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2023

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Mbuqe, Sinomtha. (2023). The Relationship Between Talent Management Practices and Organisational Competitiveness in South African Law Firms [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WireDSpace.https://hdl.handle.net/10539/40613

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The Relationship Between Talent Management Practices and Organisational Competitiveness in South African Law Firms

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A research article submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Supervisor: Dr Erasmus Kofi Appiah

28 February 2023

DECLARATION

I, Sinomtha Mbuqe, declare that this research article is my work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Nominated journal:	South African Journal of Human Resources Management.
Supervisor:	Dr Erasmus Kofi Appiah
Word count:	15229

ABSTRACT

The globalisation of legal services has massively amplified competition among professional service firms in South Africa and globally. To compete more effectively in the present-day environment, characterized by increased competition and enhanced customer expectations, sustaining high performance is critical. Due to scarcity of talent, law firms compete for the same pool of human resources to acquire and retain to increase growth in profitability and service.

*Literature has identified talent management practices ("**TMP**") such as talent identification, selection, retention, and development as sources of sustainable competitive advantage. Despite talent management and its practices being established concepts in literature and in practice, there is an apparent lacuna in research on TMP in the context of South African law firms and whether such practices enhance their competitiveness.*

The objective of this study was to ascertain the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms operating within the Gauteng province. A quantitative study was undertaken, with statistics gathered from employees of law firms located in Gauteng, South Africa. A random sampling technique was used and data was collected from 56 participants using a semi-structured survey questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate descriptive and inferential statistics.

The empirical findings indicated that all constructs associated with TMP, namely talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for using these practices, were positively correlated with organisational competitiveness. However, statistically, talent development increased an organisations competitiveness. The findings thus indicate that talent attraction, talent development and talent retention are important and have an impact on organisational competitiveness. These findings will enable law firms to apply talent development towards continuous organisational competitiveness, which further aids the sustainability of the organisation.

Keywords: *Talent management; Talent Attraction; Talent Development; Talent Retention; Competitiveness; Organisational Performance; Law Firms.*

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1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the background and purpose of the research study. This research study explores the relationship between TMP and the competitiveness of South African law firms.

1.2 Background to the study

Professional services firms distinctly differ from other companies in that their output is based on the application of knowledge embodied in their professional workforce (Von Nordenflycht, 2010). Law firms employ and make use of highly qualified employees to establish a differentiated service offering through providing knowledge- and value-driven strategies to attract and retain clients (Lowendahl, 2005).

The level of competition among professional service firms has increased greatly (Burke & Cooper, 2005) and to compete more effectively in the present-day environment, characterized by increased competition and enhanced customer expectations, organisations should not only recruit exceptional talent but should also apply strategic human resource practices that create value by increasing organisational competitiveness (Ferris *et al.*, 1999). A growing shortage of highly skilled professionals in knowledge-based industries has increased the competition for attracting and retaining professionals (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

Technological developments such as the introduction of digital tools (such as cloud computing and contract automation) and alternative legal service providers have altered client expectations and have an impact of profit margins (Reuters, n.d.). The potential growth of organisations and enhancement of their ability to compete is premised on their ability of ensuring that the 'right people with the right skills are in the right places' (Dahshan, Keshk & Dorgham, 2018, pp 108). Talent management is consequently conceived as a possible competitive differentiator in retaining employees whilst simultaneously meeting client expectations in a dynamic legal environment (Reuters, n.d.).

Management of talented employees is increasingly becoming important for organisations operating at a global level (Rabbi, Ahad, Kousar & Ali, 2015). Organisations that are driven to achieve their strategic goals, must adopt unique strategies for enticing, developing and

keeping gifted employees (Huselid, Beatty & Becker, 2005). Talent management thus becomes a source of competitive advantage for law firms, whose services are embodied in their human capital (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

There are various recognised theories and frameworks which seek to transform talent into enhanced performance, namely the resource-based view and the talent-based theory (Mtetwa, 2019). The talent-based theory is premised on the belief that sustainable competitive advantage can only be attained through using the talent resource (Roberts, 2008 as cited in Moturi, 2013; Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). The talent-based theory postulates that talent is the sole resource which enables organisations to gain and maintain competitive advantage, thus requiring organisations to focus on attracting and retaining a talented workforce (Mhagama, 2019). The resource-based view theory provides that the competitive advantage of a firm is derived from the use of resources which are valuable, unique, and difficult to imitate.

For successful implementation of talent management within an organisation, various techniques and methods should be utilised for talent attraction and selection, retention, and development. The recruitment and selection of talent is the first crucial step in talent management (Alruwaili, 2018). Organizations should systematically identify key positions that differentially contribute to an organisation's sustainable competitive advantage in order to recruit and select employees. They should then identify a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing employees to fill the roles that differentially contribute to an organization's sustainable competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to Mellahi and Collings (2010), there is a positive and important relationship between talent identification and the competitiveness of an organisation.

To retain employees who enhance the performance of an organisation and whose contribution improves an organisation’s competitiveness, organisations should utilise extrinsic and intrinsic incentives such as financial and non-financial incentives. A good reward system motivates employees which in turn triggers high performance in organisations (Mendes & Stander, 2011). In addition to a reward system, studies have shown that employees stay with an organization if they are engaged, empowered, trusted, given opportunities to advance their careers, and work in a positive environment. (Ibrahim & Daniel, 2018).

Hameed, Ramzan and Zubair (2014) found that compensation has a positive impact on an employee's performance.

Talent development is a process of upgrading the skills of employees (Williamson, 2011). In a business environment characterized by increased competition and enhanced customer expectations, learning and development has become the backbone of success, and without continuous learning, achieving and maintaining performance may become impossible. As businesses are continuously adapting to new technologies, business models and new strategies, the need to update and improve employees' knowledge grows. As can be gleaned from the above, an organisation's distinctive competence is based on the specialized resources, assets, and skills it possesses, and its attention should focus on the optimum utilization of these resources, assets, and skills to build a competitive advantage.

The resource-based view theory is the most prevalent strategic framework and theory that describes sustainable competitive advantage. It provides that the competitive advantage of a firm is derived from the utilisation of resources which are valuable, unique and difficult to imitate. These resources can be physical or human and can be used to create value-adding strategies (Wandia, 2013). Ibrahim and Daniel (2018) state that it is accepted amongst management researchers that a sustainable competitive advantage comes from internal resources which are difficult to imitate. Human resources and an organisation's knowledge resource is such a resource which can be utilised as a tool for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Odonez de Pablos, 2004). Barney (1991) posits that sustained competitive advantage is a result of internally controlled strategic assets which allow organisations to articulate and device strategies that magnify its efficiency and effectiveness.

Competitive advantage is thus dependent not only on natural resources, technologies or operational efficiencies which can be easily replicated, but rather on valuable, rare, and hard-to-imitate resources that reside within an organisation in accordance with the resource-based view theory (Stiles & Kulvisaechana, 2004; Heinen & O'Neill, 2004). The unique competence of an organization is based on its specialized resources, assets, and employee skills, and the best use of these resources helps the organization gain a competitive advantage (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). To gain a competitive advantage, (Winer, 2004 as cited in Moturi, 2013) posits that organisations must satisfy three components, namely:

(i) customer value is generated

(ii) there is a perceived enhanced value of the service by the customer; and

(iii) the strategies and actions taken must not be capable of imitation.

Thus, organisational competitiveness can be achieved if a company employs a value-creating strategy that is not being implemented by competitors. Competitiveness was measured using non-financial indicators and measuring employee performance. It has been argued that employee engagements are strong assets for sustained competitive advantage (Joo & Mclean, 2006) through the development of competencies that are rare and difficult to imitate (Ugwu & Osisioma, 2017).

1.3 Problem Statement

A law firms' ability to deliver value to its clients principally depends on the skills and performance of its professionals and therefore it is vital for law firms to develop its human resources. In this regard, businesses ought to improve their capacity to identify the people and skills that have the potential to add value and give them a competitive advantage (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). In today's dynamic, ever-changing and extremely competitive global markets, companies are presented with major decisions and challenges in global talent management (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique, 2011).

Despite the increasing necessity to devise and implement a talent strategy, several companies, including law firms, have not integrated talent management into their corporate strategy (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007). It is essential that a company responds strategically to environmental and macro-economic factors, to be and remain sustainable. A company's human resources capability is a vital element of the company's competitiveness, particularly if the talent possessed is rare, strategic in nature and inimitable (Wandia, 2013). Talent management represents an opportunity to increase the performance of a company using its main resource, people. An organisation's competitive advantage is based on its distinguished internal resources. The competitive advantage is realised by exploiting and utilization of these resources. Studies have acknowledged that the internal resources of an organisation play a critical role in the performance of an organisation (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015).

Numerous studies have been done on how TMP affect an organisation's performance and ability to compete, however current research does not provide sufficient understanding into the relationship and effect between TMP and the competitiveness of law firms from a South African legal industry perspective. It is therefore natural to use a quantitative approach to

investigate the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness in law firms in South Africa. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire in the form of a survey sent online to the target respondents. The research methodology adopted in this study was based on the scope of the research questions and predicated on the literature review undertaken. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the two constructs and provide insight and guide law firms to develop talent management strategies that will enhance their performance and competitiveness.

1.4 Research Objective

1.4.1 Aim of the study

The main purpose of this research was to determine the connection between TMP and the competitiveness of law firms in Gauteng, South Africa. The secondary objective of this research pivots on the use of the findings of the study as a point of departure to develop and propose strategic pillars that could support the successful implementation of a talent management strategy in a more systematic and focused manner.

1.4.2 Research Questions

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1.4.2.1 What is the relationship between talent management and organisational competitiveness?

1.4.2.2 What influence does talent management have on an organisation's ability to compete; and

1.4.2.3 What is the relationship between talent management strategies and organisational performance.

1.4.3 Hypotheses

Based on the above objectives, the following hypotheses are formulated -

Ho1: Talent attraction positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho2: Talent development positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho3: Talent retention positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho4: Reasons for the use of TMP positively influences organisational competitiveness.

1.5 Significance of the study

Research on the connection between TMP and competitiveness of organisations in the legal sector is under-researched and has yet to reach its potential. In particular, the use of strategic management tools, including human resource practices to enhance the performance and competitiveness of South African law firms. This study seeks to benefit law firms in various ways, namely, understanding the relationship between the two constructs and the impact of same on organisational performance (Ibidunni *et al.*, 2016 in Dahshan, *et al.*, 2018). Law firms will be able to develop talent management strategies that will improve their performance and competitiveness as a result of the findings of this study, which will help them better understand how the application of talent management strategies affects their performance and competitive advantage.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are related to these specific dimensions. As a starting point, the scope of this study was limited to commercial law firms in Gauteng, South Africa, thus other provinces were excluded and studies conducted in the excluded provinces may yield differing results. Lastly, the study's time frame was limited and the researcher was unable to reach the targeted sample, accordingly a study of this nature with a larger sample size may yield differing results and accordingly the findings of this research cannot be generalised.

1.7 Conclusion and Report Structure

The research problem identified that a study is required to understand the connection between TMP and organisational competitiveness of law firms in South Africa and the effect of such TMP on their competitiveness. A good understanding of the relationship between the two constructs will enable law firms will be able to develop talent management strategies that will improve their performance and competitiveness.

This first chapter introduced and defined the problem that is being researched. The objectives and scope were also clearly outlined. An argument has been made for the need and value of this study, which will contribute to academia and business. The remainder of this research report is organised as follows:

(i) Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical underpinnings of this study and discusses the relevant literature. This section also provides insight into the relevant theories, terminologies and research gaps that led to the research question.

(ii) Chapter 3 presents the research methodology to address the elements of the research.

(iii) Chapter 4 presents the results obtained from statistical data analysis conducted on primary data collected from respondents and a discussion of the results.

(iv) Chapter 5 provides the overall conclusion and recommendations are made for future research on similar topics.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical review of literature related to the study and empirical studies related to the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness is discussed. This chapter reviews scholarly articles on the constructs and focuses on the conceptualization of the terms such as talent, talent management, organisational competitiveness and all ancillary terms closely related to the aforementioned.

2.2 Conceptual definitions of terms

2.2.1 Background

The concept of talent management was conceptualised in the late 1990s by McKinsey & Co in its article "The war for talent", which article discussed the increasingly competitive landscape for recruiting and retaining talented employees (Chambers *et al.*, 1998). McKinsey's study established that senior management was the most undermanaged internal asset and anticipated that the identification, selection, development, and retention of outstanding employees would become a priority for organisations. The essay sparked study into talent management with the intention of ensuring that organisations' strategic decisions and functional human resources activities were concentrated on attaining a competitive advantage through their human resource.

2.2.2 Talent

Talent is a loosely defined concept with a history spanning from ancient Greek and biblical eras when the term referred to a measure of weight (Silzer & Dowell, 2010), which definition evolved to refer to a monetary unit (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen & Scullion, 2013). The definition further evolved in the 13th century and took the meaning related to the natural ability of an individual (Ansar & Baloch, 2018).

A talented employee, according to Letchmiah and Thomas (2017, p 3 as cited in Amushila & Bussin, 2021), is an individual who 'drives consistent excellent business performance through competency, commitment and involvement and has shown the potential to move up'. Bussin (2014, p 46) defines talent as consisting of 'those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential'.

Talent is also defined as the inherent ability of individuals to perform a particular task as a result of the culmination of such individual's skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence and judgment, amongst other factors (Dahshan *et al.*, 2018). According to Ansar and Baloch (2018, p. 177), talent is the individual's possession of specific characteristics or behaviors that "make an individual right for that particular role".

2.2.3 Talent Management

Talent and "talent management" are evolving theories in academic literature and practice. Despite a plethora of research on the concept of talent management, there remains no universally accepted definition of the concept "talent management" and academic literature still regards talent management as a nebulous concept lacking sufficient empirical studies (Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021; Claus, 2019; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

Talent management is often described as the components of identifying, developing and retention of talent. Davies and Davies (2015, p.3) define talent management as the "systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential, who are of particular value to an organisation". Armstrong (2014) defines talent management as all organizational actions involved in recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing the best individuals for the most strategic jobs. Ibrahim and Daniel (2018) define talent management as systems and strategies utilised to increase productivity through the establishment of improved processes for the attraction, development and retention of people who possess the required skills and ability to meet business needs.

Table 2.1 below sets out a summary of talent management definitions appearing across the variety of talent management literature.

No.	Author	Definition
1.	Tyskbo (2019)	An integrated and interrelated process of organisational activities aimed at identifying, selecting, developing and retaining the best employees.

2.	Letchmiah and Thomas (2017)	Integrated strategies designed to increase efficiency through the improvement of processes for attracting, developing and retaining of individuals with the required talents and aptitudes to meet organisational needs.
3.	Obinna (2015)	The process of identifying talent, developing talent, utilising talent, and retention of such talent.
4.	Claus (2017, p 118)	'A set of sustainable organisational strategies that use human capital to the competitive advantage of the organisation, as well as a portfolio of integrated HR activities that result in putting the right people with the right competencies in the right job in the right place, and at the right cost'.
5.	Armstrong (2012)	A process to ensure that organisations have the appropriate people to attain its aims and objectives.
6.	Scullion and Collings (2011)	Described as a collection of actions relating to the recruitment, choice, training, and retention of the best workers in the strategic jobs.
5.	Lewis and Heckman (2006)	The processes and activities involving the systematic identification of key positions which contribute to an organisation's sustained competitive advantage.

Table 2-1: Definitions of talent management

There is an overabundance of research on the concept of talent management, however existing literature has not been able to distinguish talent management from other human resource functions (Ansar & Baloch, 2018). Barney (1991) has, however, offered an explanation that distinguishes talent management from human resources and provides that

talent management considers talented workers as a competitive advantage of organisations whilst human resources management take all organisational functions into consideration. Blass (2009) developed a talent management territory model, illustrating how talent management is comprised of different factors and distinguishes it from human resources management.

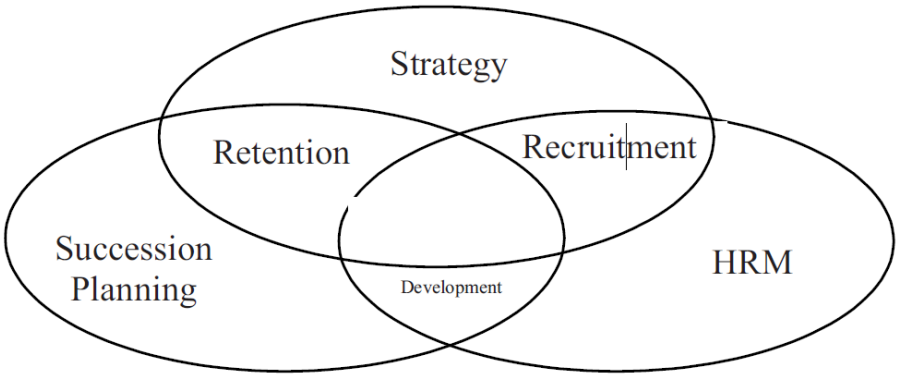

Figure 2-1: Model of Territory of talent management

Source: (Ansar and Baloch, 2018)

Ansar and Baloch (2018) have undertaken research with the aim of developing an improved understanding of the term 'talent' for academics and practitioners to effectively implement the concept of talent management and have concluded that pursuant to a literary review, there are three perspectives on what talent management entails, namely (i) that talent management is an iteration of human resources management, (ii) talent management is strategic in nature and focused on the development of talent pools to ensure a regular supply of able workers. This perspective focuses solely on the aspect of talent development and disregards other components of talent management, and (iii) talent management requires a subject approach, namely that individuals are talent as opposed to talent being a characteristic.

For purposes of this study, the author accepts the definition that talent management is a process or activity which systematically identifies crucial roles that contribute in different ways to an organisation's maintainable competitive advantage through the development of high potential pools of incumbents (Collings and Mehalli, 2009).

What can be gleaned from above is that the above notions are not standardised amongst scholars or practitioners. There are several other terms that have been used to describe

people with exceptional abilities, such as gifted or able. A wide-ranging review of literature indicates that the definitions of talent management have not been able to clearly distinguish talent management and other subsets of human resources management, consequently raising additional conceptual issues (Iles, Chuai & Preece, (2010) and Cappelli (2008)).

2.2.4 Competitiveness

Organisational performance relates to the evaluation of an organisation's performance against its objectives (Rukunga, 2018) through the analysis of financial performance, market performance or shareholder value creation (Adler, 2015 as cited in Rukunga, 2018). Competitiveness refers to an organization's ability to capitalize on identified opportunities in its environment in order to guarantee its sustainability and outperform its competitors. (Roman *et al.*, 2012). According to Kareska and Marjanova (2012), competitiveness can be viewed from a variety of angles, such as "micro-competitiveness," which refers to an organisation's capacity to participate in and win at global or local product or service offerings, and "macro-competitiveness," which refers to relations between countries or industries. Setting priorities that may include innovation and flexibility, which are two measures of competitiveness, is one way to achieve organizational competitiveness, which is one of the most significant features in the business world for survival (Roman *et al.*, 2012).

2.3 Theoretical framework

Employees are often described as the most critical asset of an organisation (Baartvedt, 2013) therefore it is imperative that the right employees are employed in the right positions to enhance the performance of an organisation. Talent management represents an opportunity to increase the performance of a company using its main resource, people. It has been demonstrated by studies that an organisation's performance is significantly influenced by its internal resources (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015).

Because an organisation's competitive advantage depends on its talent management strategies and processes being linked to its corporate strategy, talent management is increasingly becoming a management priority in businesses (Wandia, 2013). The competitive advantage is realized by exploiting and utilization of these resources.

There are several theories relating to the conversion of talent into enhanced performance. An organisation's competency and its competitiveness emanate from the optimal utilization

of its assets. The performance of these assets enables an organisation to increase its competitiveness. Two theories that have arisen from the theory of the firm, namely the resource-based theory and the talent-based theory, recognize that internal resources have a critical role to play in the performance of the organisation (Wright & McMaham, 1992 as cited in Rabbi *et al*., 2015).

2.3.1 Resource based theory

The resource-based theory of the firms suggests that talent is a critical source that supports an organisation to achieve a competitive advantage (Kireru, Karanja & Namusonge, 2017). The resource-based theory strengthens and justifies the need for organisations to continue to invest in talent development and management in order to increase its human resources performance. According to the resource-based theory, organisations must transform and organise resources into capabilities and competencies selectively engaged in building a competitive advantage that safeguards its profit margins, customer base and/or market share (Grant, 1998 as cited in Kireru *et al*., 2017).

In terms of the resource-based theory of firms, competitive advantage is obtained through the utilisation of difficult-to-imitate attributes of an organisation (Barney, 1986) and resources that are not easily transferable. Therefore, to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage, the resources must be rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Madhani, 2009). Only once an organisations resources have the aforementioned attributes can they create a sustainable competitive advantage, as demonstrated in Figure 2.2 below.

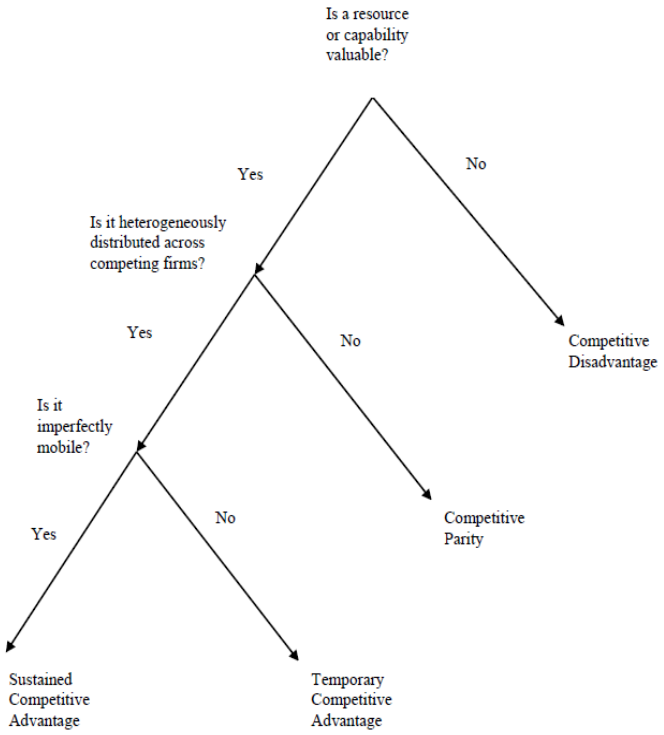

Figure 2-2: Identification of resources and capabilities
(Source: Mata, et al, 1995 as cited in Madhani, 2009)

An organisation is a collection of its organisational, physical, and human resources and talent is one of those scarce resources that enable organisations to develop and maintain a competitive advantage. Rabbi *et al* (2015) posits that the resource-based theory of the firm has hypothesised that talent is the only internal resource capable of providing an organisation with a sustainable competitive advantage, therefore organisations should align their attention and decision making primarily on talent management and the competitive capabilities derived from it.

2.3.2 Talent based theory

According to the firm's talent-based thesis, talent is the only internal resource capable of giving an organization a long-term competitive edge. (Roberts, 2008 as cited in Moturi, 2013) and an organisation must therefore focus on attracting and maintaining such workforce (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). Rabbi *et al* (2015) asserts that an organization's function should be that of a talent integration institute, not one of talent acquisition or creation.

2.4 Process of talent management

Rabbi *et al* (2015) argues that talent management comprises of three main components, namely:

(i) attraction and selection of talent;
(ii) retention of talent; and
(iii) talent development.

The most critical component of the talent management process is the recruitment of a talent pool, which is a group of contenders who have the potential to steer an organisation towards competitive performance. This talent pool can be created through internal or external recruitment. Internal recruitment has several advantages including institutional knowledge and knowledge and experience of the organisational culture (Davis, Maggie & Neil*,* 2007). An organisation can use various techniques and methods to recruit and select the correct employees (Armstrong, 2006 as cited in Rabbi *et al*., 2015).

High employee turnover affects the productivity of organisations; therefore, organisations are required to employ talent retention strategies to mitigate against employees resigning (Echols, 2007). Retention is the process of retaining employees within an organisation for lengthier periods. Organisations use intrinsic and extrinsic incentives such as monetary rewards and other non-monetary incentives to satisfy employee's psychological needs. A good reward system can motivate employees and causing high performance of the organisation (Mendes & Stander, 2011). Development is process of upgrading the skills of employees. As organisations adapt to change, introduce new technological capabilities and business models and strategies, the organisation will be required to improve and enhance the knowledge and skill set of its employees. (Rabbi *et al*., 2015).

The approach followed in managing talent needs to be strategic and integrated. Farley (2005) asserts that in order to achieve success, business goals must be translated into workforce requirements. The former statement is supposed by Heinen and O´Neill (2004, p 68) who state that "to be successful, the talent strategy must be aligned with an organisation's business strategy and human capital context". In addition, Heinen and O'Neill (2004) further posit that the interdependent policies and procedures of talent management must be integrated to achieve the desired level of performance. According to Heinen and O'Neil

(2004), an appropriate framework of integrated talent management must include the following five major applications:

(i) precise and objective talent selection

(ii) swift induction and core skills training

(iii) performance management systems; and

(iv) retention and succession planning frameworks.

Dahshan *et al.*, (2018) argue that organisations are not able to compete in the markets they operate in without highly skilled employees in the right places without continual investment in the human resource.

It is argued that the best way to create a long-term sustainable competitive advantage is through talent management (Heinen & O'Neil, 2004). Ibrahim and Daniel (2018) argue that it is trite knowledge amongst management researchers that a sustainable competitive advantage is derived from internal qualities are not capable of imitation by competitors. Furthermore, the resource-based theory supports the view that an organisation's knowledge resources are the tools that should be employed to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Ordonez de Pablos, 2004). As argued by Ordonez de Pablos (2004), personal, interpersonal and structural forms of capital can provide long-term competitive advantages.

Lewis and Heckman (2006) have identified three areas where the effectiveness of talent management can be scrutinized, namely:

(i) the tying of talent management to financial performance by using an analytical technique

(ii) analysis and optimizing the talent management systems and processes; and

(iii) using analytics as a set of metrics and measure.

2.5 Conceptual proposition

The conceptual model that defines the relationship between the variables, namely TMP (independent variable) and organisational competitiveness (dependant variable) and recruitment (control variable) is shown in Figure 1-1 below. According to Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2009), there are several variables, including the independent variable, dependent variable and control variable in research studies that researchers may require to

study the relationship amongst such variables. An independent variable is the predictor variable which is supposed to be the cause in the change of the behaviour of the dependent variable (Khalid, Hilman & Kumar, 2012).

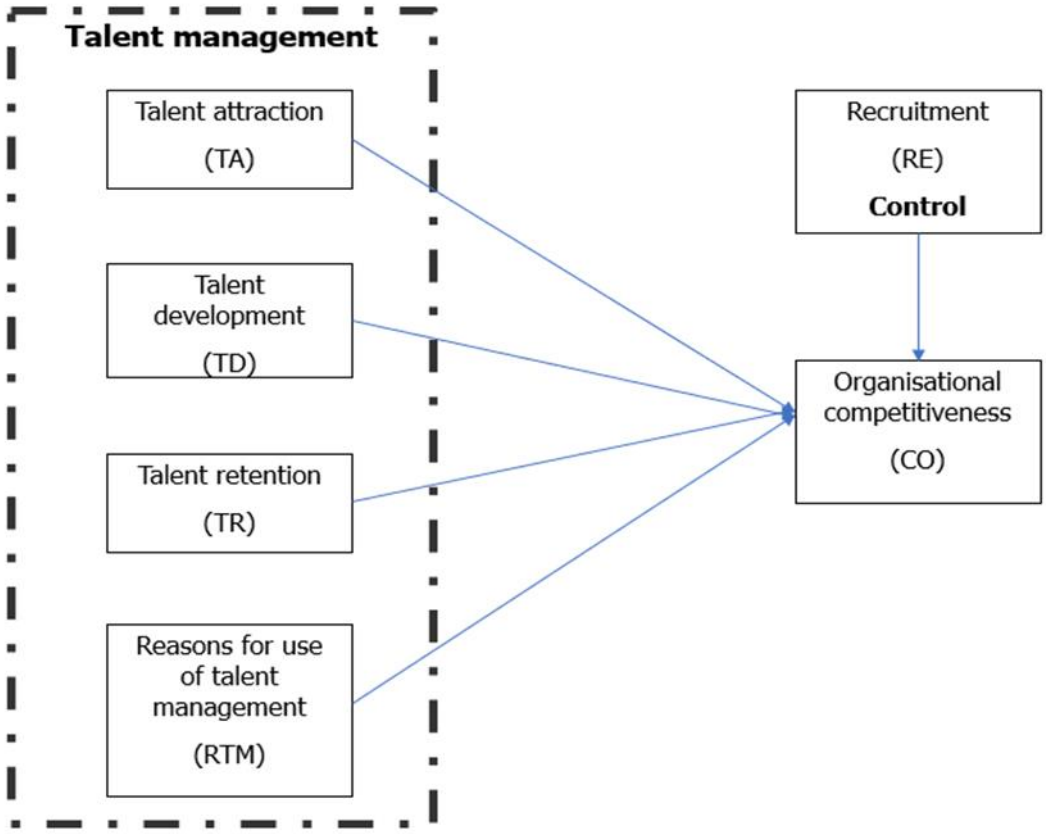

Figure 2-3 Conceptual Model (Student's own construction)

2.6 Conclusion

Literature significant to this study was discussed in this chapter. The literature included the conceptual and academic challenges in defining talent and TMP, the theoretical framework relating to the conversion of talent into enhanced performance, namely the talent-based theory and resource-based theory which provide that sustainable competitive advantage can only be attained through using the talent resource and that talent is the sole resource which enables organisations to gain and maintain competitive advantage. More importantly, literature suggests that talent enhances the competitiveness and performance of an organisation if the resources are valuable, unique, and difficult to imitate. For successful implementation of talent management within an organisation, various techniques and methods should be utilised for talent attraction and selection, retention, and development,

which are the components of talent management. Chapter 3 will outline the research design and methodology employed by the researcher in this study.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the research approach adopted and used for this study, the investigation of the research problem, detailing the research design and process, how data was gathered and analysed. The instrument that measured the various theories relevant to this study will be described in detail in this chapter. The ethical considerations discussed in the study conclude the chapter.

3.2 Research Philosophy

A quantitative study is described as one where data is collected and analysed to describe, predict, or control variables of interest (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative research is used to test hypotheses, assess cause-and-effect relationships, quantify data, and generalize sample results to population states (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Quantitative research uses tools such as surveys and is often the research design used for large sample sizes (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

This study was descriptive and was designed to determine the association between TMP and the competitiveness of an organisation within the legal services industry in South Africa. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the research undertaken in this study, being the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness, is not novel however current research into this subject in South Africa is limited. The research undertaken is thus descriptive in nature with the aim to emphasize new understandings in an already researched area, and therefore informing new questions and new ideas for consideration and adoption.

This study also adopted a deductive research approach where a hypothesis is formulated from existing theory and subjected to empirical scrutiny through the process of gathering data. Saunders and Lewis (2018, pp 112) define the deductive approach as 'a research approach that involves the testing of theoretical proposition, by using a research strategy specifically designed to collect data for the purpose of its testing'. In deductive theory development, Saunders and Lewis (2012) describe the relationship between variables as the starting point of the research.

The positivist philosophy will be applied as a result of the nature of the research undertaken in this study, being the discovery of observable and measurable facts and outcomes (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Antwi and Kasim (2015) propose that positivism suggests that the

research methodology applied in collecting is objective in measuring variables and testing hypotheses to derive causal explanations.

3.3 Research Design

Research design refers to the way information is arranged, collected, interpreted, and analysed in order to answer research questions (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed research design, quantitative research design, and qualitative research design are the three types of research designs (Morgan, 2014).

This study focuses on the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness in law firms in Gauteng, South Africa, therefore a quantitative research method was selected. A quantitative study is described as one where data is collected and analysed to describe, predict, or control variables of interest (Barnham, 2015). This research approach is defined as the measurement and collection of numerical data to ascertain the connection between theory and research (Creswell, 2003).

The term "primary data" refers to information gathered with the intention of answering research questions and problems (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). Interviews and questionnaires are the most used methods of primary data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The survey questionnaire was administered through an online survey link on Equalitrics. A cross-sectional research design was used to collect data at a single point in time. Cross-sectional research is the appropriate design to test the relationship between the variables in this study (Field, 2019). Cross-sectional studies by their very nature seek to report occurrences over a set period (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The information will be observed over a short time horizon. This approach will be taken due to the research time allocated under the MBA programme. For the reasons cited, the method of data collection is deemed to be the most appropriate method for purposes of undertaking this study.

The collection of data using information from studies that have been conducted on the subject by other researchers is known as secondary data (Dawson, 2009). Any information recovered from current literature or sources should be treated as secondary data. Secondary data includes existing reports, census data, reports, archival records, journal, periodicals, and data from relevant academic sources (Kothari, 2004).

3.4 Target Population

A complete set of research subjects or objects (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) or the entire group of respondents who meet the specified set of criteria is considered a target population (Kumar, 2014). The target population of the study consisted of employees employed by law firms in Gauteng, South Africa. The distribution of the target population spanned across job grades, job descriptions and age groups and included legal professionals, middle and senior management and operational employees across several functional areas. The population total is not known as it was not possible to obtain a reliable estimate of the number of employees at each law firm as this information was not publicly available.

There was a geographical population limitation on the study as the researcher focused solely on the Gauteng province in South Africa. The researcher argues that the target population is the most relevant within the organization surveyed because it has a broader view of the company and access to information about their team and the company performance.

3.5 Sampling method and size

Saunders and Lewis (2012) define a sample as a subset of the target population. Sampling is the practice of picking a small number of people from a larger population to use as a basis for forecasting the occurrence of a circumstance or an outcome involving the larger group (Mhagama, 2019; Kumar, 2014).

There are two main categories of sampling techniques, namely non-probability, and probability sampling (Struwig & Stead, 2009). Non-probability sampling technique was selected for purposes of this study, where there is an equal chance that each member will be chosen (Vehovar, Toepoel &Steinmetz, 2016). For purposes of this study, the random sampling technique was utilised. Random sampling, also known as randomization-based sampling, is a method in which every part of the population has the same independent chance of being included in the sample (Conway *et al.*, 2013).

The respondents were selected by way of a simple random sampling where every subject had every change of being selected (Bryman, 2012). The head office of the respective law firms located in Gauteng province, South Africa were identified and the researcher electronically emailed law firms and encouraged participation by attorneys (directors, partners, executives, senior associates, associates and candidate attorneys), human resource

practitioners, marketing and business development employees and office managers to obtain an all-inclusive impression of TMP and their outcomes in the particular law firm.

The sample size should be adequate to infer valid conclusions and to make inferences about the population from a sample (Singh & Masuku, 2014). There are approximately 4000 persons employed as attorneys by the "top 4" law firms in Gauteng, South Africa (Chambers, n.d.). The aggregate number of employees in the law firms in Gauteng, South Africa including commercial law firms described as mid-tier will approximately be greater than 5 000. According to Saunders and Lewis (2019), the larger the sample the greater the level of certainty and recommends a sample of at least 30 respondents. Based on these figures, judgement and that only professional services firms in South Africa were considered, a sample of 200 participants was targeted, however the researcher received participation from 69 participants.

3.6 Research measurement instrument

The process by which a researcher collects research data from the intended population is referred to as the method of data collection (Kothari, 2010). The researcher utilised a single-method strategy for data collection in survey method (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). A single method is an appropriate strategy for this study because the research hypothesis is derived from existing theories that provide the building blocks and explain how the data are collected.

Typically, in quantitative research, the primary source of data for this study was obtained through a structured questionnaire in the form of a survey (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix A hereto. Studies have been conducted on talent management and its effect on organisational performance, including Sunday (2012) using a survey method.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely, Section A which contained the demographic data and Section B, which contained the questions of interest based on a 5 point Likert Scale. The Likert Scale, which was implemented in the questionnaire, was based on respondents choosing how much they agreed with a statement or how much of a construct statement they saw (Stacey, 2005). This allowed the researcher to analyse and evaluate the nature of the relationship between the variables. The information section addressed the research objectives and informed respondents of the voluntary nature of the survey and the

maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality. The demographics of the respondents are used to statistically segment data for interpretation purposes (Wegner, 2007).

The questions in Section B were intended to gauge the presence of an association between TMP and organisational competitiveness. The constructs of the questions, namely talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons to use TMP, were designed to determine the existence of an association between TMP and organisational competitiveness. The quantitative survey questionnaire was created using the knowledge gained from the literature review as a foundation. The survey comprised of four independent variables as revealed in literature, including talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for using talent management.

Permission to distribute the questionnaire to employees of law firms was obtained from several law firms in Gauteng. The researcher distributed anonymous links to various law firms in South Africa and where permission was denied, the researcher posted the study survey link on LinkedIn.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were gathered, analysed, and the results presented in order to allow for the drawing of conclusions from the research. The data is presented using interval format by the Likert scales, the questionnaire's results were used to analyse numerical data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). After the data were gathered, they were summarized using the graphic and table features of Excel, looked for any invalid entries that might be deleted, and then exported to SPSS. The data was reviewed for potential errors and coded to allow for statistical assessment (Zikmund *et al.*, 2009). Descriptive statistics were used to explain the data collected and inferential statistical methods were used to test the significance of relationships between the responses.

The objective of the data analysis process was to answer the research question posed within this study and was therefore divided into three sections as detailed within earlier sections of this chapter.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity in quantitative research is the extent to which a concept is accurately measured and the degree to which a measurement instrument measures what it ought to measure.

Construct and content validity are generally acceptable methods of measuring and establishing validity (Bryman, 2012). For purposes of this study, validity was measured using the Pearson's correlation coefficients between all measured variables to confirm convergent and discriminant validity.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept whereby replicability and repeatability must be ensured. Internal reliability is concerned with whether the indicators on a multi-item measurement scale are consistent (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2012), i.e., whether the data collection and analysis methods provide dependable findings. Cronbach's Alpha was used to exam for internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha has a lower limit that is generally accepted to be 0.70, but in some exploratory studies, it can be reduced to 0.60 (Zikmund *et al*., 2009). Malhotra (2010) states that Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.5 or less indicate inadequate internal consistency reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	**Reliability Level**
Below 0.60	Poor
0.60-0.70	Fair
0.70-0.80	Good
0.80-0.95	Very good

Table 3-1 Reliability Levels based on Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (Source: Zikmud et al., 2009)

3.8 Ethical considerations

Prior to collection of data, an application for ethical clearance was submitted to the University of Witwatersrand Ethical Committee, together with the research proposal, for approval. Approval was received on 25 September 2022 (Appendix B). In conducting the study, the following ethical measures were adhered to by the researcher, namely -

- the participants agreed to participate in the study prior to accessing the questions in Section B of the questionnaire

- the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and accordingly they could withdraw from the study at any time
- the aim and objective of the study were presented to participants concisely and prominently; and
- the anonymity of the respondents was maintained.

Once ethical approval was received, the structured questionnaire was distributed to participants to obtain the relevant data for analysis. Participants willingly opted to partake in the research by clicking the "I consent" prior to accessing the questionnaire. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that their responses would be treated confidentially and anonymously, and that they were permitted to exit the study at any time. Respondents were not requested to disclose their names or contact information, confirming confidentiality and anonymity. The respondents were given access to the researcher's and supervisor's contact information in case they had any concerns or queries about the study. To access the questions, participants were asked eligibility questions and only eligible respondents were able to proceed with the questionnaire.

3.9 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was on the research design and methodology utilised to guide the study. A quantitative approach was utilised to assess the cause-and-effect relationships of the constructs of this study. The primary source of data for this study was obtained through a structured questionnaire in the form of a survey. The target population of the study consisted of employees employed by law firms in Gauteng, South Africa and the respondents were selected by way of a simple random sampling. The data was gathered and descriptive statistics was used to explain the data collected and inferential statistical methods were used to test the significance of relationships between the responses. Lastly, this chapter discussed the validity and reliability of the study and ethical considerations taken into account in conducting this study. Chapter 4 will analyse the data collected and will present the results based on statistical analysis conducted. The next chapter will also interpret the results.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three presented the research design and methodology used in the study to answer the main research question. The findings of this study's research methodology are presented in this chapter, which examines the relationship between TMP (based on talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for use of talent management) and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms. Empirical results collected through the research questionnaire together with statistical analysis of the data will be presented. The results will be presented in a tabular and graphical form in the chronological order as the questions appeared in the questionnaire. The study utilised statistical data analysis tools, namely descriptive statistics and reliability and validity analysis.

Data analysis is defined as the process of manipulating, summarising, and categorising collected data to convey logic to research (Malhotra, 2010). To statistically analyse the available data, SPSS was utilised and the following data analysis techniques; reliability and validity analysis, descriptive analysis and regression analysis will be discussed in greater detail.

4.2 Collection of data

The data received from 69 respondents was analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, which was performed by Edu-Vibes: Research, Training and Consultancy (Pty) Ltd, a statistical consultancy firm based in Gauteng, South Africa. The collected data was coded by assigning symbol classification to responses recorded in words. The collected raw data was examined to determine its accuracy and authenticity. The editing process led the consultancy firm to discover illegible, incomplete, inconsistent, or ambiguous responses from the respondents, which prompted the need to take corrective measures that would increase data accuracy. Unsatisfactory responses or questions were discovered and discarded. After completion of the data preparation process, the resultant data of 56 respondents was deemed clean and ready for tabulation and analysis.

4.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which a survey, statement, or other instrument is measured in the same way each time it is applied to the same subject under the same conditions (Heale

& Twycross, 2015). Reliability refers to the consistency of test scores over time while utilising the same test instruments. Achieving the same results is indicative of scale consistency. The reliability of the scale was tested using the internal consistency index Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's Alpha is preferred because it is the most used tool to analyse reliability (Masoka, 2021). Cronbach's alpha value was used to determine the reliability of the measuring device.

The five constructs, namely talent attraction, talent development, talent retention, reasons for use of talent management and competitiveness were considered reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha were above the acceptable limit and ranged between 0.681 - 0.885, thus the researcher could proceed with data analysis. The reliability analysis results for each construct are discussed below.

4.3.1 Reliability analysis results for talent attraction

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
0.681	0.682	5

Table 4-1 Reliability analysis results for talent attraction

With five statements, talent attraction had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.681, which is higher than the acceptable reliability values and indicates a reliable reliability scale. Given that the Cronbach's alpha value reported in Table 4.1 above is 0.681, the construct measurement is reliable.

4.3.2 Reliability analysis results for talent development

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
0.807	0.806	7

Table 4-2 Reliability analysis results for talent development

With seven statements, talent development had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.807, which is higher than the acceptable reliability values and denotes very good scale reliability. Given that the Cronbach's alpha value reported in Table 4.2 above was 0.807, the construct measurement is reliable.

4.3.3 Reliability analysis for talent retention

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
0.769	0.768	8

Table 4-3 Reliability analysis results for talent retention

With eight statements, talent retention had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.769, which is higher than the acceptable reliability values and denotes very good scale reliability. Given that the Cronbach's alpha value reported in Table 4.3 above is 0.769, the questionnaire is reliable.

4.3.4 Reliability analysis results for reasons to use talent management practices

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
0.696	0.700	6

Table 4-4 Reliability analysis results for reasons to use talent management practices

The six statements that made up the justifications for the use of TMP had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.696, which is higher than the acceptable values for reliability and denotes a sufficient scale reliability.. Given that the Cronbach's alpha value reported in Table 4.4 above is 0.696, the questionnaire is reliable.

4.3.5 Reliability analysis results for competitiveness

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	N of items
0.885	0.886	9

Table 4-5 Reliability analysis results for competitiveness

Cronbach Alpha value for organizational competitiveness, which included nine statements, was 0.885. This value is higher than the acceptable values for reliability and indicates very good scale reliability. Given that the Cronbach's alpha value reported in Table 4.5 above is 0.885, the questionnaire is reliable.

4.4 Demographics of the respondents

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: section A and section B. In section A, the respondent was required to provide demographic information, and in section B, the respondent was required to respond to a variety of statements regarding the four constructs of TMP. All respondents were employed at a law firm in Gauteng at the time of completion

of the survey. Section A of the survey observed the biographical characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, race, level of education and level of income. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in a format that fully reveals the structure of the sample and respondents. The information is presented in short tabular format and simple calculations.

4.4.1 Gender

Table 4.6. and Figure 4.1 below present the classification of information related to the respondent's gender. Most of the respondents indicated that they were female 51.8% (n = 29), and 46.4% of the respondents indicated that they were male (n = 26) with 1.8% (n=1) of the respondents indicated that they would prefer not to disclose their gender.

According to the Law Society of South Africa (2022), females constitute 42% of the legal industry, with males constituting 58% and this is supported by the findings of the Employment Equity Annual Report (2021-2022) which showed that males constitute 55.3% of the nationally economically active population by gender. Females remain under-represented in workspaces and accordingly it could be argued that this study has more relevance to females, as represented by the higher participation and accordingly law firms that formulate and implement talent management policies and approaches would need to take into account this aspect of the gender profile (Dumse, 2011). Notwithstanding the above, 51% of the respondents to this study were female, as such the results are not generalizable.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	26	46.4
Female	29	51.8
Prefer not to say	1	1.8
TOTAL	56	100

Table 4-6: Gender Demographic Composition

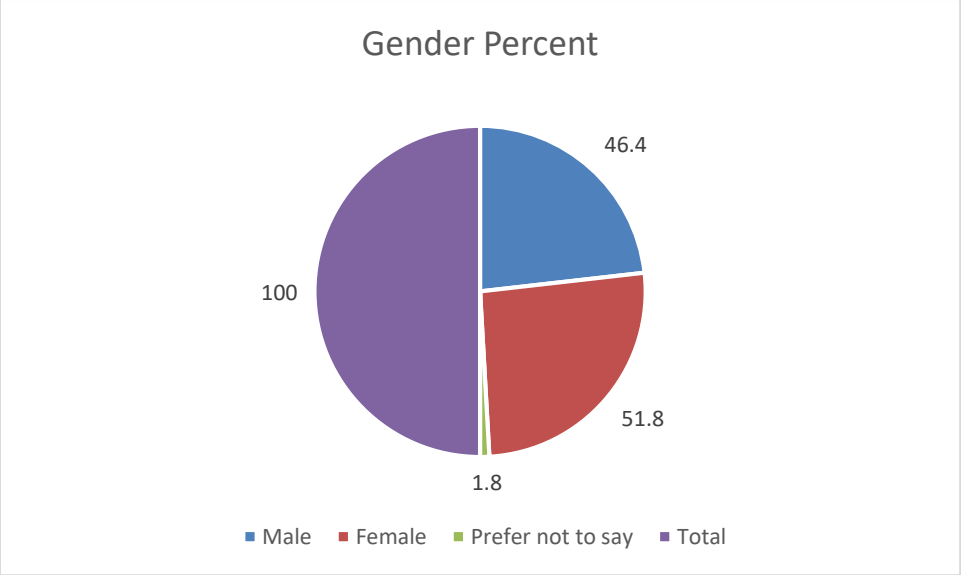

Figure 4-1: Gender Demographic Composition

4.4.2 Age

Table 4.7 and Figure 4.2 below represents the classification of the participants' age. Majority of the respondents 64.3% (n = 36) indicated that they were aged 30-39 years, followed by 26.8% (n = 15) which was those aged 18-29 years then followed by 8.9% (n = 5) aged 40-49. This demonstrates that the majority of these law firms' employees are young, necessitating talent management for their career advancement and potential impact on organization performance.

Over 64% of the respondents were over the age of 30 but younger than 40, this is an indication that the workforce population in Gauteng is generally youthful. This is supported by the findings of the labour force participation rate in South Africa for quarter 3 of 2022 which states that 35-44 year-olds constitute 78.2% of the labour force in South Africa (Statista, 2022). As the majority of the respondents fall within the ambit of youth, it could be argued that talent management is an essential matter in the workplace.

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-29 years	15	26.8
30-39 years	36	64.3
40-49 years	5	8.9
TOTAL	56	100

Table 4-7: Age Demographic Composition

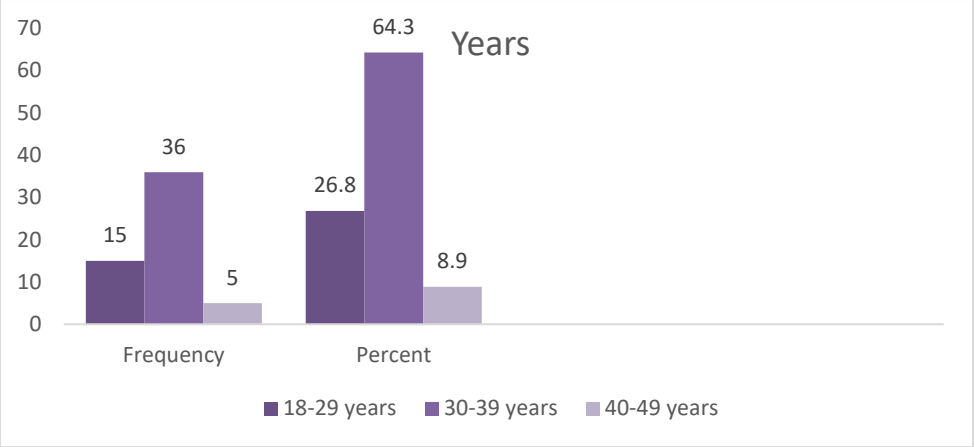

Figure 4-2: Age Demographic Composition

4.4.3 Race

Table 4.8 and Figure 4.3 below represents the classification of the participants' race. Majority of the respondents 53.6% (n=30) were Black, followed by 26.8% (n=15) respondents who were White. This was followed by 12.5% (n=7) respondents who are Coloured. The least number of respondents 7.1% (n=4) were Indian.

Although white attorneys constitute 53% of the legal industry and black attorneys (including Africans, Indian and Coloured) constitute 47% of the legal industry (Law Society of South Africa, 2022), the majority of the respondents on this study were black (African). The race split in this survey is the reflection of the demographic representation of South Africa, and in particular, the Gauteng province. It is trite knowledge that Black people are under-represented in senior or executive positions in law firms. The ethnicity demographic of this study suggests that the formulation and implementation of TMP and strategies would need to recognise the history and impact of the exclusion of Black people and the relevance of talent management to this demographic split.

Race	Frequency	Percent
White	15	26.8
Black	30	53.6
Indian	4	7.1
Coloured	7	12.5
TOTAL	56	100

Table 4-8: Race Demographic Composition

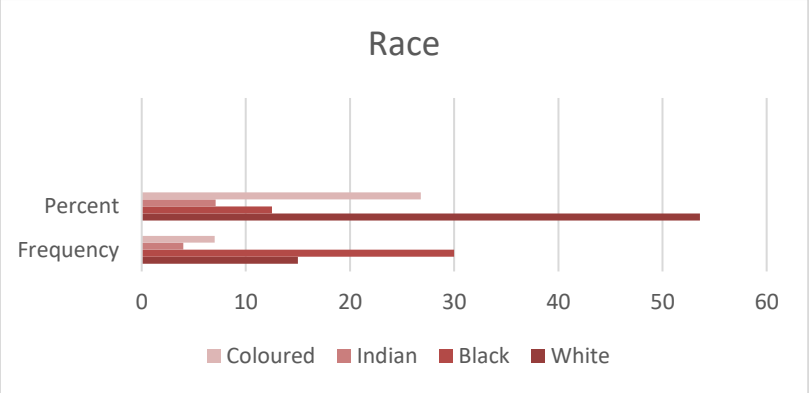

Figure 4-3 Race Demographic Composition

4.4.4 Education level

Table 4.9 and Figure 4.4 below represents the classification of the participants' level of education. From the findings, a majority of the respondents 50% (n=28) of the participants have a bachelor's degree, followed by 35.7% (n=20) who hold Masters degrees. 8.9% (n=5) of the respondents hold other degrees (such as honours) and 3.6% (n=2) of the respondents hold a matric certificate.

The high number of respondents who hold, as a minimum, an undergraduate degree, is not surprising as the minimum requirement to practice law in South Africa is an undergraduate degree in law. This assumes that employees are well educated and can easily be trained and further developed.

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Matric	2	3.6
National Diploma	1	1.8
Undergraduate Degree	28	50
Masters	20	35.7
Other (specify)	5	8.9
TOTAL	56	100

Table 4-9: Education Demographic Composition

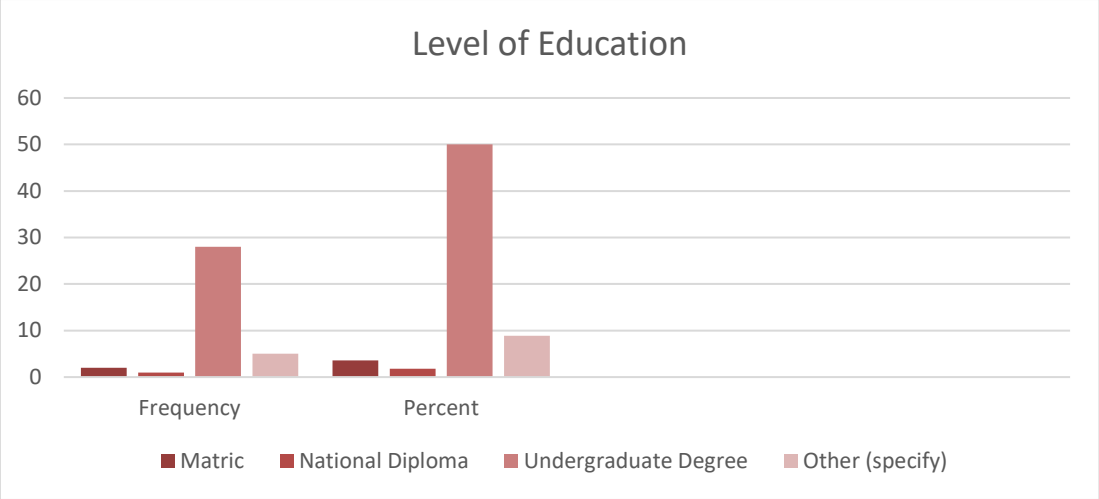

Figure 4-4: Education Demographic Composition

4.4.5 Monthly Income

The study sought to establish the income levels of the respondents. Table 4.10 and Figure 4.5 below presents conclusions on distribution of respondents by their monthly income. From the findings, a majority of the respondents 25% (n=14) earn a monthly income between R20 000 - R30 000, followed by 17.9% (n=10) of the respondents earning a monthly income above R120 000. 16.1% (n=9) of the respondents earn a monthly income of between R45 001 - R65 000, followed by 12.5% (n=7) of the respondents earning between R30 001 - R45 000.

Gross Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent
R20 001 - R30 000	14	25
R30 001 - R45 000	7	12.5
R45 001 - R65 000	9	16.1
R65 001 - R75 000	3	5.4
R75 001 - R90 000	7	12.5
R90 001 - R105 000	6	10.7
Above R120 000	10	17.9
TOTAL	56	100

Table 4-10 Income Demographic Composition

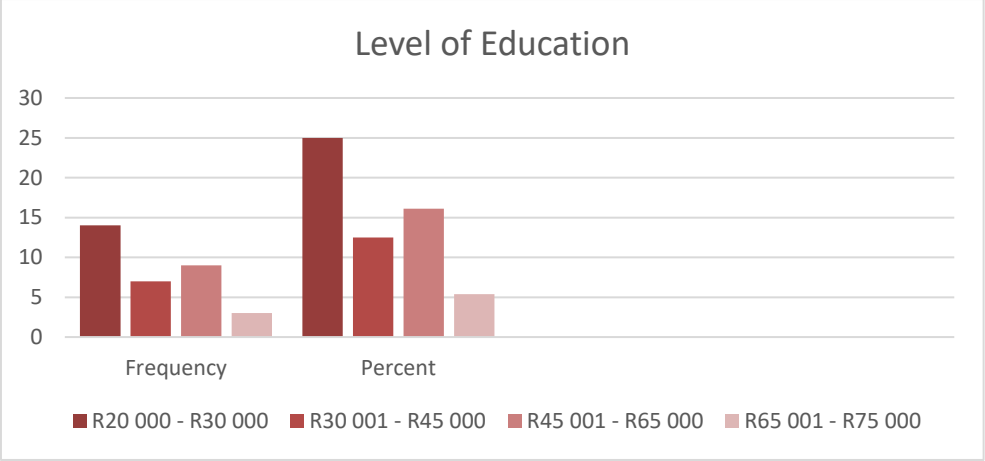

Figure 4-5 Income Demographic Composition

4.5 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to numerically describe or summarise variables in the study (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Malhotra (2010) states that descriptive statistics describe the (i) distribution of responses on a variable, including the measure of central tendency using statistics such as median and mean and (ii) measure of variability in the distribution such as variance and standard deviation). The initial analysis will be aimed at computing descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency (mean) and measures of dispersion (standard deviation) and regression analysis will be undertaken to measure the relationship between TMP (talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for use of talent management) and the organisational competitiveness of law firms in South Africa.

4.5.1 Mean and Standard Deviation

The value at the center of all data set values is referred to as the mean. It is calculated by summing up all the values and dividing them by the sum of all the values (Norusis, 2005). Standard deviation on the other hand measures the spread of data. The standard deviation seeks to summarise or measure the amount by which every value within a dataset deviates from the mean. Widespread data suggests a lack of confidence in the data's reliability. On the other hand, data that is very concentrated indicates high reliability and increased confidence in the data (Wegner, 2007). The mean scores and the standard deviation scores of talent attraction, talent development, talent retention, reason for use of talent management and competitiveness are discussed below.

4.5.1.1 Talent Attraction

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TA1	3.91	0.581	56
TA2	3.95	0.585	56
TA3	3.91	0.549	56
TA4	4.16	0.596	56
TA5	3.88	0.689	56

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.961	3.875	4.161	.286	1.074	.013	5

Table 4-11 Mean and standard deviation scores for talent attraction

Table 4.11 above reports on the mean and standard deviation scores for talent attraction. Item TA4 recorded the highest mean score of 4.16, indicating that the majority of respondents agreed that their law firm made a concerted effort to recruit employees with expertise and competence to fill important senior positions. This can be an indication that law firms' recruitment strategies are focused on recruiting the right talent pursuant to professional service firms and knowledge-based firms needing to establish a differentiated service offering through providing knowledge- and value-driven strategies to attract and retain clients (Lowendahl, 2005). The next highest score recorded related to item TA2 with a mean score of 3.95, which reflects the neutrality of most respondents to the opinion that their law firm's respectable working environments and reasonable wages have assisted it to attract the right talent. Items TA1 (mean =3.91), TA3 (mean = 3.91) and TA5 (mean = 3.88) reflected that most of the respondents were neutral on the statements that attractive salaries and incentives, organisational climate and compensation were methods used by law firms to attract talent. The overall mean score of 3.961, further indicated that respondents were mostly neutral in their responses to the statements relating to talent attraction strategies employed by law firms. The standard deviations for all statements is less than 1 (range 0.549 – 0.689), indicating that on average, respondents' responses do not differ significantly.

4.5.1.2 Talent development

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TD1	4.09	0.611	56
TD2	4.05	0.644	56
TD3	3.98	0.646	56
TD4	3.96	0.602	56
TD5	4.02	0.674	56
TD6	3.98	0.556	56
TD7	4.04	0.602	56

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.018	3.964	4.089	.125	1.032	.002	7

Table 4-12 Mean and standard deviation score for talent development

Table 4.12 above reports on the mean and standard deviation scores for talent development. Respondents mostly agreed with the statements that "the firm seeks to increase the knowledge and expertise of talented employees" (TD1), "the firm place a high priority on training and development" (TD2), "the firm assigns the right instructions to the rights people" (TD7) and "the coaching by immediate supervisors is carried out in this firm" (TD5) with the mean scores recorded as 4.09, 4.05, 4.04 and 4.02 respectively. The respondents were mostly neutral in relation to statements TD3, TD4 and TD6. The overall mean score of 4.018, further indicated that respondents agreed with the statements. The standard deviations for all seven statements is less than 1 (range 0.556-0.674) indicating that on average, respondents' responses do not differ significantly.

4.5.1.3 Talent retention

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TR1	3.86	0.554	56
TR2	3.80	0.616	56
TR3	3.84	0.532	56

TR4	3.86	0.616	56
TR5	3.86	0.724	56
TR6	3.89	0.562	56
TR7	4.07	0.599	56
TR8	3.86	0.645	56

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.879	3.804	4.071	.268	1.070	.007	8

Table 4-13 Mean and standard deviation scores for talent retention

Table 4.13 above reports on the mean and standard deviation scores for talent retention. Respondents mostly agreed with the statement that "my job provides me with sufficient autonomy, responsibility and flexibility to determine my performance objectives", however the respondents mostly were neutral in respect of all other statements relating to talent retention with the mean scores recorded as 3.89, 3.86, 3.84 and 3.80. The overall mean score of 3.879, further indicated that respondents were mostly neutral in their responses to the statements. The mean scores for seven of the eight factors had average scores in the middle of the Likert Scale suggesting that that respondents rated their firm's talent retention strategies as neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory on these factors. The standard deviation for all eight statements is less than 1 (range 0.554 to 0.724), indicating that, on average, respondents' responses do not differ significantly.

4.5.1.4 Reasons for using talent management

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
RTM1	4.13	0.574	56
RTM2	4.18	0.471	56
RTM3	4.00	0.632	56
RTM4	3.96	0.602	56
RTM5	3.70	0.570	56
RTM6	4.02	0.556	56

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.997	3.696	4.179	.482	1.130	.028	6

Table 4-14 Mean and standard deviation scores for reasons for using talent management

Table 4.14 above reports on the mean and standard deviation scores for motives for using TMP. Respondents strongly agreed with the statements relating to the reasons that their firm use TMP. Item RTM2 recorded the highest mean score of 4.18 indicating that most of the respondents agreed that the reason for using TMP is because growth in business requires better management of talent. This was followed by item RTM1 with a mean score of 4.13 indicating that a majority of the respondents agreed that the reason for using TMP is because of the desire to improve business results. Most of the respondents were neutral in relation to the statements that the reason for using TMP was driven by predicted fluctuations in skills of future leaders or management's desire to administer internal talent successfully with mean scores of 3.96 and 3.70 respectively. The overall mean score of 3.997 further indicated that respondents were neutral in their responses to the statements. The standard deviation for all six statements is less than 1 (range 0.556 to 0.632), indicating that, on average, respondents' responses do not differ significantly.

Competitiveness

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
CO1	3.71	0.594	56
CO2	3.86	0.616	56
CO3	3.82	0.543	56
CO4	3.95	0.644	56
CO5	3.98	0.587	56
CO6	3.84	0.565	56
CO7	3.79	0.624	56
CO8	3.75	0.640	56
CO9	3.79	0.653	56

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.831	3.714	3.982	.268	1.072	.008	9

Table 4-15 Mean and standard deviation scores for competitiveness

Table 4.15 above reports on the mean and standard deviation scores for competitiveness. Respondents were neutral in their responses to the statements relating to competitiveness. Item CO5 recorded the highest mean score of 3.98 indicating that most of the respondents agreed that continuous work improvement is often encouraged to promote work productivity. The overall score of 3.831 also indicates that respondents are neutral about competitiveness. The fact that mean scores for seven of the eight factors were on neutral positions on the Likert scale suggests that the respondents perceived their firm's competitiveness regarding to the factors was neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory. The standard deviation for all six statements is less than 1 (range 0.543 to 0.653), indicating that, on average, respondents' responses do not differ significantly.

4.5.2 Inferential statistics results

A statistical method called regression analysis is used to forecast or approximate one variable based on another variable (Malhotra, 2010). The primary use for regression is mainly for prediction and causal inference amongst variables. A regression model examines changes in one variable as a function of changes in values of other variable(s). According to Zaid (2015), for a relationship to be considered significant, the p-value should be less than 0.5 and the t value should be above 1.96. A multiple regression model was utilised to estimate the relationship between the independent variables against the dependent variable. The formulated hypotheses are -

Ho1: Talent attraction positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho2: Talent development positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho3: Talent retention positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Ho4: Reasons for the use of TMP positively influences organisational competitiveness.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.146	.863		-.170	.866	-1.879	1.587					
	TA	.221	.178	.201	1.241	.220	-.137	.578	.525	.173	.130	.422	2.371
	TD	.325	.153	.312	2.123	.039	.017	.632	.585	.288	.223	.510	1.962
	TR	.269	.210	.230	1.276	.208	-.154	.691	.588	.178	.134	.339	2.946
	RTM	.059	.147	.048	.398	.692	-.237	.354	.326	.056	.042	.764	1.309
	RE	.141	.150	.101	.938	.353	-.161	.443	.086	.131	.099	.945	1.058

a. Dependent Variable: CO

The objective of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between TMP (talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for use of TMP) and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms. The results are discussed in terms of the research intentions.

Table 4.16 below sets out the results of the multi regression analysis.

Table 4-16 Multiple regression analysis results

Hypothesis 1: *Talent attraction positively influences organisational competitiveness*

The empirical evidence indicates that talent attraction is not significantly related to organisational competitiveness as the t value falls below the accepted threshold of 1.96. The t value for talent attraction is 1.241 illustrating a positive but insignificant relationship between talent attraction and organisational competitiveness. The p value (p=0.220) is

greater than the accepted guideline of 0.05 indicating that the relationship is insignificant. The null hypothesis should thus be rejected.

According to Mellahi & Collings (2010), there is a positive and important relationship between talent identification and the organisational advantage. In addition, Mohammed (2015) supports the conclusion that talent management has a positive impact on employee engagement, retention and value creation, all of which lead to better organizational performance. This finding is not supported by the findings of Kontoghiorghes and Frangou (2009), who established a significant and positive connection between talent retention and organisational performance.

Hypothesis 2: *Talent development positively influences organisational competitiveness*

The empirical evidence indicates that talent development is significantly related to organisational competitiveness as the t value falls above the accepted guideline of 1.96. The t value for talent attraction is 2.123 illustrating a significant and positive relationship between talent development and organisational competitiveness. Furthermore, the p value (p=0.039) is lower than the accepted guideline of 0.05 indicating that the relationship is significant, the null hypothesis has therefore been proven.

Al-Hadid (2017)'s research, which found that talent development has a significant impact on achieving a competitive advantage in the sample companies it studied, supported these findings. These findings were further supported by Mhagama (2019) who established that there existed a strong and significant relationship between talent development and organisation performance.

Hypothesis 3: *Talent retention positively influences organisational competitiveness.*

The empirical evidence indicates that talent retention is not significantly related to organisational competitiveness as the t value falls below the accepted guideline of 1.96. The t value for talent retention is 1.276 illustrating a positive but insignificant relationship between talent retention and organisational competitiveness. Furthermore, the p value (p=0.208) is greater than the accepted guideline of 0.05 indicating that the relationship is insignificant. The null hypothesis should thus be rejected.

These findings are supported by the study conducted by Amushila and Bussin (2021) who found that talent management has made no significant progress in influencing employee

retention. On the contrary, Mhagama (2019) found a strong correlation between talent retention and organizational performance.

Hypothesis 4: *The reasons for the use of TMP positively influences organisational competitiveness.*

The empirical evidence indicates that the reasons for use of TMP are not significantly related to organisational competitiveness as the t value falls below the accepted threshold of 1.96. The t value for the use of TMP is 0.398 illustrating a positive but insignificant relationship between the reasons for using TMP and organisational competitiveness. Furthermore, the p value (p=0.629) is greater than the accepted guideline of 0.05 indicating that the relationship is insignificant. The null hypothesis should thus be rejected.

Conclusion

The major research findings were discussed and analysed in this chapter, examining the relationship between TMP (based on talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for use of talent management) and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms. The demographics of the respondents were assessed followed by a discussion of the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument used for the study. Upon establishment of the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilised to estimate the relationship between the independent variables against the dependent variable. The main findings indicated that although talent attraction, talent retention and reasons for use of TMP are not significantly related to organisational competitiveness, they do have a positive influence on organisational competitiveness. The results did find that talent development is significantly related to organisational competitiveness.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and discusses the limitation of the study and proposes recommendations.

5 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness. Talent management constructs, namely talent attraction, talent development, talent retention and reasons for use of talent management, were

considered pursuant to the literature review undertaken, to assess whether they played a significant role in impacting organisational competitiveness in law firms in South Africa.

This chapter represents brief overview of the research, which will be followed by a discussion of the significance of the study. The aim of this final chapter is to summarise and draw conclusions about what this study has achieved in terms of the hypothesis and the results. This chapter will then conclude with the limitations of the study and will also sketch the recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.2 Summary of chapters

This study was divided into 5 chapters, each serving a defined purpose.

Chapter 1 presented a background and rationale of the study. The aim of the study, research questions and hypotheses were outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter discussed the expected contribution of this study to academia.

Chapter 2 presented the literature on talent management. The concepts of talent and talent management were discussed and the theoretical frameworks of talent management and organisational competitiveness, namely talent-based theory and resource-based theory, were outlined.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology applied in this study. The research design was quantitative in nature and descriptive statistics were used to explain the data collected and inferential statistical methods were used to test the significance of relationships between the responses.

Chapter 4 presented the empirical findings of this study as well as an interpretation and discussion of the findings obtained from statistical data analysis.

5.3 Limitations

Although this study provided insight and relevant findings with regards to understanding the relationship between TMP and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms, it is prudent to be cognisant the limitations, some of which should be utilised in relation to further research on the topic. The main limitation relates to geography, with the study being conducted in Gauteng only. It is arguable that the results of this study pursuant to the geographical limitation may not be an accurate representation of the relationship between the two constructs. Another limitation relates to the targeted sample size for the study, which

was identified as being approximately 200 participants, however this number of participants was not reached, as such the results are not generalizable and cannot be fully extended to other populations.

It is imperative to note that the aforementioned limitations do not necessarily contradict the contributions of this study but provide further opportunities for future research.

5.4 Recommendations

This study was conducted pursuant to the statement by Yilmaz and Kececioglu (2014) that actual talent management is one of the key reasons in attainment of organisational success. Based on the analysis of the literature review and the empirical findings of this study, the following recommendations are outlined -

- given the empirical results have proven that talent development is significantly related to organisational competitiveness, law firms should enrich their talent development initiatives within the firm and ensure visibility and credibility of these initiatives;
- the incentive plans of law firms should be regularly revisited to ensure that they are enticing to prospective employees;
- law firms should develop individual development plans for their employees which are not generic and focused on the individual's talent; and
- human resources training and development initiatives should be aligned with those targeted to manage talent, to meet the future needs of key positions identified within the firm.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire

The Relationship Between Talent Management Practices and Organisational Competitiveness in South African Law Firms

I am a Master of Business Administration student at the University of Witwatersrand Business School, Johannesburg. In partial fulfillment of my degree, I am conducting research titled "*The Relationship Between Talent Management Practices and Organisational Competitiveness in South African Law Firms*."

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between talent management practices and the competitiveness of an organisation at selected commercial law firms in South Africa. These terms are described as follows -

i) talent management practice represents an opportunity to increase the performance of a company using its main resource, people (Wandia, 2013)
ii) an organisation's competitive advantage is based on its distinguished internal resources; hence the competitive advantage is realised by exploiting and utilization of these resources (Rabbi, et al., 2015).

The questionnaire should take about 5 – 8 minutes to complete. Your response is important to the study and there are no right or wrong answers. The survey is both confidential and anonymous. It is therefore our request that you answer all questions honestly and as best as you can. As participation in this study is voluntary, you may withdraw at any phase.

Should you require further details regarding the study, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher: Sinomtha Mbuqe 0833887652 716361@students.wits.ac.za
Supervisor: Dr Erasmus Appiah 011 717 3032 erasmus.appiah@wits.ac.za

By completing and submitting this questionnaire means you consent to participate in the study. By clicking "I agree" below, you consent to voluntarily participating in this study and that you are above 18 years

Screening question:

Are you employed in a law firm? Yes ☐ No ☐

If your answer is 'Yes' to the question above, please continue to the next question. If your answer is 'No,' you do not have to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

SECTION A: SELECTION AND BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

A1. Please indicate your gender

Male	1
Female	2
Non-binary	3
Prefer not to say	4

A2. What is your age in years (completed)?

18-29 years	1
30 -39 years	2
40 -49 years	3
50 – 59 years	4
60 – 69 years	5
70 and abover	6

A3. What is your racial group?

White	1
Black	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4
Other (specify)	5

A4. What is your highest level of education (completed)?

Matric	1
Diploma	2
Undergraduate degree	3
Masters	4
Doctorate	5
Other (specify)	6

A5. What is your gross monthly income?

R20 001-R30 000	
R30 001-R45 000	
R45 001-R65 000	
R65 001-R75 000	
R75 001-R90 000	
R90 001-R105 000	
R105 001-R120 000	
Above R120 000	

SECTION B: Relationship between talent management practice and organisational competitiveness

Please cross (X) in the appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements (Note that 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree).

Talent Attraction

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
TA1	The firm has attractive salaries and incentives for talented people	1	2	3	4	5
TA2	The firm's good working conditions and fair wages have enabled it to attract the right talent	1	2	3	4	5
TA3	The firm ensures a good organizational climate to attract the right talent	1	2	3	4	5
TA4	The firm makes a concerted effort to recruit those with expertise and competence to fill important senior positions	1	2	3	4	5
TA5	The firm has a competitive compensation system in comparison to other organizations in the same industry, which is a motivating factor for joining the firm	1	2	3	4	5

Talent development

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
TD1	The firm seeks to increase the knowledge and expertise of talented employees	1	2	3	4	5
TD2	The firm places a high priority on training and development	1	2	3	4	5
TD3	The firm supports employee training and career progression	1	2	3	4	5
TD4	The firm encourages and supports employee development	1	2	3	4	5
TD5	The coaching by immediate supervisors is carried out in this firm	1	2	3	4	5
TD6	The firm develops programs and initiatives that enhance employee development	1	2	3	4	5
TD7	The firm assigns the right instructions to the right people	1	2	3	4	5

Talent retention

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
TR1	The firm offers financial and non-financial incentives to retain talented people	1	2	3	4	5
TR2	The firm has regular training and development of talented employees, which actively creates developmental opportunities for subordinates	1	2	3	4	5
TR3	The firm builds a deep reservoir of successors at every level	1	2	3	4	5
TR4	Most often, employees are recognised for good job performance	1	2	3	4	5
TR5	My current job satisfies me.	1	2	3	4	5
TR6	My remuneration matches my effort in my job.	1	2	3	4	5
TR7	My job provides me with sufficient autonomy, responsibility, and flexibility to determine my performance objectives	1	2	3	4	5
TR8	The firm has differentiated itself as the employer of choice	1	2	3	4	5

Reason for using talent management

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
RTM1	Desire to improve business results	1	2	3	4	5
RTM2	Growth in a business requiring better management of talent	1	2	3	4	5
RTM3	Need for greater diversity in management	1	2	3	4	5
RTM4	Anticipated changes in skills of future leaders	1	2	3	4	5
RTM5	Driven by the CEO desire to manage internal talent effectively	1	2	3	4	5
RTM6	Need to increase retention of internal talent	1	2	3	4	5

Competitiveness

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
CO1	Talent management practices have increased my competencies at the firm	1	2	3	4	5
CO2	The talent management practices at the firm affect my performance and output	1	2	3	4	5
CO3	I am better able to advise my clients as a result of the talent management practices employed at the firm	1	2	3	4	5
CO4	The talent management practices employed at the firm have increased my marketable skills	1	2	3	4	5
CO5	Continuous work improvement is often encouraged to promote work productivity	1	2	3	4	5
CO6	The talent management strategy employed at our firm has increased the quality of the work I produce	1	2	3	4	5
CO7	The talent management strategy employed at our firm has had a direct positive impact on client engagements	1	2	3	4	5
CO8	Our clients benefit from our talent management strategies	1	2	3	4	5
CO9	Talent management strategies directly impact our revenue	1	2	3	4	5

Control variable: Recruitment

Please cross (X) the response that reflects your perceptions about talent management practices and organisational competitiveness

		strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
RE1	External recruitment agencies are extensively used for the selection of potential talented managers in my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
RE2	A job centre is a main recruitment method used by my organisation for attracting talented managers.	1	2	3	4	5
RE3	In my organisation managerial recruitment is mainly done by internal appointments.	1	2	3	4	5
RE4	In my organisation talent management recruitment through connections/ networking is seldom done	1	2	3	4	5
RE5	In my organisation talented managers are often recruited from referrals by existing senior/executive managers.	1	2	3	4	5
RE6	It is NOT a common practice in my organisation for talented managers to be recruited by referrals from existing staff	1	2	3	4	5
RE7	Often my organisation recruits talented managers by advertising in the national press.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

APPENDIX B

Ethical Clearance Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA716361/410
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below)

Project title	Talent management practices and organisational competitiveness in South African law firms
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Sinomtha Mbuqe
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	25 09 2022
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Prof Anthony Stacey ☎ +27 11 717 3587 +27 82 880 4531 anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

smbuqe
Signature

26 September 2022
Date: