

**Assessment of Labor Management Practices in Private Group Housing Developers in Kathmandu Valley****Sachin Sapkota<sup>1,\*</sup>, Hari Mohan Shrestha<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup> Center for Postgraduate Studies, Nepal Engineering College, Nepal\*Corresponding email: [ps.sachin918@gmail.com](mailto:ps.sachin918@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

The construction industry is known for its labor-intensive nature, and companies must maintain high labor management standards to complete projects within time and budget. However, challenges related to labor management are common in the industry and can negatively impact project delivery times and costs. In Nepal, housing developers face the issue of not delivering projects on time, leading to increased costs. This study explores the current labor management practices, challenges, and remedial measures in the construction industry of Nepal, with a focus on housing developers in the Kathmandu Valley. The study collected data from 17 building projects using interviews and questionnaires and analyzed the data using the Relative Importance Index (RII) and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The findings indicate that labor management issues, including poor communication, planning, inadequate wages, occupational health and safety, labor policy, and unfair treatment, are major challenges faced by housing developers in Nepal. The study recommends implementing better employee staffing, performance evaluation, work environment, training, and compensation management to address these challenges. The results of this study offer insight into current labor management practices and potential solutions for housing developers in Nepal, contributing to the overall success of construction projects. Proper labor management can result in substantial savings in time and cost for construction projects, making this study relevant and valuable to researchers and practitioners in the construction industry. The findings of this research could have important implications for private housing developers in Nepal, as well as for the broader housing sector in developing countries facing similar challenges.

**Keywords:** *Compensation management; Housing developer; Labor management; Performance evaluation***Introduction**

The right to housing is a fundamental human right recognized by many international human rights treaties and instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Rawls, 2005). However, for many people in developing countries, access to affordable and adequate housing remains a challenge due to rapid urbanization and demographic changes. Nepal, one of the least

developed countries of, is no exception to this trend. Every citizen shall have the right to appropriate housing and no citizen shall be evicted from the residence owned by him or her nor shall his or her residence be infringed except following the law as per Article 37 of the Constitution of Nepal.

The Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal (CBS) data shows that the urban population has reached 66.08% of the total population in Nepal. In ten years, Nepal's population grew by 10.18% with a 0.93% annual growth rate for the last ten years (CBS, 2021). This rapid urbanization has led to unplanned urban growth, with many private housing developers taking advantage of the situation. Nepal Land and Housing Developers' Association (NLHDA), an umbrella organization of all private housing developers operating in Nepal lists 97 developers as its members (NLHDA, 2020). The escalating price of land, construction materials, and labor has been a major concern for many people to build houses by themselves. Also, the aspect of proper cost-quality control and supervision time has attracted many people towards housing colonies or residential colonies developed by private developers. Labor is the amount of physical, mental, and social effort used to produce goods and services in an economy. It supplies the expertise, manpower, and service needed to turn raw materials into finished products and services (Amadeo, 2021).

The CBS (2018) Nepal labor force survey shows that the construction sector employed 978,000 workers and the growth of the sector is 9% on average. From this, it can be assumed that in 2020 employment numbers could have been around 1.7 million with 500,000 seasonal and Indian workers (Prasai, 2020). The study on the construction sector in Nepal shows that 250,000 informal laborers are involved in the private sector (Jha's, 2015). By assuming the same average rate of 9% growth there are around 4,57,000 informal laborers associated with the private construction sector in 2022. According to NLHDA around 1,80,000 laborers are involved in housing projects. Kathmandu Valley needs comprehensive planning and implementation to address the current and future urbanization and the housing sector is for sure to play a key role in fostering the global image of Kathmandu Valley as a livable city (KVDA, 2018) Therefore, proper implementation of good management practices can change dynamics of the housing sector in long-run.

The specific labor management challenges may vary across countries but the need for affordable and adequate housing and the importance of efficient labor management practices are universal. This study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by exploring labor management practices in the private housing sector of Nepal. The findings of this research could have important implications for private housing developers in Nepal, as well as for the broader housing sector in developing countries facing similar challenges.

This research focused on private group housing developers and their projects in Kathmandu Valley, employing convenience sampling. The data are based on 17 under-construction projects for study.

## **Methodology**

The methodology for this study incorporates four stages: literature review, collection of primary and secondary data, analysis, and labor management assessment. A quota sampling technique was used to divide the sample size, with all 85 populations considered due to the small population size. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

## **Primary Data Collection**

The primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey and key informant interview (KII). Interviews with 5 key stakeholders, namely executives, project managers, supervisors, engineers, and foremen were conducted. The KII was conducted with experts in the housing field to gather firsthand

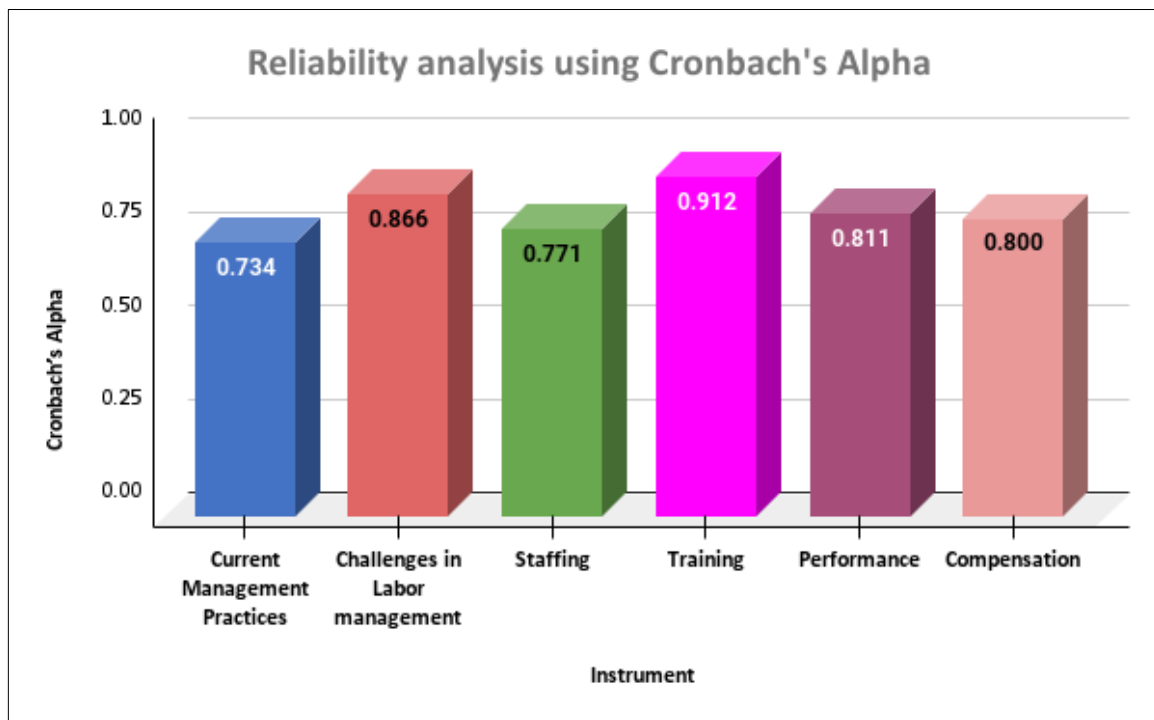
knowledge of housing/colonies. The questionnaire survey was done with concerned respondents working in housing projects and stakeholders involved in the delivery of private building projects. The questionnaire was prepared using variables identified from the literature review and presented to the interviewees. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the KII data, while a scoring tool was used to measure levels of implementation and the risk of low productivity in construction. The Likert scale was used to analyze the data, and the Relative Importance Index (RII) and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient were used to determine the importance of different factors and the strength and direction of the relationship among various factors affecting labor management practices.

### Secondary Data Collection

The annual NLHDA report was reviewed to identify private housing developers registered in Nepal, specifically within the Kathmandu Valley, and to gather information on the number and scope of housing projects. The specific project reports were analyzed to understand the nature and scope of the identified housing projects. These reports provided information on the budget and completion status of the projects. Additional documents were reviewed to identify the gaps in related information.

### Validity and reliability

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was shared with research experts, and their feedback was incorporated into the final version. The questionnaires were based on a review of relevant literature and underwent pre-testing to ensure their validity. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to assess the reliability of the instrument, and all sections of the questionnaire demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7, indicating a reliable instrument (Cortina, 1993).



**Figure 1:** Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha

## Results and Discussion

### Current labor management practices in private group housing developers

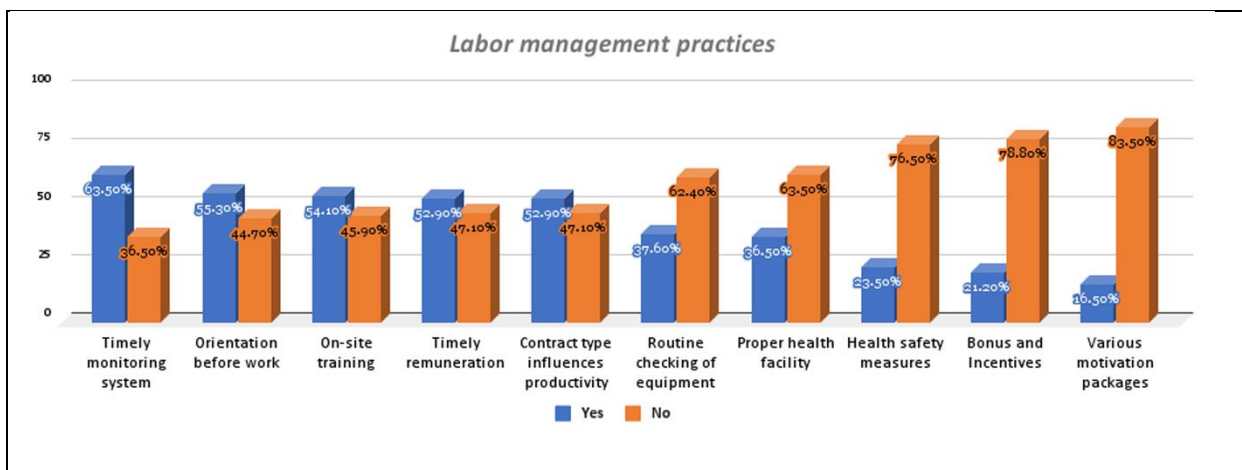
The survey results show that a remarkable portion of respondents preferred trained labor over untrained, with 55.4% agreeing and 22.4% strongly agreeing (Table 2). Additionally, 42.4% agreed that the company prioritizes recruiting experienced and educated supervisors. However, 37.6% of respondents disagreed that there was a proper communication channel between labor and supervisors, and only 43.4% agreed that proper planning and scheduling were done prior to project execution. In terms of material management, 43.5% agreed and 8.2% strongly agreed that it was done properly, but 34.1% disagreed. Finally, 45.9% agreed that prioritizing cost control had led to lower productivity, while 22.4% disagreed. Trained labor is preferred over untrained labor due to their better skills and lower training costs for employers.

**Table 2:** Management perception (n=85)

S. N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Young labor over experienced	12 (14.1%)	18 (21.2%)	12 (14.1%)	22 (25.9%)	21 (24.7%)
2	Trained labor over untrained	0 (0%)	8 (9.4%)	11 (12.9%)	47 (55.4%)	19 (22.4%)
3	Recruitment of educated supervisors	4 (4.7%)	26 (30.6%)	6 (7.1%)	36 (42.4%)	13 (15.3%)
4	Proper communication channel	8 (9.4%)	32 (37.6%)	10 (11.8%)	28 (32.9%)	7 (8.2%)
5	Prior proper planning	12 (14.1%)	22 (25.9%)	12 (14.1%)	36 (43.4%)	3 (3.5%)
6	Suitable control system	4 (4.7%)	34 (40.0%)	16 (18.8%)	25 (29.4%)	6 (7.1%)
7	Material management	3 (3.5%)	29 (34.1%)	9 (10.6%)	37 (43.5%)	7 (8.2%)
8	Lower productivity due to controlled cost	8 (9.4%)	19 (22.4%)	13 (15.3%)	39 (45.9%)	6 (7.1%)

The findings align with Franklin (1973) who found that trained labor is highly preferred by employers and are less likely to be unemployed than their untrained counterparts. This preference can be attributed to better skills of trained labor and reduced training costs for the employer (Foster, 1973). The results also indicate a lack of effective communication channels, with many individuals relying on mobile phones and the Internet, which are not widely available. This limits access to newer, more effective communication channels for many workers, particularly laborers. Additionally, there appears to be a lack of proper planning for workers, which can affect their motivation and output. This may be due to incompetence, lack of awareness, or other factors. Planning is crucial to any organization and can significantly influence the motivation and output of workers (Jeseviciute-Ufartiene, 2014).

The study found that while 63.5% of respondents reported the presence of a monitoring system, the lack of timely monitoring might impact labor productivity (Figure 2). On-site training and skill-sharing programs were conducted in 54.1% of projects, which is positive as on-the-job training can improve productivity. The lack of proper first aid and health facilities on construction sites was concerning, with only 36.5% of respondents reporting their presence. Similarly, only 23.5% of respondents reported the adoption of health and safety measures during project courses. Only 52.9% of respondents agreed that timely remuneration was provided to enhance labor productivity, and only 21.2% reported the provision of bonuses and incentives. Finally, only 16.5% of respondents reported the implementation of various motivation packages to encourage employees, highlighting the need for companies to focus on improving the work environment and implementing motivational strategies to improve labor productivity.



**Figure 2:** Labor management practices in private group housing developers in Kathmandu Valley

Approximately 63% of respondents reported the implementation of a time monitoring system, which is linked to improved workplace performance and productivity (Dupont et al., 1997). On-site training was provided to around 54% of respondents, which is critical to enhancing productivity and output by familiarizing workers with the environment and tools (Mital et al. (1999). However, on-site training seems to be insufficient. Half of the respondents reported that workers were not remunerated on time, which is essential for motivating and improving worker performance (Walker et al., 1977).

### Challenges in Current Labor Management Practices

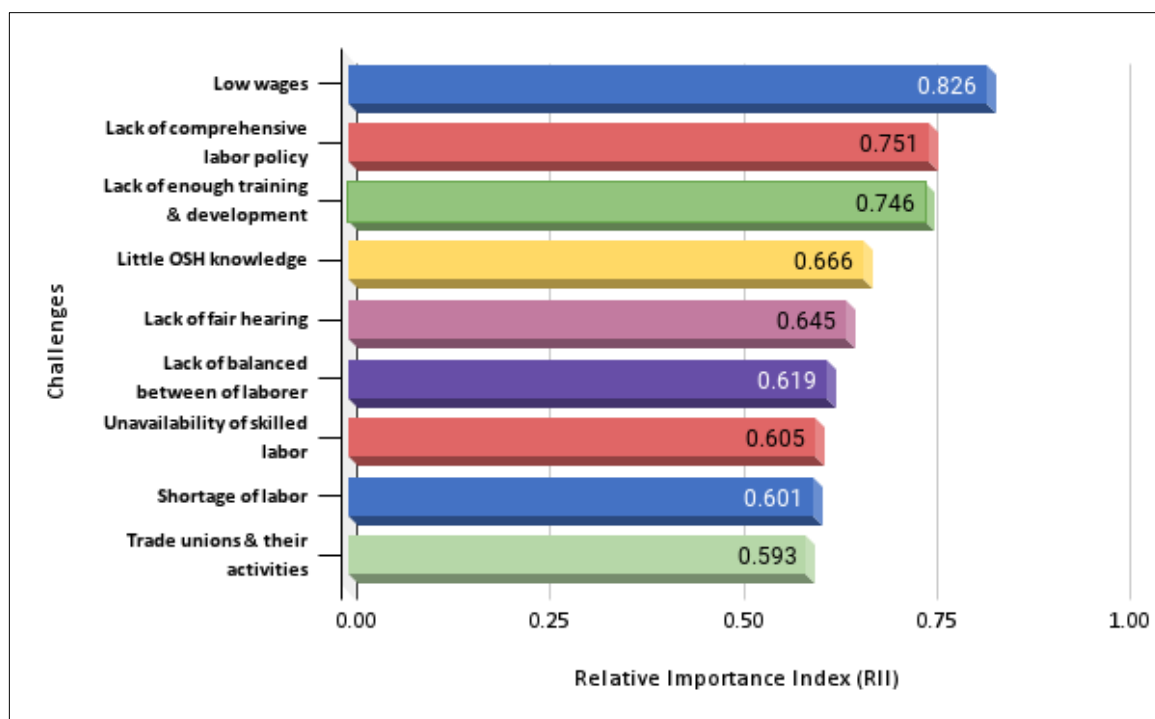
**Table 3:** Challenges in current labor management practices (n=85)

S. N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Balanced supply/demand laborer	10 (11.8%)	26 (30.6%)	10 (11.8%)	30 (35.3%)	9 (10.6%)
2	Low wages	0 (0%)	8 (9.4%)	8 (9.4%)	43 (50.6%)	26 (30.6%)
3	Availability skilled labor	8 (9.4%)	33 (38.8%)	6 (7.1%)	27 (31.8%)	11 (12.9%)

4	Enough training and development	10 (11.8%)	27 (31.8%)	12 (14.1%)	28 (32.9%)	8 (9.4%)
5	Shortage of labor	9 (10.6%)	32 (37.6%)	8 (9.4%)	25 (29.4%)	11 (12.9%)
6	Trade unions	3 (3.5%)	18 (21.2%)	35 (41.2%)	26 (30.6%)	3 (3.5%)
7	Fair hearing	7 (8.2%)	31 (36.5%)	10 (11.8%)	31 (36.5%)	6 (7.1%)
8	Little OHS knowledge	9 (10.6%)	25 (29.4%)	11 (12.9%)	31 (36.5%)	9 (10.6%)
9	Lack of comprehensive labor policy	1 (1.2%)	8 (9.4%)	9 (10.6%)	39 (45.9%)	28 (32.9%)

Low wages and poor occupational health and safety were identified as significant challenges in labor management by the majority of respondents. Workers in Nepal are underpaid, with a minimum wage of Rs 77 per hour, which is below 1 USD per hour (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2021), and an inflation rate of 6.15% in 2020 further reduced the value of the wage. This lack of knowledge and concern regarding occupational health and safety negatively, indicated by an extremely low wage, impacts labor productivity. Additionally, the majority of respondents felt that there was a lack of a comprehensive labor policy and inadequate training and development opportunities for the laborers.

This finding aligns with the current management practices of prioritizing trained labor over untrained labor. Occupational health and safety have a positive and significant relationship with labor productivity (Adjotor, 2013). Despite the introduction of the new and updated Labor Act in 2017, the majority of respondents felt that it is yet to be implemented effectively.



**Figure 3:** Challenges ranked using Relative importance index (RII)

Relative Importance Index (RII) was used to generate ranking for the Likert scale data. From the index, low wages were found to be the highest-rated challenge while trade union activities were the lowest-rated (Figure 3).

Table 4 shows the non-parametric Spearman’s correlation between the challenges. Supply and demand of labor have a significant positive correlation with training (0.973), indicating that as the supply of labor increases, the need for training also tends to increase. Properly formulated training programs and a focus on OSH can stimulate labor supply by improving satisfaction among laborers. Low wages were significantly related (0.960) to the lack of a comprehensive labor policy, indicating that labor policy should be detailed and specific to protect the interests of the laborers. However, the lack of specific details such as payment amount and timing makes laborers unable to take action against exploitation and end up receiving low wages.

**Table 4:** Spearman's correlation

Correlations	Supply	Low wages	Skilled labor	Training	Labor shortage	Trade union	Fair hearing	OSH	Labor policy
Supply	1.00	0.138	0.004	<b>0.973</b>	0.054	-0.131	-0.141	<b>0.955</b>	0.153
Low wages	0.138	1.00	0.196	0.132	0.173	0.051	0.177	0.109	<b>0.960</b>
Skilled labor	0.004	0.196	1.00	-0.010	<b>0.926</b>	0.020	-0.148	-0.022	<b>0.222</b>
Training	0.973	0.132	-0.010	1.00	0.065	-0.110	-0.118	<b>0.981</b>	0.132
Labor shortage	0.054	0.173	<b>0.926</b>	0.065	1.00	0.061	-0.082	0.052	0.194
Trade union	-0.131	0.051	0.020	-0.110	0.061	1.00	<b>0.452</b>	-0.106	0.086
Fair hearing	-0.141	0.177	-0.148	-0.118	-0.082	<b>0.452</b>	1.00	-0.118	0.153
OSH	<b>0.955</b>	0.109	-0.022	<b>0.981</b>	0.052	-0.106	-0.118	1.00	0.111
Labor policy	0.153	<b>0.960</b>	<b>0.222</b>	-0.132	0.194	0.086	0.153	0.111	1.00

The training was significantly related (0.981) to OSH knowledge. Training is not just teaching how to do things but it also includes how to do things safely and in the correct way. Training is a part of OSH itself and the two are closely related. Similarly, labor shortage was linked to a lack of skilled labor (0.926), and trade union was linked with a lack of fair hearing (0.452). The preference for trained labor over untrained labor without proper training programs results in a shortage of labor and a lack of skilled labor.

Finally, the establishment of trade unions indicates a need for laborers to be heard and have their concerns addressed.

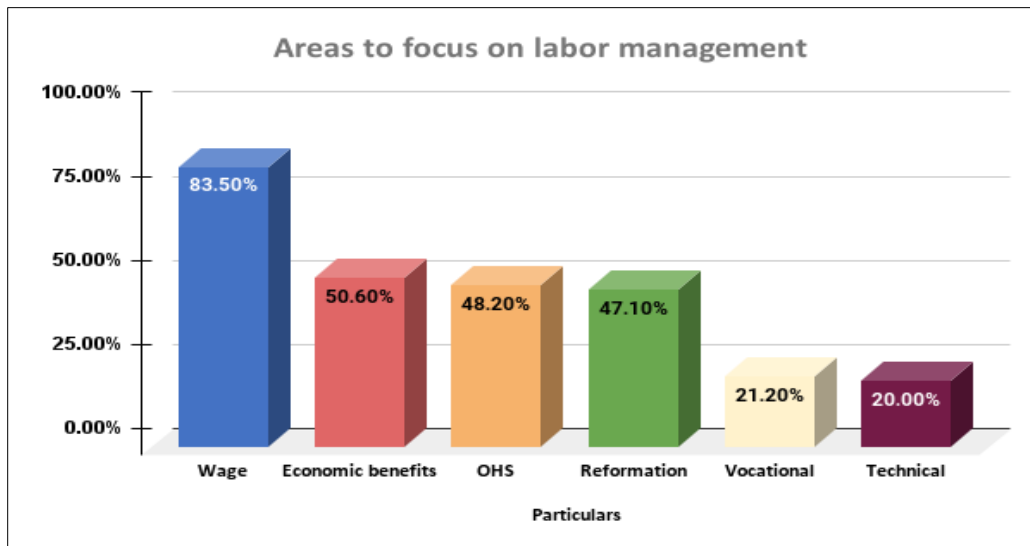
**Remedial measures to improve the current labor management practices**

Table 5 shows responses regarding employee staffing as a measure to improve current labor management practices. 60% agreed and 11.8% strongly agreed that finding and attracting suitably qualified people enhances labor management, while 64.7% agreed that companies must attract job

candidates with needed abilities and attitudes. The proper selection process was supported by 58.8%. However, Wilson (1996) argued that team members' influence may impact productivity. 52.9% agreed and 30.6% strongly agreed on creating systematic and formal communication, and 61.2% agreed and 27.1% strongly agreed on implementing tools to improve staffing processes. Improving staffing procedures can boost productivity and reduce training costs. Proper staffing and hiring are seen as remedial measures for labor management challenges (Manthey, 1991).

**Table 5:** Employee staffing

S.N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Finding qualified workers	3 (3.5%)	13 (15.3%)	8 (9.4%)	51 (60.0%)	10 (11.8%)
2	Attract candidates with abilities	1 (1.2%)	15 (17.6%)	7 (8.2%)	55 (64.7%)	7 (8.2%)
3	Proper selection process	4 (4.7%)	12 (14.1%)	7 (8.2%)	50 (58.8%)	12 (14.1%)
4	Formal communication	3 (3.5%)	5 (5.9%)	6 (7.1%)	45 (52.9%)	26 (30.6%)
5	Various tools and techniques	3 (3.5%)	7 (8.2%)	0 (0.0%)	52 (61.2%)	23 (27.1%)



**Figure 4:** Areas to focus on labor management

83.5% of respondents felt that labor wages needed to be improved, while 50.6% felt that economic benefits could be enhanced. Low wages have been identified as a major challenge to labor management, and According to Anderson (2007), providing improved wages has been suggested as the most significant way to enhance labor productivity. In addition, 48.2% of respondents identified Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) as an area that needs improvement, while 20% felt that technical education and training should be the main focus. 21.2% of respondents felt that vocational training needed work, while 47.1% identified reformation in labor regulations as a priority (Figure 4).



Strict implementation of OHS policies could help improve labor productivity by providing hazard-free work conditions, and the development of comprehensive labor policies could ensure consistency and ease for both laborers and employers (Nasirzadeh & Nojedehi, 2013).

Table 6 shows that a significant proportion of respondents agree with the importance of vocational and on-site training, investment in employee development, providing appropriate equipment and technology, and creating a knowledge-sharing work environment. The effectiveness of training and development in enhancing workers' productivity has been supported by research, with vocational training found to boost productivity by 1.5% (Sala & Silva, 2013), while access to necessary tools and equipment can significantly improve labor productivity (Kazaz et al., 2016).

**Table 6:** Training and development

S. N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Vocational and on-site training	0 (0%)	14 (16.5%)	31 (36.5%)	37 (43.5%)	3 (3.5%)
2	Investment in skills development	3 (3.5%)	12 (14.1%)	14 (16.5%)	47 (55.3%)	9 (10.6%)
3	Equipment provision	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (12.9%)	42 (49.4%)	32 (37.6%)
4	Knowledge sharing environment	3 (3.5%)	8 (9.4%)	35 (41.2%)	36 (42.4%)	3 (3.5%)

The study found that the majority (67.1%) agreed that supervisors should track work progress, while only 12.9% disagreed (Table 7). Additionally, 63.5% agreed that a proper framework of planned goals, standards, and competent requirements should be developed prior to project commencement, with 27.1% strongly agreeing. Continuous monitoring of project progress and timely evaluation of results was also deemed important, with 49.4% agreeing and no one disagreeing. Regarding fair hearing and support from immediate managers or supervisors, 45.9% agreed and 42.4% remained neutral. Finally, 70.6% agreed that formal reporting of relationships and groupings within the project should be well-defined.

**Table 7:** Performance evaluation

S. N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Work progress tracking	0 (0%)	11 (12.9%)	10 (11.8%)	57 (67.1%)	7 (8.2%)
2	Proper framework	0	4 (4.7%)	4 (4.7%)	54 (63.5%)	23 (27.1%)
3	Continuous monitoring	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (12.9%)	42 (49.4%)	32 (37.6%)
4	Fair hearing	4 (4.7%)	6 (7.1%)	36 (42.4%)	39 (45.9%)	0 (0.0%)
5	Formal relationships defined	0 (0.0%)	12 (14.1%)	6 (7.1%)	60 (70.6%)	7 (8.2%)

These findings suggest that properly defined goals, tracking progress, continuous monitoring, and formal relationships are important aspects of performance evaluation, which can serve as remedial measures for labor management challenges. A well-developed appraisal system that is trusted by workers can improve productivity and motivation (Mani, 2002).

The survey found that 42.4% of respondents agreed that companies should provide insurance for every laborer, while 29.4% remained neutral (Table 8). In terms of adequate wages and bonuses/incentives, 51.8% agreed that there must be provision for this, and only 14.1% disagreed. Similarly, 51.8% agreed that companies must guarantee coverage of basic needs during crises or disasters, and 32.9% strongly agreed. In terms of a proper recognition and reward system, 44.7% agreed that this must be introduced to sustain labor and reduce turnover, while 35.3% remained neutral. 61.2% of respondents agreed that companies must look out for labor-favoring contracts, while only 14.1% disagreed.

**Table 8:** Compensation management

S. N	Particulars	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Provision of insurance	0 (0%)	21 (24.7%)	25 (29.4%)	36 (42.4%)	3 (3.5%)
2	Adequate wages	3 (3.5%)	12 (14.1%)	17 (20.0%)	44 (51.8%)	9 (10.6%)
3	Coverage of basic needs	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)	12 (14.1%)	44 (51.8%)	28 (32.9%)
4	Proper recognition system	4 (4.7%)	10 (11.8%)	30 (35.3%)	38 (44.7%)	3 (3.5%)
5	Labor favoring contracts	0 (0.0%)	12 (14.1%)	16 (18.8%)	52 (61.2%)	5 (5.9%)
6	Compulsory OHS	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.7%)	10 (11.8%)	67 (78.8%)	4 (4.7%)

Finally, 78.8% agreed that OHS structures at construction sites are compulsory for labor safety. Overall, the survey suggests that fair compensation is an important factor for employee motivation and can lead to improved labor productivity.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, it was observed that the current labor management practices in the private group housing sectors are inadequate and require substantial improvement. The workers are being paid below their worth, which has resulted in unsatisfactory labor management. The present labor management practices need more extensive labor policies, labor development programs, orientation, and training. The private group housing sector needs to adopt and prioritize standard occupational health and safety structures, as well as health and well-being initiatives. To address the current labor management challenges, developers should implement health and safety motivational packages, in addition to offering fair wages. Economic benefits, as well as training and development opportunities, were also deemed effective in enhancing labor management practices. Overall, it is crucial for companies to prioritize their workers' health, safety, and well-being, provide fair compensation, and invest in their development to create a productive and positive work environment. The implementation of the recommended remedial measures can lead to better labor management practices and improve productivity in private group housing sectors.

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