

Evaluation of Manufacturing SMEs in Ecuador - Zone 5: Using Multivariate Statistical Techniques

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Abstract

The study delves into the growing prominence of manufacturing SMEs, especially in the economic landscape of emerging territories. The focus is on Zone 5 of Ecuador, a region that demonstrates potential and challenges faced. This research uncovers the intricate realm of human talent management, revealing its complex role in determining these companies' competitiveness in the market. The aim is directed towards understanding the nuanced impact of human talent on the strategic foundations of businesses. The research employs a quantitative approach. The study underscores the undeniable importance of proactive and well-planned human resource management. To further strengthen competitiveness and innovation in SMEs, the study also highlights the importance of investing in training and development of human talent.

Keywords: *Human Talent Management, Competitiveness, Manufacturing SMEs, Business Performance, Strategic Practices.*

Introduction

This study examines the importance of talent in the strategic management (Lechuga Sancho et al., 2018) of micro, small, and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) in Region 5 of Ecuador, aiming to analyze how effective talent management (GTH) can contribute to improving their market competitiveness (Mansion & Bausch, 2020). The relationship between human talent management (GTH) and competitiveness is examined, as well as the management practices these companies use to develop and retain their key personnel.

Manufacturing SMEs play an important role in promoting Ecuador's economic development. However, for these companies to be competitive in national and international markets (Zúñiga, 2018), it is necessary to strengthen their human and relational capital. Human talent is one of the main keys to strategic management of manufacturing SMEs in Zone 5 of Ecuador (Borazon et al., 2022). These companies face several challenges in dealing with competitiveness, such as access to new technologies, innovation, and cost containment (Noriega et al., 2018). The development of human capital is essential for them to overcome these challenges and improve their competitiveness.

Competitiveness and effective human resource management represent significant challenges for these companies. To gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between various factors affecting these aspects, researchers have turned to Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a statistical technique (Abdi & Williams, 2010). PCA can reveal hidden patterns and connections between these factors, offering valuable

insights into how they interact and affect the overall performance and success of these companies (Vera-Barbosa & Blanco-Ariza, 2019).

Strategic Human Resource Management Models

Model of Miles and Snow (1978, 1986)

This model by Kimberly, Miles, and Snow (1978) explores how strategy, structure, and organizational process interact to influence an organization's performance. The authors conclude that human resource management is a key factor for organizational success, and that appropriate strategies and structures must be developed to ensure effective management of human resources (Miles & Snow, 1978; Smith et al., 1986). The model proposed by Miles and Snow (1978) categorizes organizations into four different types.

Table 1. Miles and Snow Organizational Strategies

Strategy	Characteristics	Structure	Organizational process	Human resource management
Defender	Seeks stability and security.	Functional structure.	Routine standardized processes.	Focus on stability and efficiency.
Prospector	Oriented to innovation and the search for new opportunities.	Decentralized structure.	Flexible and adaptable processes.	Focus on innovation and growth.
Analyzer	Seeks a balance between stability and innovation.	Matrix structure.	Mixed processes of routine and flexibility.	Focus on flexibility and adaptation.
Reactor	Does not follow a coherent and consistent strategy.	Informal structure.	Unstable and chaotic processes.	Focus on reaction and adaptation.

Note: Adapted from Miles and Snow (1978).

Competitive Models

Porter Model (1980)

This model focuses on strategy, structure, and organizational processes, and how to enhance competitiveness and strategic management of human resources (Porter, 1980).

Table 2: Key factors for competitiveness and strategic human resource management.

Factor	Description
Strategy and organizational structure	Development of effective strategies to improve competitiveness, including a comprehensive evaluation of existing products and services and an analysis of the competitive landscape (Porter, 1980).
Strategic human resource management	Definition of corporate goals for talent development, identification of training gaps, and evaluation of human resource policies (Miles & Snow, 1978).
Leadership, motivation, and communication	Promotion of effective leadership that inspires and motivates employees, creation of a motivating work environment that fosters employee engagement and performance, establishment of effective communication channels that allow employees to understand the organization's strategy and their role in it (Dvouletý & Blažková, 2021; Singh et al., 2008").

The McKinsey 7S Model

The McKinsey 7S Model (Peters & Waterman, 1982) was developed by McKinsey consultants Tom Peters and Robert Waterman. This model identifies seven factors that contribute to the competitiveness of businesses.

Table 3. McKinsey 7S Model

Factor	Definition	How it contributes to competitiveness
Strategy	The overall direction and objectives of the organization.	An effective strategy must be clear, concise, and realistic. It must be aligned with the organization's resources and capabilities, and it must consider the competitive landscape.
Structure	The formal organization of the company, including its reporting relationships, job descriptions, and division of labor.	An effective structure must be flexible, adaptable, and efficient. It must allow the organization to respond quickly to changes in the market.
Systems	The processes and procedures that the organization uses to operate.	Effective systems must be efficient, effective, and easy to use. They must help the organization achieve its objectives in an efficient manner.
Style	The way in which the organization is managed.	An effective management style must be inspiring, motivating, and participatory. It must create a positive and productive work environment.
Staff	The people who work for the organization.	An effective staff must be competent, motivated, and committed. They must have the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their duties effectively.
Shared values	The beliefs and principles that guide the organization's behavior.	Effective shared values must be clear, concise, and shared by all employees. They must create a sense of belonging and commitment among employees.

Note: These factors are interdependent, and all play an important role in the competitiveness of a company.

SMEs in the manufacturing sector

The business sector is a fundamental component of the Ecuadorian economy. In 2022, according to data from the Superintendence of Companies (SuperCias), there were a total of 863,681 registered companies in the country, of which 95.33% were micro-enterprises (Superintendence of Companies, 2023). These data show that micro-enterprises are the pillar of the Ecuadorian business sector, representing many companies and creating most jobs. Economic growth and sustainable development are quickly becoming topics of great importance in the modern business environment (INEC, 2022). These concepts involve the responsible use of the planet's limited resources for production and the economy (Mocan et al., 2016).

Table 4. Economic sectors within Ecuador

Economic Sector	Number of Companies	% Total
Total	863.681	100,00%
Services	392.659	45,46%
Commerce	295.431	34,21%
Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, and Fishing	78.134	9,05%

Manufacturing Industries	69.191	8,01%
Construction	26.658	3,09%
Mining and Quarrying	1.608	0,19%

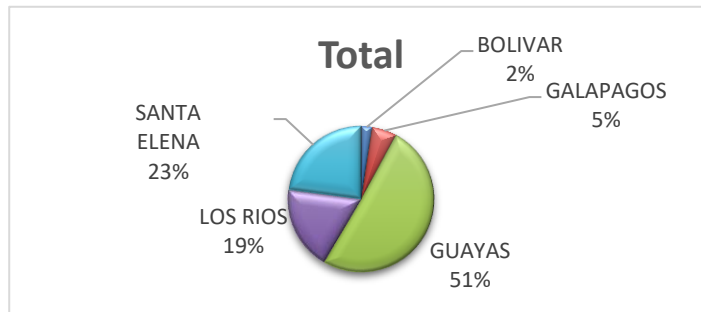
Note: Taken from SuperCias.

In the provinces that make up Zone 5 of Ecuador -Guayas (excluding the cantons of Guayaquil, Durán, and Samborondón), Los Ríos, Santa Elena, Bolívar, and Galápagos-, manufacturing SMEs are a significant force. They represent 1.1% of all companies in these provinces and 3.8% of manufacturing companies. These percentages underscore the presence and relevance of SMEs in the Ecuadorian manufacturing sector. In the framework of our research, we identified a total of 253 of these manufacturing SMEs operating in this territory.

Tabla 5. Number of Manufacturing SMEs by Province in Zone 5 of Ecuador

Provinces	SMEs
Bolívar	6
Galápagos	14
Guayas	128
Los Ríos	47
Santa elena	58
Total	253

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Manufacturing SMEs by Province in Zone 5 of Ecuador



Note: Proportion of Manufacturing SMEs.

The study of manufacturing SMEs in Zone 5 of Ecuador is important for several reasons. First, these companies represent an important engine for economic growth and job creation in the region. Second, manufacturing SMEs in Zone 5 face specific challenges, such as competition from foreign companies and lack of access to financing. The study of these companies can help identify strategies to overcome these challenges and improve their competitiveness (Maguirre & Torre, 2019).

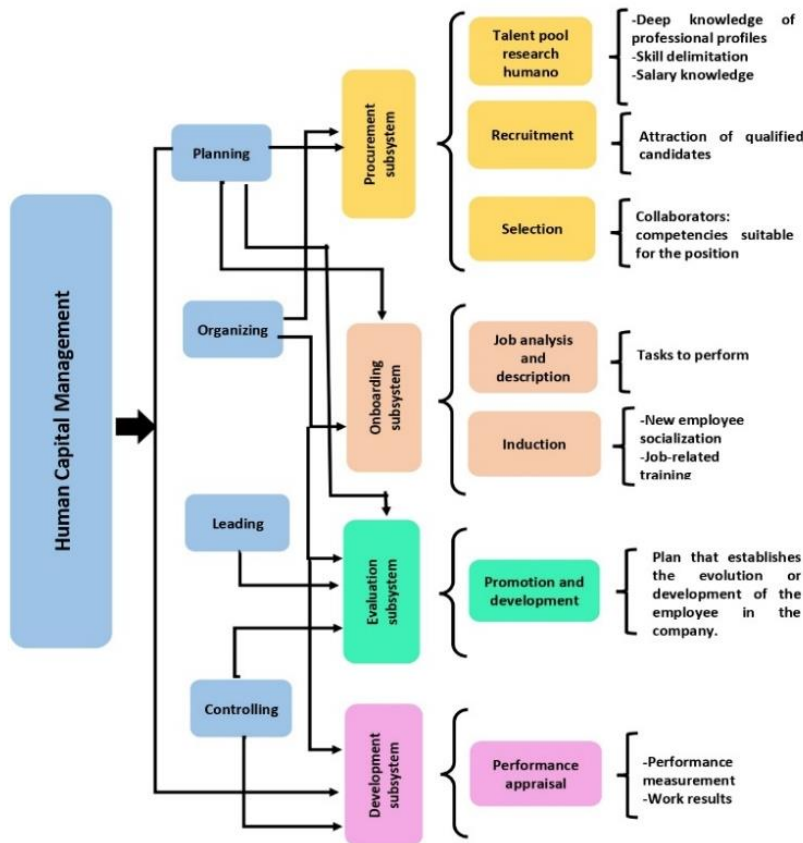
Methodology

Figure 2 presents a structured schema of human talent management, outlining the fundamental stages and their respective subsections. The visual arrangement facilitates understanding of how each element is interrelated and contributes to the overall goal of effective human talent management (Ramírez-Torres, 2023).

The structure of the proposed model is articulated through various subsystems, each with specific functions that are crucial in the comprehensive process of talent management:

1. Procurement subsystem: It goes beyond simple recruitment; it involves understanding the organization's changing needs, forecasting future talent demands, and connecting with candidates who not only have the necessary technical skills, but also those who align culturally with the company (Apanasovich et al., 2017, pp. 11-25).
2. Onboarding subsystem: Its main objective is to ensure a smooth transition for new collaborators. This involves not only familiarizing them with the tools and work processes, but also instilling the organization's mission, vision, and values in them, ensuring that they feel like an integral part of the team from the start (Pollard & Svarcova, 2009, p. 501).
3. Development subsystem: Although it is focused on the growth and development of employees, it is also essential to ensure that the organization can adapt and evolve in a constantly changing business environment. This is achieved through continuous training, leadership development, and succession planning (Schumpeter, 1909, p. 214).
4. Evaluation subsystem: Continuous evaluation is essential to identify areas for improvement and highlight significant achievements. However, it is vital that this subsystem is based on objectivity, transparency, and, above all, on fostering a constructive dialogue between employees and supervisors (Cera et al., 2023, p. 329).

Figure 2. Applied Human Resource Management Model



Note: A holistic approach to attracting, retaining, developing, and evaluating employees.

Human Talent Management (GTH) is a dynamic balance between meeting organizational needs and fostering employee growth and well-being. This concept, as Collings & Mellahi (2009) suggest, requires regular updates to stay effective in the evolving business world.

This study investigates the impact of talent management on the competitiveness of manufacturing SMEs in Ecuador's Region 5. It explores how effective talent management

can enhance these companies' market competitiveness. The research examines the relationship between human talent management and competitiveness, focusing on management practices for developing and retaining key personnel.

Employing a quantitative approach, the study involves descriptive statistical analysis and principal component analysis of data from a representative sample of Zone 5's SMEs. The survey, targeting managers and key employees, gathered data on talent management practices while respecting participant confidentiality. According to Ericson et al. (2016), principal component analysis helps identify factors affecting SME competitiveness. Understanding these factors is crucial for SMEs to develop effective strategies for improving both competitiveness and human resource management.

An empirical instrument consisting of 7 items on a Likert scale was structured, followed by validation by a panel of experts in the field. Participants within the expert panel included PhDs and Masters with extensive experience in areas such as Business Administration, Human Resource Management, Economics, Sociology, etc., which produced a definitive questionnaire. After pilot testing, it was used on a significant sample of n=112, corresponding to participants with a high level of involvement within the companies.

Table 6. Success factors of manufacturing SMEs in Ecuador

ITEMS	QUESTIONS
P17	Employees receive training that is relevant to their role or function.
P18	Employees are known for achieving their work goals on time or within the planned timeframe.
P19	Employee turnover is low; that is, employees tend to stay with the company for a long time.
P41	The business strategies applied are successful, demonstrating that the SME has the attitude to sell what it produces.
P42	The SME demonstrates the ability to maintain and increase its market share.
P43	In Ecuador, there are policies that protect domestic businesses from foreign competition.
P44	In Ecuador, there are policies that promote and contribute to the development of manufacturing SMEs.

Note: Items of the instrument applied to evaluate the success factors of manufacturing SMEs in Ecuador.

For the treatment and evaluation of data for the descriptive and multivariate statistical analysis, the statistical software Jasp. Version 0.17.2.1 and RStudio Version 2023.03.0-386 were used to conduct the relationship between Human Resource Management and Competitiveness.

The following workflow was developed for the analysis of the applied instrument:

1. Analysis of descriptive data and item reliability to measure distribution and dispersion of data.

The descriptive analysis of the instrument items was conducted, with the results indicating that the data follow a platykurtic and negatively skewed distribution. This suggests that most responses are clustered around the mean, with a tendency towards

lower values. No outliers or missing data were found, suggesting that the sample is robust and reliable. See table 7 for details.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics

	Valid	Missing	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Standard error of skewness	Kurtosis	Standard error of kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk	Shapiro-Wilk value	p-value
P17	112	0	3.750	0.905	-0.593	0.228	-0.318	0.453	0.831	< .001	
P18	112	0	3.777	0.956	-0.670	0.228	-0.401	0.453	0.812	< .001	
P19	112	0	3.420	1.213	-0.056	0.228	-1.601	0.453	0.797	< .001	
P41	112	0	4.107	0.591	-0.026	0.228	-0.146	0.453	0.755	< .001	
P42	112	0	3.991	0.844	-0.991	0.228	0.835	0.453	0.766	< .001	
P43	112	0	3.348	1.105	0.005	0.228	-1.398	0.453	0.835	< .001	
P44	112	0	2.973	1.305	0.100	0.228	-1.117	0.453	0.904	< .001	

The reliability of a scale or item refers to the consistency and stability with which it measures a construct or concept. A commonly used tool for assessing reliability is the Guttman lambda 6 index. In the study by Fumeaux et al., (2016), this index was used to assess both the reliability of the full scale and the individual items.

Tabla 8. shows the reliability statistics of the frequent scale.

Estimar	Guttman's λ_6
Point Estimate	0.868
CI lower bound 95%	0.826
CI upper bound 95%	0.908

Table 9. Item-level reliability statistics for the frequent scale

Item	Guttman's λ_6
P17	0.864
P18	0.809
P19	0.825
P41	0.796
P42	0.832
P43	0.783
P44	0.808

2. Principal component analysis to measure the perception of the influence of human resource management and competitiveness.

Principal component analysis, the chi-square test ($X^2=131.820$, $df=8$, $p<.001$), with a saturation of no more than 0.6, the results were significant, see table 11.

Table 11. Chi-square contrast

Valor	gl	p
Model	131.820	8 < .001

Two principal components were obtained, which are supported by the sedimentation figure.

Figure 3. Scree plot

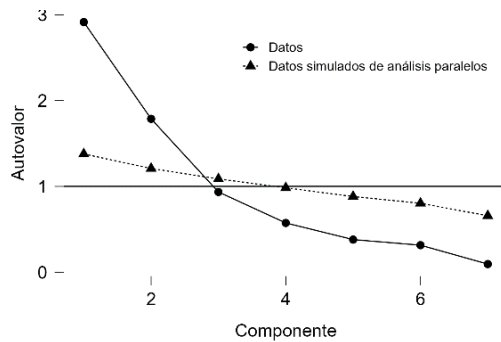
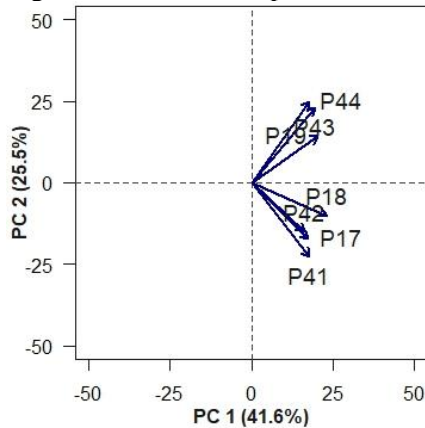


Figure 4 illustrates a relationship between the principal component data. It shows two main clusters, representing human resource management and competitiveness.

Figure 4. Relationship between Human Resource Management and Competitiveness



Nota: PC 1 represents Human Resource Management and Business Strategy and PC 2 represents Environment and Labor Stability.

Using the promax oblique rotation method in the principal component analysis, two main components were highlighted. The first one shows a uniform trend in human talent management practices among SMEs in Zone 5, indicating a widespread adoption of certain practices in this area. The second component reveals those responses to questions P41 and P42 cluster around high values, roughly 4, suggesting a generally positive perception in aspects of competitiveness. Conversely, responses to P43 and P44 indicate a less favorable perception, with averages around 3.35 and 2.97, respectively. This uniformity might suggest a collaborative business environment or reflect specific characteristics of the local market and business culture. These findings are detailed in tables 12 and 13 of the study.

Table 12. Component Characteristics

Solution Unrotated	Solution rotated
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	Eigenvalue	Proportion var.	Cumulative	Sums of squared loadings	Proportion var.	Eigenvalue
Component 1	2.914	0.416	0.416	2.415	0.345	0.345
Component 2	1.787	0.255	0.672	2.287	0.327	0.672

Table 13. Component Loads

	RC1	RC2	Unicidad
P41	0.881		0.275
P17	0.766		0.432
P18	0.743		0.307
P42	0.690		0.533
P44		0.920	0.198
P43		0.916	0.180
P19		0.733	0.373

Note. The rotation method applied is promax.

Results

This research focused on analyzing human talent management as a key factor in achieving competitiveness in manufacturing SMEs in Zone 5 of Ecuador. Through the principal component methodology, several relevant components influencing the competitiveness of these companies were identified.

The first principal component was named Human Talent Management and Business Strategy, contributing 41.60% of the variance. The combination of these items suggests that companies investing in the training and development of their employees, and achieving a high level of motivation and commitment, are more capable of effectively managing their human resources and achieving sustainable growth. This observation is particularly relevant as it highlights the importance of human talent management practices in SMEs in the region. It is interesting to note that the data suggest a strong correlation between human talent management and the importance of effective internal management.

The second principal component was named Environment and Work Stability, contributing 25.5%, suggesting that companies with clear vision and mission statements, innovative, efficient, and producing high-quality products are more competitive. It underlines the relevance of the external environment, specifically the labor and political context in Ecuador, and how this can influence the stability and success of manufacturing SMEs.

The analyzed data indicate that manufacturing SMEs in Ecuador are characterized by having a skilled and committed workforce, with low staff turnover. Additionally, the business strategies applied are successful, demonstrating that SMEs have a proactive attitude towards selling their products.

Discussion

The study on strategic management in manufacturing SMEs has revealed key findings that align and differ from previous research, such as that of Chuang & Liao (2010) and Edgar (2020). The relationship between competitiveness strategies, the importance of the Human Resource Practices System (HPWS), and its significant link to market performance were highlighted. It was emphasized that employee performance is influenced by the logic of the behavioral model, reinforcing the idea that this approach is crucial for predicting employee outcomes. These results support the theory that SMEs investing in the development and motivation of their human talent achieve more effective resource management and sustainable competitiveness.

The robustness and reliability of the data, with no outliers or missing data, validate the conclusions of the study. The multiple squared correlations indicate that the model explains a moderate amount of variance in the variables studied.

This study has relevant practical applications in SME management, particularly in Zone 5 of Ecuador, suggesting that human talent is key in competitive strategy. Although there are limitations, such as the sample size and the lack of data on individual work context, these findings can guide managers in formulating strategies and HR practices. Future research is recommended to include contextual factors and work history variables to improve the accuracy of the results.

Conclusions

The present study offers a deep insight into the relationship between human resource management and competitiveness in manufacturing SMEs in Zone 5 of Ecuador. In Zone 5 of Ecuador, manufacturing SMEs play a fundamental role in the business landscape, highlighting the importance of analyzing their operations and the challenges they face in this environment.

The results of the study emphasize the importance of proactive and planned human resource management to drive competitiveness. It is evident that efforts in training and development, combined with strategies to strengthen motivation and commitment, lead to superior business performance. The interrelationships detected between different variables indicate that competitiveness does not derive from individual elements, but from an intricate combination of practices and perceptions. The close connection between specific variables, such as P43 and P44, highlights certain aspects that may be crucial for the competitiveness of SMEs. This analysis proposes that manufacturing SMEs that aspire to boost their competitiveness adopt solid human resource management practices, establish clear vision and mission, and maintain an open attitude to innovation and adaptation in the face of changing market demands.

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