

The Impact of a Working Model on Employee Performance

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Abstract

There are many factors that influence how employees perform and this study focused on the working models. The type of a working model that an employee has access to (either by choice or default), has an impact on how they perform their job. This study was conducted at a South African bakery with the aim of evaluating the impact of a working model on employee performance. A mixed methods approach was adopted, where observations were conducted at the company's premises to notice and identify differences in customer queues, and employees' performance when the company expanded, and the company's top management was interviewed after the observations. Furthermore, 200 questionnaires were distributed to customers where 186 responses were received and showed a positive correlation between employee performance and customer service and satisfaction. Findings and the recommendation to use a rotational shift working model to improve employee performance proved that working models do affect employee performance. For future research, it is recommended to use other SERVQUAL tool constructs, and the use of larger sample sizes, different geographical locations, and various sectors to widen the generalization of the study findings related to employee performance as affected by working models.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The success of a company's operational aspects is largely dependent on satisfaction levels of its employees and customers at large, therefore, as Sarker and Ashrafi (2018) add, employee satisfaction is essential for ensuring higher revenues in an organisation. Working Models vary between flexible and fixed working models. Wysocka (2019) shares that organisation decide on a model that suits them, mostly based on factors such as type of service rendered and/or products produced, availability of labour, employee position, work processes, etc. This study is determined to examine the extent at which a working model influences employees' overall performance and customer service at a bakery and look at possible ways to adjust employees' working models. The world is constantly technologically changing, some of the work that needed full employee attention can now be incorporated with machine/robotics and allow an employee to work from home (Inuwa, 2016).

This study focuses on a growing bakery located in Gauteng, South Africa. The bakery recently expanded both its production capacity and operational space due to rapidly increasing demand for the goods it provides. The bakery is, however, faced with the challenge of decreased employee performance and numerous customer complaints related to service delivery. The focus is on company-wide workforce from top management to shop floor workers and customers with a specific emphasis on the employee performance in fixed and flexible hours working models and service delivered to customers. Currently, the company uses only a fixed hours (with two shifts, namely, day and night shifts) working model for employees at operational level.

1.2. Problem Statement

The bakery suddenly faced a consistent drop in employee performance after expanding the company and receiving large orders for goods; a few customers also began complaining about poor service delivered by the bakery employees. The problems can be summarized as: having unhappy employees, which could possibly lead to high employee turnover; the possibility of losing customers; and lastly, the risk of dropping sales further leading to profit diminutions. Companies increasingly face challenges with employee performance and customer service due to the increasingly competitive market striving to satisfy the ever-increasing customer demand and frequently changing technology (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017).

According to Yu, Burke, and Raad (2019), companies are continuously taking initiative of assessing the different working models to address the challenges of employee performance, and the ever-increasing demand from the customers. De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) emphasize that companies introduced a variety of working models in their workplaces to enhance employee performance. The study conducted by Wheatley (2017) indicates that the most employed working model recently is the

flexible hours working model, which is one that helps to ensure that employees maintain a work-life balance and achieve their productive hours what is expected of them, at their own pace.

1.3. Main Research Objective and Sub-Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether working models have an impact on employee performance and customer service and the extent thereof.

To achieve the above main research objective, the following research sub-objectives are to be achieved:

(1) To measure current employee performance compared to before the company expanded, (2) To investigate factors that affect employee performance relative to working models at the company, and (3) To develop a working model applicable and satisfactory to workers at operational level and will further result in improved customer service for the company.

2. Literature Review

The physical and mental health of workers does not only depend on what type of work they engage in at an organisation, but also on when they work and for how long they work (Bhui et al., 2016). The importance of understanding psychological effects of working models cannot be emphasised enough as it has been observed that many people work on working models that do not follow the typical 9-5, Monday to Friday work week. A working schedule refers to the days per week and the hours per day that employees are expected to be at their work. Organisations around the world have varying working models based on the organisation's goals and employees' positions (Theodoridis, 2017). These varying working models can also be influenced by time of the year, for example, certain jobs consist of working models that change based on seasons (Doyle, 2021). A work schedule is crucial to enable work-life balance (Feeney and Stritch, 2019). It is crucial for individuals to discuss working models with their employers to find out if it fits one's prior responsibilities (Feeney and Stritch 2019).

2.1 Types of Working Models

2.1.1. Shift working model

Shift work is a system of working that consists of differentiated work patterns in which one group of workers substitutes for another group during the workday, such that the organisation's operating hours exceeds a particular individual's work hours (Goffeng, 2018). Wickwire et al. (2017) define a shift worker, furthermore, as an individual that frequently starts or ends work outside of daytime hours (for example, starts at 6am and finishes at 6pm). Shift systems are different in the way they operate; continuous systems are those that operate twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week; semi-continuous systems are those that stop during the weekend and discontinuous systems are those that stop for a period during weekdays as well as the weekend (Wickwire et al., 2017). As defined by Goffeng (2018), rotating systems make a distinction where employees periodically change from one shift (for example, morning shift) to another shift (for example, night shift) and permanent arrangements in which workers only work one type of shift (for example, a morning or a night shift).

2.1.2 Compressed working model

It is a type of working model that allows employees to work a modern 35 to 40-hour work week in a period of less than five working days (Messenger, 2018). There are different options for compressed work schedules that organisations opt for, for example, a full-time employee could work ten hours each day for four days instead of eight hours each day for five days (Berkery et al., 2017). Another option that organisations opt for is for full-time employees to work nine days for full two weeks allowing for two weeks of work to be compressed into nine or nine and a half days of work; this option is largely preferred by staff members who require some flexibility in their schedule (Feeney and Stritch, 2019).

- Advantages and disadvantages of compressed working model

Benefits of working a compressed working model include less time spent commuting during a given week for staff members working under such a model; more time outside of work to take care of personal responsibilities (Berkery et al., 2017). The compressed working model allows employees to focus better and potentially be more productive, especially during non-traditional hours. It also enhances workspace efficiency and extends service hours (Berkery et al., 2017). However, the longer workdays can be physically and mentally taxing. Maintaining morale can be challenging, especially if not all employees follow this model, and arranging childcare and transportation can be tricky (Feeney and Stritch, 2019).

2.1.3 Overtime working model

Overtime working model constitutes hours worked by an employee that exceeds their normal scheduled working hours (Fontinha, Easton and Van Laar, 2019). Hours that are regarded as overtime include hours worked during holidays, vacation days, days on jury duty or witness leave and days on compensatory time off (Williamson, 2019).

- Advantages and disadvantages of overtime working model

The overtime working model offers both pros and cons. On the upside, it boosts earnings and benefits both employees and employers. It provides more time for tasks, addresses bottlenecks, covers for absent staff without hiring more, and allows for tasks outside regular hours like maintenance (Pulignano et al., 2020). Productivity rises as work extends, and dedicated employees can gain recognition and advancement opportunities. Overtime can be preferable to a second job, as it builds on familiar tasks and strengthens coworker bonds (Luther et al., 2017).

However, the downsides include higher overtime costs for companies, potential inefficiencies without managerial oversight, and risks to employee well-being. Extended hours can harm health, work quality, and personal life. Overwork can lead to fatigue, increased absenteeism, and unsafe practices (Rivard et al., 2020). While some prefer multiple jobs for extra income, it can demand new skills and adjustment. Excessive overtime, even in a loved job, might dampen enthusiasm and passion (Dawson et al., 2017).

2.1.4 Part-time working model

Yoon et al. (2018) define this working model as a form of employment that consists of fewer working hours per week compared to a full-time job. Normally, workers that are working part-time commonly work hours fewer than thirty hours per week (Dunn, 2018). Sarich (2020) notes that part-time work salary is calculated differently from full-time work salary and that employees who work part-time generally do not receive employment benefits such as medical aid, paid time-off and retirement fund as compared to full-time employees.

- Advantages and disadvantages of part-time working model

Working part-time offers several benefits, such as cost savings for companies and flexibility for employees (Jaworski et al., 2018). It can also lead to reduced stress, better health, and savings on transport for workers (Maatouk et al., 2018). However, part-timers might be less committed and have knowledge gaps compared to full-timers, gaining less experience due to fewer hours worked (Van Osch & Schaveling, 2020). While part-time work has more advantages for employees, its suitability depends on a company's needs (Joung et al., 2018).

2.1.5 Flexible hours working model

According to Chen et al. (2017), there is no universal definition of flexible hours working model, however, in general, this model should be defined in terms of flexibility about where, when, and how much an employee works. Flexible hours working models' availability depends largely on the type of industry. For example, in a non-exempted workplace; repeatedly industrial, production, warehousing or customer-facing such as retail, medical caregiving, grocery and service stations, a flexible hours working model depends on the amount of interdependence required in the work (Heathfield, 2021). Flexible hours working model is recently preferred by many organisations, and Heathfield (2021) suggests ways to make a flexible schedule work. He asserts that once an employee and employer have agreed upon a flexible working model, it is the employee's responsibility to accept it as their normal schedule. The quality and quantity of work delivered by the employee must match the efforts of their work so that employers believe that the employee is putting in their time and are indeed accomplishing their goals (Heathfield, 2021). For organisations to effectively implement a flexible hour working model, a set of guidelines should be clear, and employees must be inducted before the adoption of a flexible working model. When an organisation does that, confusion and unfair application will be limited (Heathfield, 2021).

- Advantages and disadvantages of flexible hours working model

Flexible working hours offer both pros and cons for employees and employers. Employees benefit from meeting family needs, saving on commute time and costs, and working during their most productive hours (Attaran et al., 2019). Employers see improved morale, less absenteeism, and a positive company

image. However, challenges arise when office staff coordinate with remote workers, blurring work-home boundaries (Janene-Nelson & Sutherland, 2020). Employers might face reduced efficiency without supervision, limited in-person availability, potential unfairness in remote work policies, and security concerns with cloud technology (Attaran et al., 2019). Still, Heathfield (2021) believes the pros outweigh the cons, and with good management, challenges can be addressed. Many companies now offer flexible work as a perk, boosting morale and productivity (Austin-Egole et al., 2020).

2.2 Employee Performance

Employee performance reflects how well someone does their job (Pradhan and Jena, 2018). It's a hot topic in organizational behavior and HR (Pradhan and Jena, 2018). Measuring performance can be delicate however using key performance indicators (KPIs) and job descriptions can help (Dasril, 2018). Performance management aligns employee actions with company goals (Rohr, 2016).

2.2.1 Employee Performance in Germany

According to Jermon (2016), Germany is a country with good reputation as regards to engineering related systems; however, that is not the case with employee performance evaluation systems. Since 2007, Germany has used a system that ranks employees (individually) based on quality work, skills' possession, promptness, team fairness and conflict management (Jermon, 2016). The evaluations are not considered formal as technology is not involved. The computer related evaluations are only performed annually, and they depend on specific job positions and gender, for example, males are more often evaluated than females and those who previously received negative analysis are frequently evaluated. Once evaluations have been completed, meetings are held with employers and employees right before evaluation results are computerised.

Andriani, Keet et al. (2018) assert that the results of performance evaluation are based on expert knowledge, working method and results, leadership, and social skill. A rating scale that was developed in a point form by the Federal Ministry of the Interior is used and employee salary is related to the number of points scored during the evaluation. Furthermore, Chuang et al. (2016) support this by mentioning that since Germany has been using this system no complaints have been received from employees. Kroll and Nuesch (2017) share that companies worldwide are gradually implementing the flexible work practices in which employees decide when, where and how long they stay engaged on work related tasks. Sabbaticals are becoming more of a norm in Germany, that is, paid leave from the work environment (Kroll and Nuesch, 2017).

2.2.2 Employee Performance in Indonesia

Employee performance in Indonesia's manufacturing companies has been in decline during the years 2015 and 2016 and leadership style is said to be the dominant factor in this decline (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). A company that manufactures, assembles, and exports printers in Indonesia faced issues that

were continually emerging, related to human resources that relate to employment such as leadership, motivation, and discipline (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). The study shows that these factors affect employee performance which further affects overall company performance (Muchtar et al., 2017). The study found that motivation has a positive noteworthy effect on employee performance, that is, if employees are highly motivated, their performance on required duties will also be high (Muchtar et al., 2017). Leadership style, motivation and discipline simultaneously affect employee performance positively. Suggestions are made for the company to improve disciplinary measures, followed by motivation, and lastly apply appropriate leadership styles for different work situations (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). It is crucial to know the potential of each employee in the company as an indicator of work performance and work ethic (Wahyuni and Irawan, 2020).

2.2.3 Employee Performance in United States of America

Organizations across the world have started using strategies involving both financial and non-financial measures to track employee progress, after realizing that the traditional strategic management was insufficient to make plans and remain competitive (Cignitas, et al., 2021). A study that evaluated the impact of a balanced scorecard (BSC) on employee performance in United States of America (USA) found a positive impact on employee well-being and overall performance. A BSC is a measure of employee well-being and performance that focuses on aspects beyond organization's financial goals, such as, staff training, increase in employee satisfaction, improvement of information and technology systems, harmonized working procedures, an increase of skill and morale, and customer satisfaction to achieve organizational long-term objectives (Cignitas et al., 2021). Sundararajan and Sudhakar (2018) mention that for performance to be assessed on a measurable basis, each employee's contribution to the organization's success should be measured, and BSC is a tool used to keep personnel activity actions, control, and monitor results. Recently, learning and growth perspectives have been identified as important perspectives of BSC, in which there are three measurements, namely, employee retention, satisfaction, and productivity (Wahyudin et al., 2021). These three measurements are the basis of core competencies and skills, technology, and organizational culture that is required to support organizational strategy (Wahyudin et al., 2021). Using these measures, the results of the study conducted by Cignitas et al. (2021) corresponds with the results of Robertson and Cooper (2011) that organizations that ensure and prioritize employee well-being have employees that are committed to the organization and its goals. There is a positive correlation between BSC and employee well-being and improved employee performance, therefore, the BSC measurement is tool that organizations can use for business strategy (Buyukbay 2017). According to Aktar and Pangil (2018), although job engagement and commitment are crucial to the growth of the organization, these can have a negative impact on employee well-being and therefore, performance.

2.2.4 Employee Performance in Brazil

Organizations are struggling with positioning organizational goals with the growing demand of organizational climate that meets basic human needs and where work is synonymous with personal fulfilment (Silva et al., 2019). Employee retention according to managers across the world, goes far beyond paying the highest salaries in the market as the managers are more convinced that to achieve organizational goals, it is imperative to use human resources efficiently and effectively (Silva et al., 2019). The loss of human resource in an organization, causes recruitment and training expenses and discontinuation of activities, therefore, companies should avoid turnover as far as possible (Grobelna, 2018). A study of reality, conducted in Brazil, found that companies are struggling with retaining employees due to poor management that is largely focused on reducing costs for the company. This is a disadvantage because employees need opportunities of growth and challenges that come with monetary rewards to remain in organizations and continuously perform well (Davidescu et al., 2020). Furthermore, employee demographics (age, gender, and marital status) do not influence employee performance; however, employee training, advancement opportunities, salary raises, employee benefits, and opportunities of growth are more valued and are positively related to overall employee performance (Rawashdeh and Tamimi, 2019).

2.2.5 Employee Performance in New Zealand

The Business Management Continuity (BMC) processes focus more on getting the organization running after a crisis, and focus less on employee well-being, satisfaction and performance that lead to organizational effectiveness (Malinen et al., 2018). After the Canterbury earthquake in New Zealand, a large corporation struggled with getting back to business and remaining competitive due to the ignorance of strategies that support staff in a post-disaster environment (Malinen et al., 2018). According to Naswall et al. (2017) organizations are the key drivers of sources of recovery as they provide goods and services, and employment during times of distress. However, organizations can further contribute to people's sense of normality after a disaster by supporting employees' psychological well-being (Hatton, 2018). A study conducted after the Canterbury earthquake at a financial provider organization in New Zealand found managerial employees to be experiencing fatigue and low energy levels but were committed to protecting the rest of the staff from experiencing the same or higher levels of stress had their well-being and performance affected (Malinen et al., 2018).

2.2.6 Employee Performance in Nigeria

Motivation is an important theory of psychology and is important for seniors who direct the actions of subordinates towards worthwhile goals in an organisation (Sandhu et al., 2017). The concept of motivation helps in clarifying the difference between employees with the same talents, abilities, and opportunities to perform their jobs under similar circumstances in a same organisation and similar facilities but exhibit different employee performance (Sandhu et al., 2017). Employee performance has

become particularly important in Nigeria, due to the increasing unease of human resources and personnel experts about the level of output achieved by workers in various organisations. The problem is that many organisations fail to understand that human resources are the main drivers of organisational growth and hence the decline in corporate performance (Ali et al., 2017).

Sandhu et al. (2017) emphasizes that unless until employees are satisfied, motivated, have feelings of fulfilment for their achievements, and are encouraged by organisational leaders, none of the organisations can progress and achieve success. Employee motivation, employee incentives, retirement benefits job security and status have been identified to have a positive relationship with employee performance (Sandhu et al., 2017). A study conducted in Nigeria's selected banks revealed that the ability of an organisation to improve and encourage work-life balance enhances the best employee performance (Falola et al., 2016).

The way employees are recruited, trained, and developed plays a major role in how they perform in their respective jobs (Ismail et al., 2019). A link between human resources practices and enhanced employee performance and outcomes have been established by a variety of researchers (Sivapragasam and Raya, 2018).

2.2.7 Overview of Employee Performance in South Africa

Prior to democracy, South African organisations were principally shaped by social and political discernment and inequalities of racial, gender, established and spatial nature (Zhuwao et al., 2019). Breetzke and Hedding (2016) support this claim by stating that the South African higher education sector was homogeneously characterised by both academic and non-academic white race, mostly males. Post 1994, the newly appointed democratic government focused on diversifying various institutions and organisations as the confirmatory action policy and Employment Equity Act of 1998 (Zhuwao et al., 2019). As much as these initiatives were aimed at ensuring better response to human resources, redress previous discrimination practices and ensure equal opportunities for all.

Leboho (2017) points out that gender and ethnic inequality issues still prevail in organisations; that this is because most organisational leaders see diversity as a matter of lawful compliance instead of valued consideration for organisational development and cost-effectiveness. Fernandez and Lee (2016) argue that although it is mentioned that in future, women will be given equal opportunities as men, a barrier still exists between employers' perceptions in gender diversification in workplaces. Women are still considered less skilled and less qualified for various jobs (Kundu et al., 2017). Sharma (2016) emphasises that organisation that prioritise gender diversification stand higher chances of retaining talent and achieving increased both employee and organisational performance.

A study conducted in a South African higher education institution revealed that gender and ethnic diversity positively relates to employee performance (Zhuwao et al., 2019). Ethnic diversity was the number one contributing factor to employee performance. The higher institutions' employees

acknowledge gender and ethnic diversity as beneficial to them (Zhuwao et al., 2019). Marx et al. (2016) explains the importance of organisational management in understanding the possession of knowledge and skills of managing diversity as it comes with unfavourable effects if not properly managed. The results of improperly managing diversity may bring behavioural changes to employees such that they may choose to only work in ethnic groups that consists of members with similar ethnic background, poor communication, less cooperation, and reduced cohesiveness (Ekot, 2017).

Ngwenya and Aigbavboa (2017) point out that effective human resource management practices are crucial for ensuring high organisational and employee performance. Various organisations make use of performance appraisal systems to measure employee performance and job satisfaction (Worku, 2019). Inkinen (2016) emphasises the importance of using performance appraisal systems by stating that these systems are vital for ensuring employee satisfaction and high morale. Employee performance schemes require proper management as this results in employees' ability to master operational skills and routines which further enhances their contribution to overall organisational growth (Worku, 2019). Performance management, according to Romiszowski (2016), enables line function managers and subordinates to identify and fill gaps that require collaboration for enhanced employee performance. Albert et al. (2018) mention that managers who least trust and do not have confidence in their subordinates, are often not successful in achieving high levels of employee performance. Managers should refrain from micromanaging employees and allow them to evaluate themselves based on their own perceived values and experience at the workplace (Worku, 2019).

The South African public sector has been identified as having high employee turnover rates (Ogony and Majola, 2018). Schlechter et al. (2016) assert that organisations are still faced with the challenge of ensuring employee retention in low skilled environments. A study conducted in a South African public sector located in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that management should provide more benefits in retaining employees and delivering the best services to the public (Ogony and Majola, 2018). The study emphasises that fairness in recruiting employees and recognising best performance and rewarding it with promotions will result in improved employee performance and morale. Nzonzo (2017) pronounces that as much company related efforts to keep employees and ensure high performance, endogenous and exogenous factors are not to be avoided. The researcher elaborates that these factors contribute largely to employees' wellbeing. According to the model of employee wellbeing drivers, endogenous factors include emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological health while the exogenous factors are occupational, policies and regulations, social, and workplace environment. To understand these drivers, organisations should investigate influencing existing leadership mental models, behaviour, and embed a wellness-centric culture (Nzonzo, 2017).

The study focused on wellbeing of South African employees at large and concluded that prioritising employee well-being is a least researched topic and organisations rarely pay attention to it whilst employees consider it a crucial factor. Nzonzo (2017) further concludes that having employees who

have high levels of endogenous and exogenous employee performance drivers will result in positive working environments and enhance healthy employee relationships.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A mixed method approach was adopted for conducting the study in assessing the impact of a working model on employee performance. A mixed approach data collection was applied for the study such that qualitative data was collected first through observations and interviews (top management that consisted of the chief executive officer and manager were interviewed). Quantitative data was collected from customers through a questionnaire, using the SERVQUAL tool. the mixed method helped to overcome the limitations of qualitative and quantitative designs when used individually and this was useful in collecting rich information that could not be obtained using only quantitative or qualitative method (Almeida, 2019).

3.2. Observations

The company processes and employees were observed to identify differences in customer queues (and the pace at which they were moving), and employees' performance when the company expanded. Observations were conducted during different days and times as inconsistencies occurred in the customer queues and employee productivity. For example, during days when the weather was cold, the company experienced longer queues in the morning compared to other (not so cold) days and employees would struggle to match the demand with supply due to difficulty in operating new machinery. During observations, the researcher noticed that the customers' purchasing queue was moving slowly as employees took longer to produce goods ordered by customers. During observations, employees mentioned that they struggled with navigating through the new machinery, hence they took longer to produce goods.

Some customers would leave the company premises in frustration—without any purchased goods—because of the slow service and employees' performance slowly became poorer as they were less motivated to do their job because they did not understand how to operate the new machinery and no training had been provided by the company. Furthermore, the fact that employees had to take it upon themselves to put in extra hours to learn the new machinery resulted in them being too exhausted to perform the actual job and looking uninterested in serving the customers.

3.3. Interviews

The company's top management (chief executive officer and manager) were interviewed using structured interviews (where interview questions were prepared prior to the interview) after the observations to discuss the results (of observations) and get their point of view. The interview questions revolved around identifying if top management is aware of the changes in employee performance and customer dissatisfaction. During the interviews, top management revealed that they would be willing

to consider solutions provided by the researcher, as both employees and customers are of utmost importance to the success of the company. The researcher identified from their point of view that the structure of working models seemed to be affecting customer performance which later affected the service provided to the customers. As employees were observed and company top management interviewed, a questionnaire using the SERVQUAL tool was prepared for distribution to customers to understand their views about the service provided by the company.

3.4. Questionnaires

A questionnaire using the SERVQUAL tool to assess customers' perception and expectation was developed from reviewed literature to collect data from the study respondents (customers). The questionnaire comprised two sections; section I contained respondents' demographic information and section II focused on five SERVQUAL constructs, namely, the tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and serviceability, with five questions each. The first page of the questionnaire contained the ethical considerations followed by the researcher and anonymity and voluntary participation were clearly explained to the respondents. The Likert scales used by the researcher to collect specific perception and expectation data: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.5. Population and Sampling

Statistical analysis, according to Nardi (2018), refers to a process of investigating patterns and relationships using quantitative data. This section discusses important concepts that were used in statistically analysing data and were crucial for classifying the population and sample of the study. Following this section, the statistical techniques used to analyse and interpret data are discussed.

3.5.1. Target Population

Davis (2021) explains a target population as the population that the researcher is interested in studying and where the study sample can be drawn from. The population targeted for the current study was selected from the Gauteng province at The bakery located in Etwatwa Township. Census (2021) reveals that the township has roughly, a population of 151 866, with an area of 20.83km². The criteria for choosing the respondents were limited to the requirements that the participants should be the company's employees and lastly, the participants should be the company's customers (new and regular customers). These participants were in an outstanding position to participate in the study as they have seen and are familiar with the bakery procedures and products.

3.5.2. Study Sample

The current study adopted non-probability sampling, which is defined by Buelens, Burger and van den Brakel (2018) as a non-random technique of selecting study participants based on convenience or other criteria, allowing the researcher to easily collect data. Non-probability sampling adopted for this study was based on convenience sampling where the researcher made site visits when it was convenient

(during the day and at different times), the company's top management was interviewed at a time, day, and platform convenient for them, lastly, customers who were easily accessible (for example, those who were not in a rush and were willing to participate in the study) to the researcher were approached. All participants conveniently selected to complete the questionnaires had to be or have been customers at the bakery.

Convenience sampling was selected because it provides research results quickly (Stratton, 2021) and based on the COVID-19 regulations that the researcher had to take into consideration when conducting the study and collecting data, this was the best option for the researcher to ensure safety by not spending long periods of time with respondents and reduce risks of contracting the virus. This method also produced encouraging results during the pilot study that was carried out before the full-scale study (of distributing 200 questionnaires to the customers) was conducted. The researcher had access to the respondents that were willing to participate in the study, therefore, physical distribution of the questionnaire was easier with convenience sampling.

3.5.3. Sample Size

The sample size refers to the number of participants included in a study (Buelens, Burger and van den Brakel., 2018). For this study, sample size consisted of all the bakery's employees on the specific shift and group that was working during when the researcher was conducting observations; secondly the top management (two individuals) and lastly 200 questionnaires were physically distributed to the company's customers.

3.6. Validity

To test validity for the current study, SERVQUAL tool was used. SERVQUAL contains two parts with section 1 being related to demographics information and section 2 focusing on service quality dimensions namely, tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and serviceability to study customers' perception and expectation. As in Mohammadi-Sardo and Salehi's (2019) study, face and content validity would be confirmed through perspectives articulated by a panel of experts in the bakery field where a questionnaire drafted by the researcher would be provided. The experts assisted with indicating whether each measurement item is vital for practicality of the questionnaire by thoroughly inspecting the questionnaire and providing scores for all service quality dimensions individually and calculate the overall score. The experts' inputs provided guidance in terms of questions to be eliminated or added to the questionnaire. IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 was the tool used to analyse respondents' data and produce graphical presentations are provided to interpret the data. Adaptation with the current study was made to the content and format, however, visual presentations differ based on the respondents' responses. The drive for adaptation was to better fit the requirements of a new population, language, location or sector, or any combination of these based on this study.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was granted by the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment's Ethics and Plagiarism Committee (Ethical Clearance Number: UJ_FEBE_FEPC_00515). Prospective participants were knowledgeable about the study and provided with a consent letter to seek their voluntary participation. Participants were assured that their information would be treated confidentially and accessed only by the researcher and academic supervisors involved in the study. Furthermore, participants were given a consent letter that emphasized their right to withdraw from the survey at any point, and that there would be no consequences for doing so. Participants were also told that there will be no monetary compensation nor costs associated with participating on the study.

4. Findings and Results

4.1. Interview and Observations Findings

Most of the bakery's employees are semi-skilled and unskilled; they have low levels of English literacy. Some time was therefore allocated in thoroughly explaining the study and the need for their participation as this was vital to establish trust, loyalty, and complete anonymity was also guaranteed. The bakery's employees were observed, and during the observations, employees revealed that they were producing less than they used to produce before the use of new machinery. The reason for this was that the company opted for more advanced and new machinery that employees were not able to operate, and training was not provided. This led to employees having to put in extra hours to figure out how the machinery is operated; they were exhausted most of the time and this showed in the service they provided to customers.









Service provided to customers slowly became poorer as customers stood longer in queues waiting for their produce; employees' output lowered as they did not know how to operate the new and advanced machines. Pictures of employees performing their work, and of the customer queues on different days were taken and kept for reference. A suggestion was made by the researcher, to develop a working model that would allow employees to change shifts and not always work one shift but to all experience the different shifts (day and night shift). The top management (chief executive officer and manager) of the company was interviewed to discuss the findings of the observations, what they considered as possible solutions, and the researcher's suggested solution. The company's top management willingly accepted the use of recommended working model discussed in section 4.2, and four new employees were recruited to allow for smooth rotational shift working model suggested by the researcher.



4.2 Proposed Working Model

Employee well-being should be prioritized, hence the working model shown in table 3 has been proposed by the researcher for the operational level employees to improve employee performance, which would result in good service delivered to customers. As it is revealed by the study that employees had difficulties adapting to the transitions that occurred at the bakery; it is also recommended that in

future, the bakery offers suitable training to use new machinery, and to give employees sufficient time to adjust and adapt to the changes. The model depicted on Table 1 proposes rotational shifts between the two operational teams at Company A. In this way, both teams get to experience working both during the day and the night. This model also proposes that employees work 28 days per month such that they get off days to accomplish their errands and attend to personal issues. These days exclude the employees' legal leave days as necessitated by basic conditions of employment, Act 10 of 2018.

Table 1: Proposed Working Model for Operational Level Employees at The bakery

Team	Days 1-7	Days 8-14	Days15-21	Days 22-28	Hours
Team 1					168
Team 2					168
Hours	84	84	84	84	336

Shifts:  Day shift (12 hours) 6:00am – 6:00pm.  Night Shift (12 hours) 6:00pm – 6:00am

A questionnaire was then developed using the SERVQUAL tool, to be distributed to customers to determine their perception about the service provided by The bakery after the implementation of the new working model. The results obtained from the questionnaires as reported on Table 2 and Table 3, showed a positive correlation between employee performance and customer service, showing that treating employees well encourages them to be equally responsive to the needs and expectations of customers.

Table 2: Paired Sample Statistics Analysis

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std Dev.	Std Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Tangibility - Expectation and Tangibility – Perception	.02366	.44683	.03276	-.04098	.08829	.722	185	.471
Pair 2	Reliability - Expectation and Reliability – Perception	.11183	.47371	.03473	.04330	.18035	3.220	185	.002*
Pair 3	Empathy - Expectation and Empathy – Perception	.05833	.51246	.03758	-.01580	.13247	1.552	185	.122
Pair 4	Responsiveness - Expectation and Responsiveness - Perception	.12177	.50921	.03734	.04811	.19544	3.261	185	.001*
Pair 5	Serviceability - Expectation and Serviceability – Perception	.03387	.36285	.02661	-.08636	.01862	-1.273	185	.205

The standard deviation of serviceability has the lowest value compared to the other study constructs. This indicates that serviceability means data is clustered around the mean and not spread out as with the other constructs. The standard error mean for serviceability construct is suitable to be likely compared to the true population mean compared to the other constructs. It has the lowest standard error mean. The t-score value for serviceability has the lowest value compared to the other constructs. This indicates that there is more similarity between the two sample sets (expectations and perceptions) of data for serviceability than the other constructs with values, tangibility (0.722), empathy (1.552), reliability (3.220) and responsiveness (3.261).

Table 3 shows the calculated values of the standardizer, point estimate and 95% confidence interval with Cohen's d and Hedges' correction formulas. The serviceability construct (in both expectation and perception) has a smaller confidence interval, indicating that the population parameter can be estimated less accurately compared to the other study constructs that have larger confidence interval.

Table 3: Cohen's d and Hedge's correction results for Standardizer^a, Point estimate, and 95% Confidence Interval

			Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Tangibility - Expectation: Tangibility - Perception	Cohen's d	.44683	.053	-.091	.197
		Hedges' correction	.44773	.053	-.091	.196
Pair 2	Reliability – Expectation: Reliability - Perception	Cohen's d	.47371	.236	.090	.381
		Hedges' correction	.47467	.236	.090	.381
Pair 3	Empathy - Expectation: Empathy - Perception	Cohen's d	.51246	.114	-.031	.258
		Hedges' correction	.51351	.114	-.030	.257
Pair 4	Responsiveness - Expectation: Responsiveness - Perception	Cohen's d	.50921	.239	.093	.385
		Hedges' correction	.51024	.239	.093	.384
Pair 5	Serviceability - Expectation: Serviceability - Perception	Cohen's d	.36285	-.093	-.237	.051
		Hedges' correction	.36358	-.093	-.237	.051

5. Managerial Implications

Taherdoost (2020) could not emphasize more strongly that larger sample sizes reduce sampling error and study biases. As much as this research study aimed to align with this emphasis, the current COVID-19 restrictions were a hindrance as they necessitate restricting gatherings to only fifty people or fewer, which created challenges in reaching many customers to conduct surveys with. Distinguishing old (loyal) customers from new ones was necessary to understand and assess the perspective from which the customers provide answers during the survey. Customers also spent as little time as possible at the bakery, creating space for other customers that are queueing to purchase while adhering to COVID-19

regulations. This therefore raised concerns that most customers might not be interested in participating in the study.

Furthermore, generalizing results of the study would be misleading as the study was only focusing on Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) and this is a slowly growing business, specifically a bakery operating under South African Small Businesses Conditions specified in the Business Act of 1991.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted to evaluate the impact of a working model on employee performance at a South African bakery. A mixed methods approach was adopted to meet the objectives of the study where observations were conducted at the company's premises to notice and identify differences in customer queues, and employees' performance when the company expanded, and the company's top management was interviewed after the observations. Furthermore, 200 questionnaires were distributed to customers where 186 responses were received and showed a positive correlation between employee performance and customer service and satisfaction.

Observations and interviews revealed that employees appeared too exhausted to do their job and continue serving customers, therefore, the employees' working model (which was a fixed model with employees specifically working the night shift and those working the day shift) seemed to be not supporting them to efficiently do their job. The study aim was achieved as the questionnaire results showed that customers responded positively to the changes made at the bakery (the use of a rotational shift working model to improve employee performance). Working models do affect employee performance and service delivered to customers.

For future research, it is recommended to use other SERVQUAL tool constructs to collect service-related data that matches the context of the study being conducted for data collection accuracy, and lastly, use larger sample sizes, different geographical locations, and various sectors to widen the generalization of the study findings related to employee performance, customer service and satisfaction as affected by working models. Another future research work phrased as "Development of a Linear Programming (LP) model that will provide a working model solution tailored towards minimising the total cost of meeting customers weekly demand requirements at a South African Bakery under employees' preference working schedule constraints" can be conducted.

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