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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION AT GWERU LIGHT INDUSTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Awareness of the prevalence Effective Human Resource Management practices such as training and development, reward management, employee recognition as well and health and safety are regarded as key components for any organisation/s employee retention success. The purpose of this research was to uncover how employees place significance in these said Human Resources practices on their retention. Data was collected using interviews which were done to the sample of 100 individuals. Through critical analysis of the data, the researcher brought to light that training and development, reward management, employee recognition, and health and safety are all significant for employee retention. Based on the results it was discovered that training and development, health and safety, and employee recognition were very crucial to employee retention, while reward management was significant but only when it was fair and understandable to everyone. This could be attributed to the phase in which the research was conducted where everyone considered the salaries to be not significant to warrant one's retention. The study recommended several interventions that organizations may use to strengthen their retention strategies, these among others included ensuring that an organization's reward system takes into consideration employees' qualifications, skills, expertise, and industry standards so that employees feel that they are being properly rewarded.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources have proven to be the backbone of any business's success. According to the AICEBM 2015 report, organizations are having difficulty retaining employees due to increased competition for skilled labor. According to Akila (2012), employee retention refers to the activities that organizations implement in order to retain their key personnel. This means that if a company wants to stay ahead of the competition, it must implement measures or incentives that encourage employees to stay with the company rather than leave for other companies. These viewpoints are supported by Hong et al (2012), who argue that employee retention benefits any organization and allows it to gain a competitive advantage. Organizations with strong retention strategies have motivated employees who believe their employers care about them, which leads to increased sales, customer satisfaction, smooth management succession, and improved organizational learning. A company that fails to retain employees incurs high HR costs as a result of the high rate of employee replacements. Human resource practices that are effective create a supportive work environment, which leads to increased productivity.

Ssemugenyi and Augustine (2014). According to Singh (2010), organizations have recognized the significance of human resource practices activities and their relationship to employee retention. He went on to argue that it is these Human Resources practices that can influence an employee's decision to stay or leave an organization. (Kakar, Raziq, & Khan (2015) and Olaimat & Awwad (2017) agree that human resources' daily practices influence employee decisions. They argue that if employees believe that management practices are not fair and equitable to all, they will most likely leave the organization. Employees are more likely to stay with an organization if these practices are perceived as fair. The Human Resources department is now responsible for implementing such HR practices to ensure effective employee retention. Human resource practices that an organization supports and recognizes contribute directly to the overall organizational strategy. As a result, how an organization manages its human resources has a direct impact on employee retention. According to research conducted by -Appiah et al (2013) in the Ghanaian mining industry, employees place a high value on health and safety. Employers who were able to provide adequate personal protective equipment, as well as other safety features, had a higher percentage of employee retention than those who did not prioritize such measures. Based on the literature review, a greater percentage of research on human resource practices and employee retention was conducted in developed countries

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while very few studies have been carried out in developing countries in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular therefore, this present study aims to cover that gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Retention: Mita (2014) Postulates that Employee retention is all about the policies and practices organizations put in place to curtail critical employees from leaving their organizations. Employee retention includes calculated methods that are meant to discourage employees from leaving, these measures are meant to ensure that employees stick to their current organization for the maximum employment period that can be achieved. Hiring knowledgeable people for the job is essential for any organization. But retention is even more important than hiring. According to Ahlrichs (2017), most organizations underestimate employee turnover costs. Usually, turnover costs can incurred when the organisation is involved in the following processes, interviews, induction and training, police clearance, reference checks, and the cost of time that it takes for one to fully adopt their new roles (Kotzé and Roodt, 2015). However, the cost incurred is not limited to the stated cost there is also other hidden cost such as missed deadlines, negative perception about the company from clients, and loss of institutional memory among others.

This is why employee retention has become so important in many organizations. Employees are the most important resources in any organization and the foundation for achieving organizational goals. As a result, employee retention is critical for the organization's bottom line. As a panacea for retaining the best performers, organizations of all sizes must implement the best strategies in order to retain their best performers Casey 2017. Gberevbie (2018) discovered that if organizations adopt and implement appropriate employee retention strategies, employees will undoubtedly remain and work to achieve organizational goals. According to Acton et al. (2017), the Human Resource Department actively participates in employee retention. It develops policies to improve employee satisfaction and keep employees with the company for a longer period of time. This demonstrates that it is not only about retaining employees, but also about retaining valued skills. This demonstrates that it is not only about retaining employees, but also about retaining valued skills. The entire retention process is designed to ensure that employees are retained in the organization, particularly those with valuable or required skills or experience in a scarce/critical field (where recruitment is difficult). According to Ongori (2016), the strategies for reducing employee turnover should be tailored to the diagnosis of the problem. Employee turnover due to poor selection, for example, is unlikely to improve if policy changes focus solely on the induction process. As a result, management is frequently exhorted to identify the causes of employee turnover and to take the necessary steps to address those issues.

Training and Development: Messmer (2015) defined training and development as the systematic acquisition and development of employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to adequately perform an assigned job or task in order to improve performance in the workplace. Training is critical in imparting knowledge and new skills that will enable employees to meet their organizational roles and, ultimately, help in effectively achieving overall business goals (Salas, 2016). Development, on the other hand, is viewed as a continuous process of ensuring that employees are well versed in all

functional areas of their jobs, and development is not one-time but ongoing so that the organization has effective and efficient employees when needed. Deery (2016). Training and development outcomes include increased output and performance as evidenced by increased productivity, customer satisfaction, and reduced raw material usage, provided that it is done in accordance with the needs of the organization and meets the organization's bottom line. If training and development initiatives meet individual needs and expectations as well as the expected outcome by the organization, it follows that when both parties are fully engaged, employee retention can be achieved. According to Huselid (2017), Human Resources activities such as training and development are critical components of employee retention. Furthermore, other researchers, such as (Lazear 2016; Madrian, 2016; Gruber & Madrian, 2016), argue that training and development and HR practices are positively related to employee retention because they have the habit of tying employees to the employer, as employees believe they owe their development to the organizations. This is due to the organization's investment in employee training and development.

According to Landsman (2014), training and development are valuable interventions for enhancing employee growth and skills, as well as overall employee performance, which will boost employee motivation because they will be able to complete their assigned tasks in the shortest amount of time and with the fewest resources. Furthermore, training and development lead to role clarity within the organization, which alone goes a long way toward reducing employee stress about how they will go about their day-to-day activities. In other words, organizations with efficient training and development interventions and opportunities have a higher retention rate. On the contrary, it is also worth noting that training and development alone can address all the issues leading to retention of staff. However, as part and parcel of other organizational interventions training and development can be added as an ingredient towards staff retention.

Reward Management: Authors such as Armstrong (2017) define employee reward as "how an organization compensates its employees at agreed-upon time intervals." In general, reward management involves money paid as a salary or wage or whatever monetary value the parties to the employment relationship have agreed on. According to Thompson (2016), any organizational intervention in reward management must be deemed fair and reasonable to the recipients of the reward. Reward management systems should be carefully and methodically designed to motivate recipients. According to Jones (2017), an inconsistent reward management system will generally lead to conflict within the organization because employees will always question the system's application. According to Mabaya (2018), a comprehensive reward management system entails more than just money. Organizational benefits, such as pensions, medical aid, funeral coverage, retirement plans, and packages such as subsidized meals, company cars, and airtime allowance, are a significant reward in most organizations. Any organization's reward management system is always regarded as a critical component in attracting and retaining desirable employees. Previous research by scholars such as Harvey (2017) demonstrated that the length and time an employee stays at an organization is generally determined by that organization's reward management systems. DiPietro and Condly (2016) investigated how hospitality employees are motivated using the

Commitment and Necessary Effort (CANE) model of motivation. They concluded that non-monetary rewards and work environments were extremely important in determining employee retention. Organizations with hostile work environments risk losing employees to those with friendly and welcoming work environments. According to Williams et al. (2016), an organization with clear and open communication on its reward system has committed employees, and when the employees are committed, the organization is more likely to retain those employees because everyone is clear on how they are being rewarded. Furthermore, the employees' performance would improve as a result of the positive environment in which they would be working.

Employee Recognition: Employee recognition is defined as "a return on an employee's effort, dedication at work, and results" by the Australian Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (2016). Employee recognition is defined as "the acknowledgment of an individual or team's behavior, effort, and accomplishments that support the organization's goals and values" by the Human Resources Council of Canada (HR Council CA, 2015). Employee recognition is critical for any organization because it is linked to a variety of positive outcomes that result from employees being recognized for their efforts. Silbert (2015) advanced the viewpoint that reward is important because it leaves an indelible impression on employees, giving them the impression that they are valued in the organization.

Employees will appreciate that management and organizational leaders value what they bring to the organization as a result of employee recognition. Employee morale will always be high as a result of being recognized because they will know and appreciate that management appreciates their efforts, and in turn, the employees will become loyal to their organization. According to Barker (2014), simple employee recognition in the form of written memos and birthday messages can go a long way toward ensuring that employees appreciate that the organizations for which they work recognize their presence. He went on to argue that if an organization fails to recognize these milestones, such as long service awards, it will demotivate employees because they will believe that management only cares about them when tasks are completed. Employees who are highly recognized at their workplaces develop a sense of ownership, which leads to the creation of a supportive and conducive work environment, and the organization's retention improves significantly. Organizations that are serious about employee retention must be able to identify and retain highly skilled employees while constantly reminding them of their importance to the organization (Bhatt, 2015). As a result, the organization will avoid dissatisfaction and prevent employees from leaving (Noe et al., 2016).

Health and Safety: According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, health and safety are among the top five needs in the pyramid. This includes personal security, health, and well-being (Maslow, 1943). It should be the employer's responsibility to provide a safe working environment in any working relationship. According to King (2016), the organization ensures a good working environment by providing personal protective clothing, a safe working environment, and a general employee-friendly working environment that creates a sense of safety for employees. However, the absence of these employee-friendly conditions leads to problems such as anxiety or depression, which further alienates employees from their

jobs (Boorman, 2019). Work environment, according to Jain and Kaur (2014), refers to the physical surroundings, such as noise, equipment, ventilation, temperature, and so on (. Employees are more likely to stay in a company where an expected job atmosphere is maintained (Zuber, 2001), and employees are unwilling to perform for longer periods of time in insufficient working conditions such as poor lighting, unsatisfactory furniture, and so on (Shamsuzzoh & Suman, 2010). The organization's primary focus will be to ensure that it provides a safe working environment and that employees who work in a safe working environment are more likely to stay. Stansfield et al. (2016) discovered that health and safety were of paramount importance to every employee in their study of mining companies in Zimbabwe, and employees who participated in the survey informed them that they would not engage in work activities if the work environment was unsafe. As a result, these findings support other findings from various scholars that organizations with sound, healthy, and safe policies are more likely to retain their employees than organizations that do not.

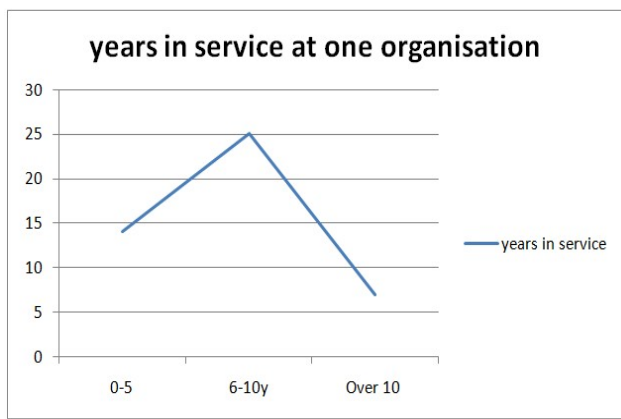
It is also worth noting that job satisfaction is influenced by health and safety. Job satisfaction is defined as employees' perceptions and evaluations of their jobs (Ivancevich et al. 2015; Paul, 2015; Aknc, 2016). A pleasant work environment generates satisfaction (Spector, 2016), and employees who are happy at work pay more attention to their jobs (Davies, Sirett, & Taylor, 2001). Changes in safety and health concerns may have an impact on a variety of aspects of job satisfaction (Spurgeon, 2015). Furthermore, health and safety improve employee motivation, which is one of the most critical success factors for any organization (Johnson, 2018). It can be defined in a variety of ways. According to Shief (2016), motivation is a stimulus that helps employees achieve organizational goals. Employees and the organization as a whole benefit from motivation because a motivated workforce achieves organizational goals and reduces employee turnover.

METHODOLOGY

The main aim of the study was to assess Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Retention at Light Industries in Gweru. The population of the study covers the selected employees from the light industry in Gweru and the sample sizes of 100 employees were selected, using simple random sample techniques. A qualitative approach was used to gather data as the researcher wanted to have first-hand information about employees' feelings and emotions. Interviews were used to collect data as they allowed the researcher to probe and obtain more information from the respondents. The interview guide consisted of two sections. The first section dealt with the number of years one had been employed at an organization and the second section consisted of questions on the dependent variable, which is employee retention namely employee retention, and on the other hand the independent variables, which were the human resource practices. The human resource practices that were covered by this research were limited to training and development, reward management, health and safety, and employee recognition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of respondents: The researcher had a sample of 100 employees to interview but only managed to interview 94 individuals out of the total sample size.



The research was a success because according to Cooper and Schindler (2013), a response rate of more than 75% of the targeted respondents is enough for the study. Therefore, according to the target of the researcher the intended percentage was achieved which in turn will give validity of the response to the researcher. Responses from the respondents proved that over 75% of the respondents had at least 6 plus years at one organisation. The researcher wanted to know why the employees were still at one employer and what made them to stick to the same employer for a long time.

Health and Safety and Employee Retention: According to the findings of the study, health and safety are major concerns for many employees. According to the study, 100% of respondents indicated that they will likely stay at an organization where safety is given paramount importance, as stated by the Health Safety Authority 2020, which states that an organization that does not cater to their employees will likely lose them to an organization that does because of how they approach work accidents. This is because employees value their health because they will be focusing on their families in everything they do at work. As a result, if these employees are injured and unable to support their families, their performance will suffer. Bevan et al. (2018) conclude that employee retention can be influenced by the absence of sickness. Employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs or who have stressful and poor working relationships with their coworkers are more likely to resign (Bevan et al., 2018). This is because most employees prioritize health and safety when performing their daily duties. Employees who work in a safe environment are more likely to be motivated to do their jobs than employees who work in unsafe conditions. Employees who are not motivated to work are more likely to leave the organization, so motivation becomes a critical factor in retention. According to the research, 96% of respondents indicated that working in a safe environment gives them peace of mind; therefore, when one has peace of mind, they are less likely to leave than when they do not have peace of mind. A good health and safety plan, according to Anthem (2020), not only helps to attract and retain qualified talent, but it can also provide employees with peace of mind during unexpected life events. As a result, when employees face life challenges, they will have peace of mind knowing that their employer will take care of them. According to the research, health and safety play a critical role in employee retention; organizations can only retain their talented and experienced employees through consistent and proper health and safety policies. Tawiah et al. (2016) discovered that only mines with low accident rates can retain their employees in their study of safety in mining companies in Ghana.

Employees avoided all other mines with high accident rates because they saw them as death traps.

Employee Recognition and Retention: According to the findings of the study, there is a strong relationship between employee recognition and retention in an organization. 90% of respondents said they are more likely to stay if their employers recognize them, even if it is just acknowledging that they exist and contribute to the organization's bottom line. This study corroborates what Bonusly (2016) discovered in a study of 1,500 employees, where he discovered that 63% of employees indicated that they would stay if their employers recognized them. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, every human being requires a sense of belonging to a specific organization or cause, and employee recognition is the only way for employees to feel a sense of belonging and that they are a part of the organization. According to Chiradeep (2020), "regular employee recognition instills a sense of purpose in your workforce." As a result, they are less likely to seek out more meaningful opportunities outside of the organization. Furthermore, it establishes a channel of communication through which employees can seek new opportunities for advancement within the company without considering a separation." As a result of this observation, it is possible to conclude that employee recognition facilitates communication between management and employees. Employees are more likely to be open to their superiors in order to find better and more efficient ways to improve their jobs when they are properly and sufficiently recognized. According to Wong (2019), employee recognition drives employee engagement, and higher employee engagement leads to lower turnover rates and better business results. Wong's observation corresponds with the responses of the research participants, who stated that through employee engagement, employees can air their concerns, and if management considers their concerns, they tend to feel recognized because they have input on how they should conduct their day-to-day operations. Furthermore, if business results continue to be positive, employees will feel obligated to continue with the same or more input, which will increase their desire to stay.

Training, Development, and Retention: From the research results 85% of the respondents strongly agreed that training and development was instrumental in staff retention. Respondents indicated that that through training and development employees are empowered and would have the confidence to execute their duties properly. According to Acton and Golden (2018), on-the-job training and development improves employees' problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, trained employees are more confident in performing their duties than untrained employees, and turnover can be reduced. Mikeal recommends that organizations provide appropriate training and development programs to keep employees confident and up to date on current operations. Only through training and interventions can employees work with little supervision and become more committed to the organization (Mikeal, 2017). In 2019, the American Public Transportation Association suggested that organizations provide adequate employee training and development to ensure adequate employee retention. As a result of the research, training and development are critical for employee retention in any industry.

Furthermore, it should be noted that training and development not only contribute to retention but can also lead to the achievement of the organization's bottom line. According to

Hassey (2017), through training and development, employees gain new skills that enable them to quickly solve day-to-day issues that may arise within the organization; at the end of the day, this can lead to low costs in production or task completion. As a result, training and development is a critical component of employee retention because employees understand that after training, they must demonstrate to the organization that they are now equipped to perform the task for which they were trained.

Employee Reward and Retention: 85% of respondents said the employee reward system was critical to their retention. According to the findings of the study, 95% of respondents agreed that if a reward system was fair and consistent, they would stay with an organization. The expectancy theory, which states that effort should be compensated equally, supports this viewpoint. Employees will stay if they believe the rewards are commensurate with their efforts and are distributed fairly to all. Employees will likely leave the organization if the reward system is not fair. However, it is worth noting that employee compensation is not limited to salary alone. Desler 2017 notes that "employee reward refers to all forms of pay going to employees and arising from their employment." The definition's phrase 'all forms of pay' does not include nonfinancial benefits, but rather all direct and indirect financial rewards. The reward was said to be a critical factor in employee retention, with 90% of employees saying they would stay at a company that offered higher rewards than the market average. In other words, one of the critical reasons why employees go to work is reward at the time, and if they are offered what they perceive to be above-market rewards, they are more likely to stay than if they are offered low salaries. According to Armstrong and Murlis (2017), reward is an important component in Human Resources Management that enables the organization to achieve its objectives; a poorly formulated reward policy can drive out good employees from an organization. They go on to say that reward should not focus on high salaries but should be regarded and viewed as fair to the recipients. In Reward Management, how a person is rewarded should be equated to a specific variable, such as qualification, experience, or grade; if organizations can match that, their reward system can be considered fair.

CONCLUSION

As the study has proved human resources practices such as Training and development, employee recognition, employee reward, and health and safety on employee retention form the core basis for employee retention in an industry. However, it should be noted that reward management was not as critical as the other factors. This could be attributed to the fact that current RTGS salaries are considered never to be enough as compared to the previous USD salaries that workers in the light industries used to receive. Before arriving at the research results, the study provided evidence that supports all the above human Resources practices and their effects on employee retention. Several researchers agreed with the observations as shown in the literature review, hence the general research arguments were based on the arguments of the authors as a foundation and awaited to be tested in later stages through this research's result. After coming up with a solid and reasonable design instrument, primary data was then gathered from the targeted respondents which were light industry employees and this data was analyzed to get meaningful information from the data. Eventually, all the Human resources practices were seen

to be supporting the assumptions of this study. After all being said and done the whole research successfully identified Human resources practices such as training and development, reward management employee recognition, and health and safety as fundamental elements for consideration for employee retention decisions. Even though employee reward at times was considered to be less fundamental than the other three employees still regarded a fair reward management system as a perfect retention strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

From the study observations, the following is recommended
Health and Safety

The study discovered that employees place a high value on their well-being and how their management is prepared to care for it. As a result, it is recommended that management ensure that employees are provided with adequate personal protective clothing when necessary, and that the employer provides a safe, harm-free working environment. It is also recommended that policies be put in place to deal with issues of health and safety, and that the policies be reviewed and adhered to on a regular basis. This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the workstations under study, like many others, had no plan in place to deal with infectious diseases or pandemics. As a result, it is recommended that the health and safety plan include strategic ideas for dealing with situations such as pandemics, cyclones, and other environmental elements that may occur from time to time. Moreover, it is recommended that periodic Workplace safety scans should be done from time to time so that all the possible health hazards are eliminated, if these hazards are eliminated then the workplace will be regarded as safe.

Training and Development: It is recommended that organizations conduct regular training needs assessments and send their employees for training on a regular basis. Employees benefit from training because it provides them with relevant skills and expertise. Furthermore, training and development motivate employees, and motivated employees are more likely to go the extra mile and want to stay with an organization that regularly upgrades their skills. Furthermore, after learning a new skill, employees will want to use or put that skill to use, so that by the time they put their new skills to use, they will be retained by the organization. According to the study, training and development play critical roles in employee retention. Organizations that consistently invest in their employees reap the benefits of employee commitment. Employees tend to stay if they see the organization is committed to their development because most employees in the industry want to stay competitive and up to date. As a result, when an organization provides them with such opportunities, they are more likely to stay. It is important to note that training and development serve two purposes: it acts as a tool for employee retention and it also helps to improve the quality of employees at an organization, which is reflected in either improved customer satisfaction or quality products with no defaults.

Employee Recognition: It is recommended that employees be recognized on a regular and ongoing basis. According to the findings of the study, employees do not expect only monetary recognition, but also other forms of recognition. Long service, awards, feedback after completing a task, promotion, and other various employee recognition interventions can thus be used as recognition tools to ensure that employees do not leave the

organization in search of organizations where they are recognized. It is also suggested that because employees are the cogs in any organization, their recognition is critical because it not only aids in employee retention but also leads to employee motivation. Employees should be recognized, even if it is as simple as sending birthday greetings and work anniversary messages, so that management is aware of their existence.

Reward Management: It is suggested that management devise a fair and understandable reward management system that is valued by everyone in the organization. Given that pay is never enough, management should ensure that the reward system is fair, taking into account elements such as qualification and experience and matching these with an individual's reward. Furthermore, it is recommended that an organization's reward management system be all-encompassing and not limited to monetary rewards. A reward management system that includes elements such as housing loans and car loans for employees who have served for at least 5 years is a wise intervention because it encourages other employees to stay with an organization and enjoy the same benefits as others. Furthermore, interventions such as transportation to and from work, food hampers, medical aid, and funeral coverage go a long way toward retaining employees. According to the research, a well-structured reward management system goes a long way toward ensuring employee retention. The firms under study were still paying their employees using the RTGS whereas the firms were charging their services in USD, so this was a de-motivating factor. Therefore, as a way of improving the reward strategy, it is recommended that as it stands in Zimbabwe companies should pay their employees in the USD because it is more valuable than the RTGS dollar. Therefore the best way to reward your employees is to pay them according to how your clients are paying you

Areas of further study: The researcher highly recommends that future studies on Human resources practices and employee retention should be carried out in Small to medium enterprises. This is necessitated by the fact that the Zimbabwean economy these days is mainly based in this sector and if employers in the SMEs manage to embrace good human resources practices their organisations will grow rapidly due to the skills and expertise which they would have kept within their workplaces.

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