

## **EMPLOYEES' EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REWARD MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: A CASE STUDY OF ZIMBABWE NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING COUNCIL (ZNFPC)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study explores employees' evaluation of the relationship between reward and organisational strategies in the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council. Theoretical propositions and empirical research evidence have highlighted the significance of direct links between rewards and organisational performance. A sample of sixty-seven (67) participants comprising top and middle managers and, lower level employees based at Head Office in Harare were interviewed using a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive analysis. The key findings showed that the majority of the participants reported lack of integration between rewards and organisational strategy. They further reported low levels of appreciation for their efforts and contributions by the organisation. The key recommendations are that the organisation should continuously review human resource management practices and consider performance-related remuneration that can be directly related to accomplishment of operational and strategic goals. In addition, top management need to engage the parent ministry and key stakeholders to support implementation of reward strategies and HRM practices that enhance organisational performance.

**KEYWORDS:** Reward Management, Organisational Strategy, Strategic Human Resource Management

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reward strategies should be integrated with the business objectives in order for the organisation to achieve competitive advantage (Brown, 2001). A tight link between reward management and business strategy contributes to the development of employee behaviours that are consistent with the business strategy (Armstrong et al. 2005:267). Thus reward policies and practices play a significant part in achieving strategic goals and influencing the underpinning organisational culture (Armstrong and Murlis, 2007: 237). Becker and Gerhart (1996) point out that the alignment between reward systems and the organisational strategy is critical for the effective attainment of organisational goals. In turn, Gomez-Mejia et al (1992) highlight the need for modern-day firms to align reward strategies with organisational strategies in order to achieve higher levels of performance at both the individual and organisational levels. Armstrong (2010) suggests that reward management strategies and practices contribute to the improvement of organisational performance and enhances employee attraction, retention and engagement. Schuler and Jackson (1999) posit that the integration between human resource (HR) and business strategy contributes to the effective management of human resources, improvement in organisational performance and the overall success of the organisation. In addition, they point out the importance of *vertical integration* between human resource management (HRM) practices and the organisational strategic management

process. Wright and McMahan (1992) reiterate that vertical integration is critical in aligning organisational goals with HR activities. Schuler and Jackson (1987) add that vertical integration ensures that HRM responds to business challenges and contributes to the development of core competences. In contrast, Baird and Meshoulam (1988) describe *horizontal integration* as the congruence among the various human resource management practices (e.g. resourcing, remuneration, performance management, human resources development) essential for standardising the implementation of effective and efficient HRM practices. While Armstrong (2010) asserts that horizontal integration ensures that the different elements of the HR strategy fit together and are mutually supportive. However, Schuler (1992:20) cautions that ‘melding business needs with HR activities is challenging, mainly because linkages between HR activities and business needs tend to be the exception, even during non-turbulent times’.

Purwanti et al (2010) reiterate that reward strategies motivate and energise employees through recognising the achievement of employees. In many ways, the positive organisational outcomes derived from integrating reward and business strategies include retention of high performers; enhancing financial performance and attracting key talent (World-at-work, 2010). Brown (2001) reported some positive relationship between rewards and business strategy in the broadest sense. While, Cox and Purcell (1995) point out that the real benefits of a well-designed organisational reward strategy lies in its complex linkages with the business strategy. As a result, the integration of reward systems supports the achievement of competitiveness (Armstrong 2003; Beer,1984). Babakus et al (2003) point out that positive employee perceptions on the reward strategy influences their attitude towards the organisation. This is supported by Rhoades et al (2001) who state that the reward strategy plays a critical role in motivating employees to perform creatively. In turn, Nguwi (2013:2) asserts that the only way to ensure the continued viability of companies in the midst of challenging economic environments as was the case for Zimbabwean organisations when this study was conducted is to focus on reward management and organisational performance.

The organisation under investigation in this study, the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC) is a parastatal established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 and falls under the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The organisation is mandated to co-ordinate the provision of family planning (FP) services in Zimbabwe. The core services include the provision of technical assistance/support and quality control for all public and private FP service providers; training, marketing and communications for FP and other reproductive health (RH) issues; youth reproductive health; RH research; the procurement and distribution of contraceptives for the whole country. The organisation operates thirteen (13) clinics country-wide. This study examines employees’ evaluation of the relationship between reward management strategy and organisational strategy, in particular, how rewards offered by the organisation influence employees’ motivation towards meeting the stated organisational strategy. The research contributes to the body of knowledge on the nature of and influence of reward management strategies on the attainment of organisational strategies within the public sector in Zimbabwe, a developing country.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM)

Strategic human resources management (SHRM) postulates that the development and implementation of HR strategies should be integrated with business strategies (Armstrong and Taylor, 2013:16). Baird and Meshoulam (1988:116) state that ‘business objectives are accomplished when human resource practices, procedures and systems are

developed and implemented based on organizational needs, that is, when a strategic perspective to human resource management is adopted'. This is reiterated by Schuler and Jackson (2007:5) who point out that SHRM is about 'systematically linking people with the firm'. In addition, Walker (1992) highlighted that the SHRM concept places emphasis on the alignment between the human resources management practices and the organizational strategy. From this perspective, SHRM enables organisations to attain competitive advantage through creating unique HRM systems that cannot be imitated by others (Barney, 1991). While, Greer (1995) points out that SHRM links corporate strategy and HRM in order to enhance the exploitation of opportunities in the business environment. In turn, Armstrong and Murlis (2004) point out that reward strategies determine the direction in which reward management innovations and developments should be integrated with the business strategy. Notwithstanding the SHRM propositions cited above, Armstrong (2010) cautions that reward management is one of the most technical of the HR practices and can fail badly if not embedded as part of a holistic approach to HR.

### **Reward Management**

Armstrong (2003:13) define reward management as a process concerned with the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies that aim to reward people fairly, equitably and consistently in accordance with their value to the organisation. Schwab and Smadja (1995) point out that reward management is not just about attaching value but about rewarding people according to the value they create through recognising and paying them in ways that meet or exceed their expectations. The point is reiterated by Wood (1999) that the aim of reward management is to attract a highly qualified and competent workforce that is motivated to perform at high levels. In addition, Murlis and Armstrong (1996) point out that rewards support the achievement of business goals by ensuring that the organisation has talented and engaged people. Similarly, reward management plays an important role in supporting and developing the organisation culture through linking rewards to behaviour (Armstrong et al. 2010). Further, Schneider (1987) pointed out that reward management is a motivational tool that can be used to channel employee efforts towards attainment of organisational goals and showing concern for the value they create in the organisation. Schwab and Smadja (1995) emphasise that reward management should be based on a well-articulated philosophy, underpinned by a set of beliefs and guiding principles that are consistent with the values of the organisation. Similarly, Armstrong (2007) highlights that reward management should work in tandem with the strategies, policies and processes that enhance the employees' contribution towards organisational objectives.

Armstrong and Brown (2006) pointed out that the components of reward management should consist of financial, non-financial rewards and employee benefits which together constitute total remuneration. From this perspective, the concept of total remuneration takes cognizance of the fact that there is more that employees want and value other than just money in an employment relationship (Armstrong 2003). As a result, a prudent reward strategy should focus on attracting, retaining and motivating employees and enhance their contribution towards achievement of organisational goals. Brown (2001) notes that an effective reward management must have clearly defined goals and a well-defined link to business objectives. He further points out that a well-designed pay and reward programme should be tailored to the needs of the organisation and its people.

A study by Sohail and Al-Ghamdi (2012) in Saudi Arabia showed that organisational performance improved when reward practices were in sync with generic business strategies. In turn, Ong and Teh (2012) reported some direct

relationship between total rewards systems and organisational performance in Malaysian manufacturing companies. Similarly, Scott et al (2010) reported some positive relationships between total rewards, employee engagement programs and organisation performance. This supports observations by Edirisooriya (2014) on the positive link between employee performance and goal-oriented rewards in the public sector in Sri Lanka.

Onyango (2014) examined the effects of rewards on organisation performance in public primary schools in Kenya and showed that employee rewards significantly affected organisational performance. While Ozutku's (2012) study in Turkish manufacturing companies showed some positive relationship between reward practices and organisational performance. Mehmood et al. (2013) examined the relationship between incentive-based reward systems and organisational performance in different types of business organisations in Pakistan. They showed that the majority of employees were dissatisfied with incentive-based pay, While Karami et al (2013) explored the effectiveness of reward management on organization performance in Iran and showed that reward management systems had some positive effect on employee motivation and the success of the business strategy.

Aktar et al (2012) examined the relationship between rewards and employee performance among executive level employees in commercial banks in Bangladesh. They reported some positive relationship between levels of employee motivation and rewards. In turn, Danish (2010) reported some positive relationship between employee motivation and job satisfaction in Pakistan. Harunavamwe and Kanengoni (2013) explored the relationship between monetary and non-monetary rewards on motivation among lower level employees in selected retail shops in South Africa. They observed some weak relationships between rewards, motivation and organisational strategy. In contrast, Chiboiwa and Chipunza (2010) reported positive relationships between reward strategies and employee motivation in selected private organisations in Zimbabwe.

Terera and Ngirande (2014) explored the impact of rewards on job satisfaction and employee retention among nurses in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. They showed that employee rewards were positively related to employee retention although this did not result in job satisfaction among the nurses. On the other hand, Head and Eshwar (2014) reported some positive relationship between rewards and motivation on job satisfaction among employees in the public and private sector commercial banks in India. In turn, Kwenin et al (2013) reported some positive relationship between job satisfaction, rewards, human resources policies and employee retention in Vodafone Ghana Limited.

On the other hand, San and Theen (2012) explored the function of reward systems in small to medium enterprises in Malaysia and showed some positive integration between reward systems and the business strategy. Hafiza (2011) explored the relationship between rewards, employee motivation and strategy in three non-profit organisations in Pakistan and reported some direct relationship between extrinsic rewards and employee motivation. Similarly, a study by Pratheepkanth (2011) reported some positive relationship between rewards and business strategy in commercial banks in Sri Lanka. In turn, Snelgar et al. (2013) explored categories of rewards considered important by employees and the impact of these reward categories on an organisation's ability to attract, motivate and retain employees among medium to large size organisations in South Africa. Their findings showed that most employees preferred adequate basic pay to any other category of rewards. Schneider (1987) reiterates that reward management should be used as an employee motivational tool to enhance the value they create for the organisation.

## Business Strategy

A business strategy is concerned with the match between the internal capabilities of the company and its ability to exploit opportunities in the external environment (Kay, 1999). Chandler (1962) defined strategy as concerning the determination of the basic long-term goals, adoption of courses of action and allocation of resources necessary for carrying out the goals. In turn, Ansoff (1969:7) defined strategy as 'a set of management guidelines which specify the firm-product market position, the directions in which the firm seeks to grow and change, the competitive tools it will employ, the means by which it will enter new markets, the manner in which it will configure its resources, the strengths it will seek to exploit and conversely the weaknesses it will seek to avoid.

Strategy is a concept of the firm's business which provides a unifying theme for all its activities'. Similarly, Porter (1991) states that business strategy is about obtaining a competitive position that leads to superior and sustainable financial performance. In addition, Quinn (1980) points out that strategy enables an organisation to achieve competitive advantage through deployment of unique capabilities while focusing on the present and future direction of the organisation.

## Rewards and Business Strategy

The integration between rewards and business strategy contributes to the effective management of HR and improvement in organisational performance (Schuler and Jackson, 1999). This is supported by Huselid et al (1997) who stated that the relationship between rewards and business strategy helps organisations to achieve competitive advantage by creating unique HRM systems that cannot be imitated by others. Similarly, Truss et al (1997) pointed out that the integration between rewards and corporate strategy provides a broad range of solutions for solving complex organisational problems. Purcell (1989) notes that the integrative linkage between rewards and business strategy enhances business development. Guess (1987) adds that the fit between rewards and business strategy enhances the principle of complementarities (mutuality) of rewards and business strategy that generates employee commitment.

World-at-work (2010) observed that the integration between total rewards and business strategy is achieved through the direct involvement of senior executives responsible for total rewards in business strategy development. Gohari et al (2013) explored the relationship between rewards, employee performance and business strategy among different employee levels within two Malaysian Tourism companies. They reported that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards had positive relationships with the attainment of the business strategy. While Jehanzeb et al (2012) investigated the impact of rewards and motivation on business strategy in the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia and reported the benefits of the alignment between rewards and organisational goals. Musenze et al (2013) examined the relationship between rewards and business strategy among academic, administrative and support staff at Busoga University in Uganda. They reported improvements in organisational performance arising from the alignment between rewards and business strategy.

Chomal and Baruah (2014) explored the relationship between performance-linked reward practices and job satisfaction levels among different employee categories in the Indian banking sector. Their observations showed differences by employee levels on the relationship between performance-linked rewards, job satisfaction and attainment of business strategy. While Khalid et al. (2011) examined the influence of rewards on motivation, job satisfaction and business strategy within the private and public water utility organizations in Malaysia. They reported some variation in perceptions on the relationship between rewards and employee motivation and job satisfaction and attainment of the

business strategy within the public and private sectors. The key reason cited in the study was that public sector employees enjoyed better rewards in the form of pensions, job security and related welfare policies compared to private sector employees. On the other hand, Wambugu and Ombui (2013) examined the influence of reward strategies on employee and organisational performance among teaching and non-teaching staff in Kenya. They reported some positive relationship between reward strategies and employee performance.

In view of the preceding theoretical and empirical evidence, this study explores employees' evaluation of the relationship between reward management and the organisational strategy in the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC), a parastatal under the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The study contributes to the body of researched evidence on the influence of reward management strategies on the achievement of strategic goals in public institutions in developing countries.

## METHODOLOGY

An exploratory case study design was adopted in the study. Yin (2013) points out that the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context within which it is studied are not clearly evident within a case study. This approach is important in gaining rich understanding of the research context and the process being enacted (Morris and Wood 1991). This provides considerable opportunities to generate answers to the questions *why*, *what* and *how* (Saunders et al 2009). The population of the study comprised all employees based at the ZNFPC Head Office in Harare.

Sixty-seven (52 males and 15 females) employees participated in this study. The ages ranged from 18 years to over 65 years. The qualifications profiles showed that 22% held Ordinary & Advanced Levels, 36% had college diplomas, 28% had undergraduate degrees and 13% held post-graduate degrees. The work role categories showed that 6% were in top management (director) positions, 19% were divisional/departmental managers while 50% were lower level operational/front-line employees. Participants' work experience varied from 1-5 years (20%); 6-10 years (28%); 11-15 years (34%) and 16 years and above (18%). The researchers believed that the convenient sample (Saunders et al, 2009) were in a position to provide insights on the relationship between rewards and the organizational strategy, in particular, how the rewards management strategy influenced employees to pursue or otherwise the stated organizational goals.

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data in this study. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended items. Questionnaires are widely used in collecting survey information (Saunders et al. 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2007, Erikson and Kovalainen, 2008). The questionnaires were pilot-tested to check the relevance and usability of the items. All the questions were found to be clear to participants. Permission to carry out the study was granted by Head Office senior management. Participation in the study was voluntary and in order to ensure anonymity, participants were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire. In addition, participants were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of this study.

Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the data. Data are presented in Tables 1-3 below.

**RESULTS**

The findings of this study are presented in Tables 1-3.

**Table 1: Demographic Data (n=67)**

Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	52	78%
Female	15	22%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24 years	22	29%
25-34 years	23	31%
35-44 years	17	23%
Above 45 years	13	17%
<b>Educational levels</b>		
Ordinary & Advanced Level	15	22%
College Diploma	24	36%
Degree	19	28%
Postgraduate degree	9	13%
<b>Organisational level</b>		
Top management	4	6%
Divisional management	13	19%
Lower level	50	75%
<b>Work experience</b>		
1-5 years	13	20%
6-10 years	19	28%
11-15 years	23	34%
Above 16 years	12	18%

Table 1 shows that 78% of the respondents were male while 31% were between 25-34 years old and 34% had working experience ranging between 11-15 years. The qualifications profiles show that 36% held College diplomas and employee category representation shows that 50% were lower level employees.

**Table 2: Evaluation of the Relationship between Rewards and Organisational Goals**

	Yes	No	Not sure
Rewards are linked to organisational goals	6 (9%)	50 (75%)	11 (17%)
Rewards are linked to departmental goals	30(45%)	37 (55%)	

Table 2 shows that the majority (75%) of the respondents reported that they did not discern any link between rewards and achievement of organisational. In turn 55% reported lack of direct link between rewards and departmental goals.

**Table 3: The Relationship between Rewards and Motivation (n=67)**

Factor	Respondents
Am motivated by available financial & non-financial rewards	5 (7.20%)
Am not motivated by available financial & non-financial rewards	56 (83.40%)
Am unsure about the link between financial & non-financial rewards	6 (9.40%)
I prefer Performance-related pay	36 (53%)
I prefer adequate base pay	31 (47%)
Superiors do not appreciate my job role contribution	19 (28%)
Superiors recognise my role job role contribution	35(52%)
I feel empowered to do my job	21(31%)
Support & feedback is offered through Quarterly & Annual Performance appraisals	35 (52%)
Support & feedback is offered through Memos & Meetings	25 (38%)
Support & feedback is offered through refresher courses	7 (10%)

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents 83.40% were dissatisfied with the financial and non-financial rewards offered by the organisation. The majority (53%) of the respondents reported that they preferred a performance-related reward system. The significance of performance appraisals in terms of offering feedback and support was cited by 52% of the respondents.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings show that 75% reported lack of a direct link between rewards and organisational strategy, 9% of perceived some link between the two while 11% were unsure. In turn 55% reported lack of a link between rewards and departmental strategies compared to 45%. While the majority of the respondents (83.40%) reported that they were not motivated by the available financial and non-financial rewards. These findings support observations by Danish's (2010) that failure to align rewards with the business strategy affect employees' motivation towards achieving organisational and departmental goals. The importance of the direct link between rewards, employee performance and business strategy was echoed by Gohari et al (2013); Ozutku (2012) and Karami et al. (2013). The apparent disconnect between financial (extrinsic) and non-financial (intrinsic) rewards and motivation cited by the majority of participants does not augur well with recommendations from empirical evidence (e.g. Hafiza 2011; Pratheepkanth 2011; Jehanzeb et al, 2012; Musenze et al., 2013; Harunavamwe and Kanengoni, 2013; Wambugu and Ombui (2013)).

The direct link and effects of financial and non-financial rewards on employee motivation support observations by World-at-work (2010). The importance of performance-related pay as a reward management strategy was cited by 53% of the participants which concurs with observations by Chomal and Baruah (2014), Khalid et al. (2011) and Mehmood et al. (2013). Similarly, Nguwi (2013) highlighted the need for linking performance-related pay and performance particularly in challenging business environments as was the case for the Zimbabwean context when this study was carried out.

Respondents reported low levels of perceived appreciation (28%), empowerment (31%) and recognition (52%) of their personal contributions by superiors. This supports observations by Snelgar et al. (2013) on the need for managers to consider categories of rewards considered important by employees since these impact on the organisation's ability to attract, motivate and retain employees. The need to pay attention to these intangible aspects is echoed by Schneider (1987) that reward management should be used as a motivational tool to galvanise employee commitment towards adding value to the organisation. This reinforces the importance of rewards on job satisfaction and employee retention observed in studies by Terera and Ngirande (2014); Head and Eshwar (2014) and Kwenin et al (2013).

In many ways, the reported dissatisfaction with financial and non-financial rewards (83,40%) and the perceived negative relationship between rewards and business strategy (75%) points to the absence of an integrative linkage between rewards and business strategy (Purcell,1989), and *fit* between rewards and business strategy (e.g. Guess 1987; Brown, 2001).Broadly the underlying tenets of strategic human resource management which espouse the necessity for integration between HR and business strategies (e.g. Armstrong and Taylor, 2013; Schuler and Jackson, 2007; Barney, 1991;Greer (1995) are not evident in the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council.

## CONCLUSIONS

The perceived negative relationship between reward management and business strategy should be addressed by management. Dissatisfaction with rewards have implications for employee motivation, job satisfaction and commitment which affect execution of organisational strategies. In the case of ZNFPC, the consequences of poor remuneration on execution of its constitutional mandate has implications on human capital development as well as wider socio-economic developmental goals. Overall, the organisation should continuously review human resource management practices and consider introduction of performance-related pay. In addition, top management should engage the parent ministry and key stakeholders to avail resources to support organisational reward strategies and HRM practices that enhance organisational performance.

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