem of multiple contingencies can complicate measurements. HR practices can change continuously if the environment is very dynamic and complex and there are multiple inseparable contingencies. Another problem is that organizations are unable to treat their employees consistently over time. The treatment method changes according to the external pressure.

5.2. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

A conceptual framework in Figure 1 based on SHRM practices (organisation, resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward management and employee welfare) was formulated in order to examine their impact on organisational performance in terms of employee commitment, employee performance and service delivery.

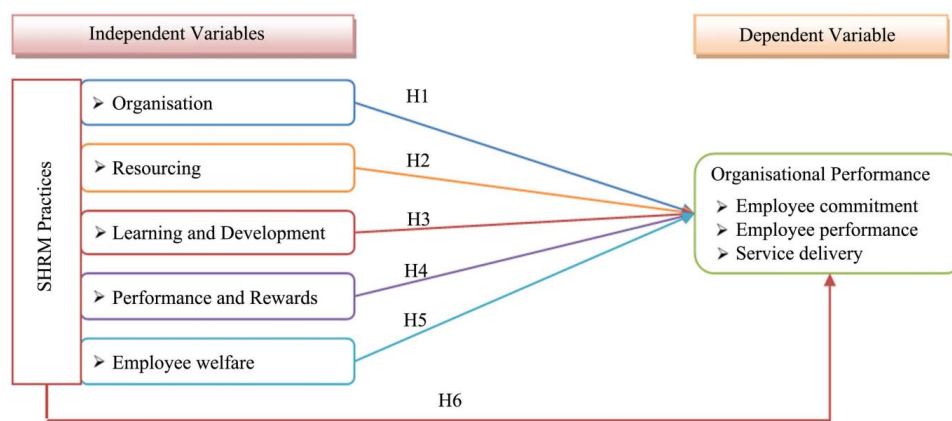


Fig 1: Conceptual framework for SHRM practices on organisational performance

The following hypotheses were formulated using the conceptual framework:

H1: Organisation has a positive impact on organisational performance

H2: Resourcing has a positive impact organisational performance

H3: Learning and Development has a positive impact organisational performance

H4: Performance and Rewards management has an impact on organisational performance

H5: Employee welfare has an impact on organisational performance

H6: there was a relationship between all HRM practices and organisational performance

6. Methodology and Research Design

The research design used in this study was the quantitative survey design. The study was conducted at the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia main building, the Zambia National Assembly Motel and some selected Constituency Offices across the country. In this case, the study population for this research were the employees of the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia totaling 1,200. The researcher employed Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula to estimate the sample size for this study as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size,

N = population of the study,

e = margin of error percentage

Given the population (N) of 1,200 and margin of error (e) of 5%, the sample size for this study was found to be 174 based on the aforementioned formula. The study employed purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires rated on a 5-point Likert scale whilst secondary data was obtained from books, magazines, journals and reports. Data collected was analysed using descriptive, correlation and multiple regression analyses using SPSS software. In collecting data, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to all the participants before requesting them to participate. Consequently, all the participants gave prior approval to participate in the study and they were not identified by name. Data collected was used only for the research purpose and it was treated as confidential. The research findings and the interpretations were done in an honest manner and objectivity was also exercised. Reliability and validity were enhanced through pre-testing the questionnaires. More so, Cronbach's Alpha test for reliability was used in this study.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1. Response rate

While 174 questionnaires were distributed to selected employees, only 165 questionnaires were successfully collected, representing 95% response rate. This implied that

the data collected were adequate to attain the objectives of the research.

7.2. Results for the Cronbach test for reliability

Table 1 shows that the Cronbach’s Alpha values for all the independent variables (organization, resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward management and employee welfare) tested were > 0.7. The dependent variable also had a value of > 0.7. Ursachi *et al.* (2015) [55] states that the common accepted rule is that α of 0.6 to 0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability whilst α of 0.8 or greater indicated very good level of reliability.

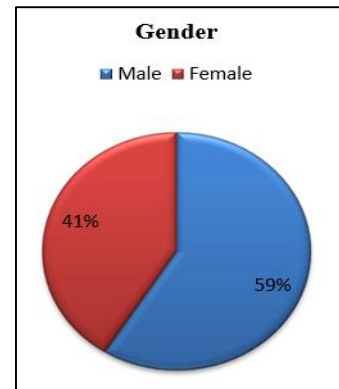
Table 2: Test of Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Organisation	.841	6
Resourcing	.732	6
Learning and Development	.709	6
Performance and Reward Management	.723	6
Employee Welfare	.785	6
Organisational Performance Indicators	.746	6

Source: Survey Data (2022)

7.3. Demographic Information for the Respondents

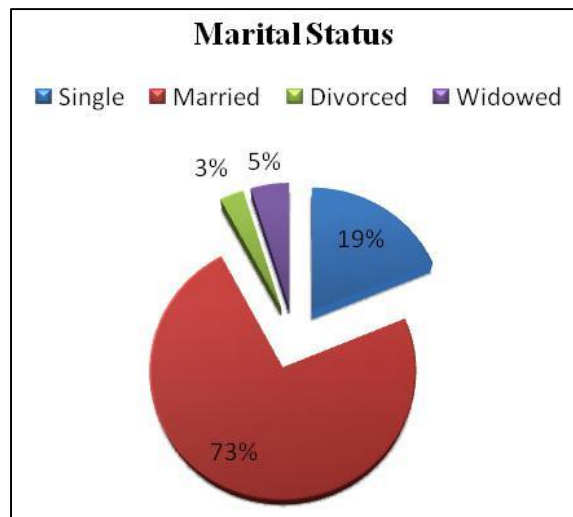
Figure 2 below shows that 59% of the respondents on gender were male while 41% were female.



Source: Survey data (2022)

Fig 2: Gender distribution of the respondents

Further, Figure 3 below indicates that 3% of the respondents indicated that they were divorced while 5%, 19% and 73% indicated that they were widowed, single and married, respectively.

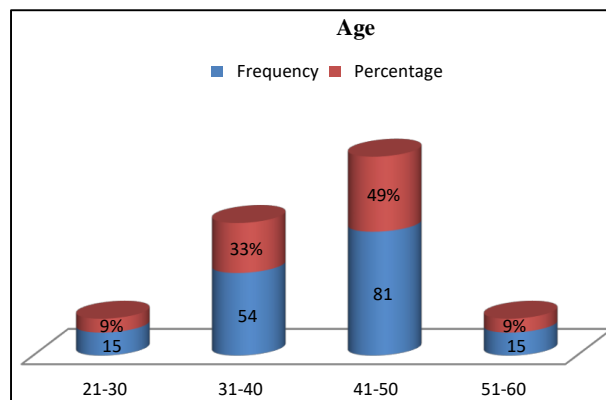


Source: Survey Data (2022)

Fig 3: Marital status of the respondents

Figure 4 below shows that 9% and 33% were aged between 21 – 30 and 31 – 40, respectively. Further, 49% and 9% were

aged between 41 – 50 and 51 – 60, respectively.

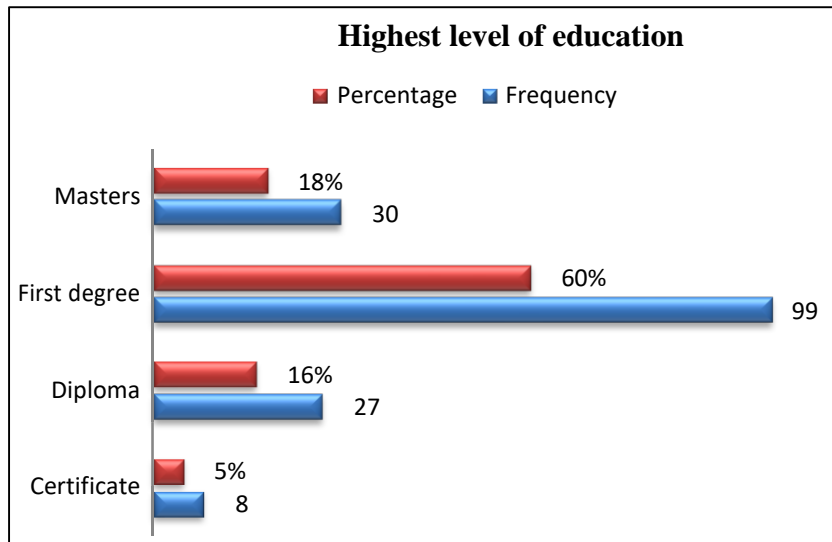


Source: Survey Data (2022)

Fig 4: Respondent's age

Figure 5 indicates that 5% were grade had a certificate as the highest level of education. Those who had a diploma were 27 representing 16%. 99 respondents, representing 60% had a

first degree and 30 respondents representing 18% had a master’s degree as highest level of education.

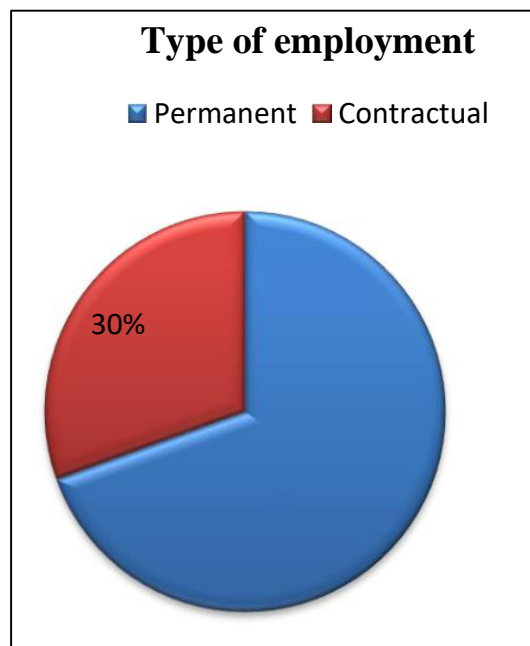


Source: Survey Data (2022)

Fig 5: Respondent's highest level of education

Further, Figure 6 shows that the type of employment for 70% of the respondents was permanent and 30% of the

respondents had contractual type of employment.

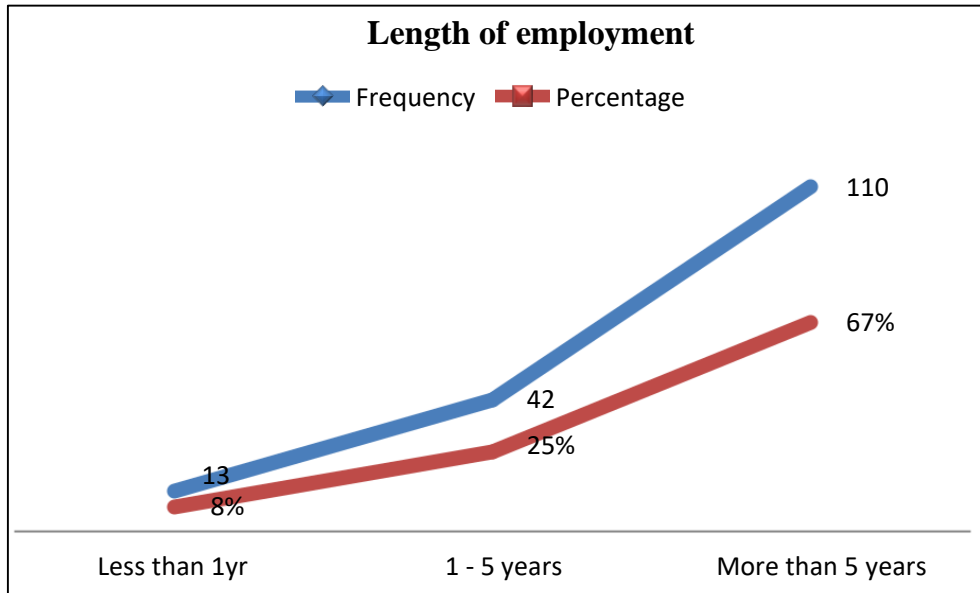


Source: Survey Data (2022)

Fig 6: Respondent's type of employment

In Figure 7, 8% had a length of employment of less than 1 year. 42 respondents and 110 respondents, representing 25%

and 67% had a length of employment of 1 – 5 years and more than 5 years, respectively.



Source: Survey Data (2022)

Fig 7: Respondent's length of employment

7.4. Correlation results for SHRM practices and organizational performance

In this research, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (*r*) was used to establish the relationship between SHRM practices and organizational performance. This was done in order to find out whether there was a correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable before addressing the main objective of this research. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Variable		Organisational Performance
Organisation	Pearson Correlation	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.477
	N	165
Resourcing	Pearson Correlation	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	165
Learning and development	Pearson Correlation	.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	165
Performance and Reward Management	Pearson Correlation	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	165
Employee welfare	Pearson Correlation	.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	165
All SHRM practices	Pearson Correlation	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	165

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

The results in Table 3 revealed a weak, positive correlation between organisation and organisational performance ($r = .056, p = .477$). Since the $p > .05$, it means that there was no statistically significant correlation between organisation and organisational performance.

More so, Table 2 indicates that a strong, positive correlation between resourcing and organizational performance ($r = .504, p = .001$). Since the $p < .05$, it means that there was

statistically significant correlation between resourcing and organisational performance.

Table 2 shows a strong, positive correlation ($r = .605, p = .001$). With the $p < .05$ implying a statistically significant correlation between learning and development and organisational performance.

Further, Table 2 shows that there was a strong, positive correlation ($r = .526, p = .001$). With the $p < .05$, there was statistically significant correlation between performance and reward management and organisational performance.

The results in Table 2 indicated a strong, positive correlation between employee welfare and organisational performance ($r = .457, p = .001$). Since the $p < .05$, it means that there was statistically significant correlation between employee welfare and organisational performance.

Lastly, Table 2 indicated that there was a strong, positive correlation between all SHRM practices and organisational performance ($r = .611, p = .001$). With the $p < .05$, there was statistically significant correlation between all HRM practices and organisational performance.

7.5. Regression results for SHRM and organisational performance

In order to find out the impact of SHRM practices on organisational performance, a multiple linear regression analysis was done. Table 3 presents the model summary.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.663 ^a	.439	.421	.42428

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Welfare, Organisation, Resourcing, Performance and Reward Management, Learning and Development

Table 3 indicates an R Square of .439 which means that about 44% of the organizational performance could be credited to the collective impacts of SHRM practices. Further, Table 4 shows that this variance was highly significant as indicated by the ANOVA F value ($F = 24.893$ and $P < 0.01$).

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	22.405	5	4.481	24.893	<.001 ^b
1	Residual	28.622	159	.180		
	Total	51.028	164			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Welfare, Organisation, Resourcing, Performance and Reward Management, Learning and Development

The researcher proceeded in estimating the regression model where the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 6: Coefficients ^a model

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.274	.322		3.955	<.001
	Organisation	-.064	.058	-.068	-1.119	.265
	Resourcing	.100	.094	.101	1.065	.289
	Learning and Development	.326	.095	.330	3.449	<.001
	Performance and Reward Management	.145	.073	.172	1.982	.049
	Employee Welfare	.191	.058	.222	3.260	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Performance

The model also gave an explanation that if all other predictor variables are taken at zero, a unit decrease in organization would lead to -.064 decrease in Organizational Performance. A unit increase in resourcing would lead to .100 increase in Organizational Performance. Further, the model showed that a unit increase in the learning and development would lead to .326 increase in Organizational Performance. Furthermore, the model exhibited that a unit increase in performance and rewards management would lead to lead to .145 increase in Organizational Performance and a unit increase in Employee Welfare would lead to .191 increase in Organizational Performance at the Zambia National Assembly. Mdhlalose

(2020) ^[34] also found that Training and Development has a positive impact on the overall. In a study on SHRM practices and organizational performance, Gituma and Beyene (2018) ^[22], found that performance appraisal positively influence performance.

7.6 Summary of hypothesis results

The hypothesis test results from the correlation and regression analyses are summarised in Table 6. From the results, all the research hypothesis except for H1 were accepted.

Table 7: Summary of hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Decision at 5% level
H1: Organisation has a positive impact on organisational performance	Rejected
H2: Resourcing has a positive impact organisational performance	Accepted
H3: Learning and Development has a positive impact organisational performance	Accepted
H4: Performance and Rewards management has an impact on organisational performance	Accepted
H5: Employee welfare has an impact on organisational performance	Accepted
H6: There was a relationship between all HRM practices and organisational performance	Accepted

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

Based on the results it can be concluded that the implementation of SHRM practices can effectively enhance performance of the Zambia National Assembly. The study results were adequate to attain the aim and research objectives. The correlation results for this study established that there was a weak relationship between organisation and organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly. However, the correlation results showed a strong relationship between resourcing and organisational performance. There was also a strong relationship between learning and development and organisational performance. Further, performance and reward management as well as employee welfare also showed a strong relationship with organisational performance. In general, the correlation results revealed that there was a strong relationship between all SHRM practices and organisational performance at the Zambia National Assembly.

The study therefore concluded that learning and development, performance and reward management and employee welfare have significant impacts on performance of National Assembly. Based on findings of the study, the researcher was able to formulate recommendations that may be useful to the management at the Zambia National Assembly in the implementation of SHRM practices. The recommended the need for institutional transparency, employee engagement and access to information by the employees at the Zambia National Assembly. The study also indicated the need for management at the Zambia National Assembly to review the organisational structure. The study also recommended that the Zambia National Assembly should also have a deliberate policy on continuous professional development as well as a succession plan policy. Numerous issues suitable for further studies arose from this study including the need for future studies to be conducted in other public Institutions in Zambia in order to validate the

findings of this study.

There are usually limitations when conducting research. This is because a single study is not able to deal with all facets of the problem. This study's limitation was that it only used quantitative methods for data collection. Therefore, the study was unable to capture people's emotions, attitudes and behaviours. Also, the researcher did not have an opportunity to ask the participants questions using an open-ended questionnaire which would have resulted in both qualitative and quantitative methods research methods. Another limitation was that the study focused only on the Zambia National Assembly of Zambia thereby the researcher not being able to generalised the findings to other public Institutions.

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