



# Assessing the Effectiveness of Human Resources Retention Strategies on Employee Retention in the Ministry of Health Institutions in Gwanda Town, Matabeleland South Province in Zimbabwe

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**Abstract:** *The study sought to assess the effectiveness of the human resources retention strategies employed by the Ministry of Health and Child Care in health institutions Gwanda Urban in Matabeleland South province. The Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe has experienced massive brain drain of employees such as doctors, nurses, environmental health technicians and the support staff in general to seek greener pastures in the private sector and in the diaspora, leaving health institutions in the country critically understaffed, leading to poor service delivery. In response to this massive exodus of employees, the Ministry implemented several strategies to retain its employees which included increased allowances, reduced working hours, shared decision making and retraining among other incentives. This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in retaining the employees and improving service delivery. The study used an exploratory survey design and a qualitative approach to capture the experiences of the participants. A sample of 24 participants comprising of doctors, nurses and ancillary staff was purposively sampled from a target population of 400 employees. Interviews and focus group discussions were used for data generation. The findings revealed that the retention strategies employed by the Ministry are ineffective because employees continue to leave in large numbers for greener pastures in the country and beyond resulting in institutions critically understaffed, and service delivery remaining poor. The researchers recommend that the Ministry revisits its retention strategies to make them effective to reduce the high levels of staff turnover and improved service delivery.*

**Keywords:** *Effectiveness, Human Resources, Employee retention strategies, Compensation, Assessing*

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## 1. Introduction

Employee retention is a process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for the maximum period or until the completion of the project, however employees today are different. As soon as they feel dissatisfied with the current employer or the job, they switch over to the next job. It is the responsibility of the employer to retain their best employees. If they don't, they would be left with no good employees. A

good employer should know how to attract and retain his employees (Bindusha and Dineshkumar 2022). Noorulkathija and Hussain (2025) posit that companies across various industries invest significant resources in recruiting and training employees, making retention a key priority to sustain productivity and minimize costs. Effective retention strategies contribute to improved employee satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and enhanced organizational performance. Despite growing awareness of employee retention's significance,

organizations continue to face multiple challenges. One major challenge is the evolving nature of work environments, where employees demand greater flexibility and work-life balance, which traditional retention strategies often fail to address. Compensation disparities and limited career growth opportunities contribute significantly to dissatisfaction, prompting employees to seek better prospects elsewhere (Noorulkhathija and Hussain (2025). From a global perspective, for decades, employee turnover has been a continuing problem faced by many businesses around the world. According to Joseph, Pierrard and Sneessens (2018), job turnover is relatively high in countries like Belgium, (15%), France (24.4%), Germany (16.5%), Italy (21%), Netherlands (15.4%) and the United States of America (18.6%). Zhou (2025) posits that China's labour market is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by demographic shifts, evolving workforce expectations, and technological advancements. In recent years, businesses have been facing growing challenges in attracting, engaging, and retaining top talent as competition for skilled professionals intensifies.

Similarly, the African continent faces a huge challenge in terms of retaining skilled human resource like other continents of the world (Mgohamwed,2019). Tetey (2019) posits that Africa is losing significant numbers of employees who are fundamental resources in socio-economic and political development. He further stated that there are severe recruitment and retention difficulties in African organisations. Many studies have proved that there is a dire need not only to recruit qualified people but also to retain competent staff. While various efforts have been made to address the problem, there seems to be little progress, due to reasons such as, inadequate investment in staff training programmes and hence the World Bank, for example, made significant investments in capacity building initiatives in several countries during the 1990s, these initiatives have not generated sustained human capital benefits for the African countries, (Loan-Clark et.al 2019). To make matters worse, even the narrow high skill base that exists is being eroded at a very fast rate by the outflow of professionals to more developed countries of the world. The impact of employee turnover on organizations is that it often engenders far-reaching consequences and may jeopardize efforts to attain organizational objectives (Hill and Jones, 2021). In addition, Hill and Jones (2021) indicate that when an organization loses a critical employee, there is a negative impact on innovation, consistency in providing service may be jeopardized, and major delays in the delivery of services to customers may occur. A decline in the standard of service could also adversely affect the satisfaction of internal and external clientele and consequently, the profitability of the organization. It is for these reasons that this research sought to analyse human resource retention strategies adopted by organizations and how they affect and impact workers. Many studies have proved there is a dire need not only

recruiting qualified people but also to retain competent staff.

The Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe has faced challenges in retaining qualified and skilled staff, as Kanyumba and Msosa (2020) argue that due to brain- drain as employees leave in large numbers to seek greener pastures in the private sector and in the diaspora. To curb this mass movement of employees the Ministry came up with strategies to reduce the high staff turnover of its employees. The strategies included financial and non-financial incentives, retraining, shared decision making, competitive salaries, competitive insurance policies and many such strategies. These strategies were meant to restore the confidence of the employees in the organisation in the process ensuring service delivery remained at the expected levels. These strategies were implemented in all its facilities in the country including those in Gwanda. These strategies, however, do not seem effective as poor service delivery has been noticed in the Gwanda urban health institutions. Preliminary observation shows that the poor delivery of service is a result of the mass exodus of health employees who leave their jobs for greener pastures. Despite the existing human resources retention strategies being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Child Care in its facilities in Gwanda urban area, service delivery has deteriorated drastically leaving the current employees with no option but to join the mass exodus for greener pastures leaving a few working under unfavourable conditions resulting in low morale consequently compromising productivity. Such a scenario gives a bad picture of the health institutions thereby provoking many unanswered questions to the observer. This study therefore evaluates the effectiveness of these measures in terms of curbing brain drain and improvement of service in the Ministry's facilities in Gwanda urban with a view to recommend strategies to strengthen them. Herzberg's Theory explains motivation and dissatisfaction of employees while Mitchell and Lee's Job Embeddedness clarify the attachment of employees to their jobs. These theories serve as valuable framework for this study as such will be used as a lens to explore the effective human resources strategies to back up this study.

## 2. Literature Review

Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, (2021) argue that the employee retention strategies should be formulated in such a way that organisations grow with greater efficiency and innovation and achieve long-lasting strategic business objectives. When an organisation loses talented employees there is a huge negative impact on innovation and services provided.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

There are many theories for retaining staff in organisations, however for this study Herzberg's Two-

Factor Motivation-Hygiene and Mitchell and Lee's Job Embeddedness theories were used to guide this study. Herzberg's theory identifies motivation and dissatisfaction of employees at work for reasons that employers must consider for motivation and satisfying employees with a view to retain them while Mitchell and Lee's theory also identify factors that satisfy employees and lead them to remain in the organisation longer. Hence, these two theories go hand in glove in assisting organisations in retaining employees and further improve the performance of both employees and organisations. These two theories link at some point especially where the employees are retained by factors which both end up retaining employees and satisfy them to certain extents.

## **2.2 Staff Retention Measures/strategies**

### **2.2.1 Competitive Compensation Plan**

Compensation constitutes the largest part of the retention process. The employees always have high expectations regarding their compensation packages. Compensation includes Salary and Wages, Bonus, Health Insurance, after retirement benefits (Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022) Although compensation is not one of the top factors influencing non-management turnover, but it can act as a critical factor in reducing managerial turnover and increasing commitment (Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022).

Many studies have explored the relationship between compensation and retention. In some organisations compensation has a positive impact on retention while in others it does not have a positive impact. Tremblay et al., (2018) found that work-related activity is an important factor in the decision to quit. Milkovich and Newman (2020) concluded that monetary pay is an essential factor in keeping the employee in a company. Hytter (2021) gathered that there is a positive relationship between reward and retention. Hausknecht et al, (2020) found that compensation and benefits contribute to retention. Daniel (2019) conducted a study among Nigerian civil servants and concluded that to retain skilled workers for the job, proper incentives, that is competitive salaries, and meaningful allowances must be provided. Pitts et al., (2019) observe that compensation predicts turnover of employees, meaning that if incentives are far too low compared to other competitors in the market environment, employees tend to quit jobs opting for competitive salaries in other organisations. Onyango (2018) found a positive relationship between direct and indirect financial rewards and employee retention.

There tends to be uncertainty surrounding job security as most organisations in Zimbabwe cannot guarantee continuous employment of its employees due to prevailing uncertain economic conditions which places

economic survival of business organisations on the balance today (Samuel and Chipunza ,2019). This reflects the general business environment in Zimbabwe where businesses including ministry of health and childcare institutions cannot afford to pay competitive salaries like those obtaining in neighboring countries such as South Africa, Botswana and beyond which attract most of the highly skilled Zimbabweans. Job insecurity is also found to be a contributory factor to the high rate of turnover and inability to attract and retain skilled employees in organisations, also leading to poor organisational performance, (Chiboiwa et.al ,2018, Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022).

### **2.2.2 Environment**

A motivated employee wants to contribute to work areas outside of his specific job description. Ramlall (2003) stresses that a suitable work environment is the need of an employee in an organization as it will encourage commitment. Nelson (2006) explains that job satisfaction is priceless, incomparable and invaluable. Hopeless employees negatively upsetting the desire level of work. A little number of employees which are satisfied with their work not only affect the performance but also the work environment affects the performance employees and performance of organization (Bindusha and Dineshkumar,2022). Studies indicate that organizations with a positive and inclusive work environment report higher employee commitment levels. Workplace culture that fosters diversity, recognition, and collaboration contributes to long-term retention by ensuring employees feel valued and engaged. Conversely, toxic work environments characterized by micromanagement, favouritism, and lack of transparency significantly increase turnover rates (Noorulkhathija and Hussain ,2025 Babatunde and Onoja, 2023).

### **2.2.3 Growth**

Growth is an integral part of every individual's career. If an employee cannot foresee his path of career development in his current organization, there are chances that he'll leave the organization as soon as he gets an opportunity. Grossman, (2002) stresses that work growth is the effect of employee performance in the organization as well as the result of organizational provenance provided to employees by organization. Growth and productivity are the ultimate results of employee behaviour such as performance, retention and satisfaction of employees (Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022). Literature also emphasizes the role of continuous learning and career development in retention. Daniel (2019) conducted a study among Nigerian civil servants and concluded that to retain skilled workers for the job, proper incentives, that is competitive salaries, and meaningful allowances must be provided. Pitts et al., (2019) observed that compensation predicts turnover of employees, meaning

that if incentives are far too low compared to other competitors in the market environment, employees tend to quit jobs opting for competitive salaries in other organisations. Investing in employee development not only improves retention but also enhances overall workforce productivity and innovation (Noorulkhathija and Hussain ,2025). An organization that is well structured with a clear path for career growth and advancement will have better chances of retaining the best of the best talents. Employees who have a perception of a steady mobility in their career will likely have a longer stay in an organization. Organization must plan and design its structures in such a way that gives room for upward movement of employees on the career ladder (Babatunde and Onoja ,2023)

### 2.2.4 Relationship

Sometimes the relationship with the management and the peers becomes the reason for an employee to leave the organization. The management is often not able to provide an employee a supportive work culture and environment in terms of personnel and professional relationships. A supportive work culture helps grow employees professionally and boosts employee's satisfaction. There are times when an employee starts feeling bitterness towards the management or peers, which leads to less satisfaction and eventually attrition (Armstrong ,2003) Employee relations consist of all those areas of human resource management that deals with employees directly and through collective agreements where trade unions are recognised. The union practices for the welfare and good working condition of the employees. Employee relations are concerned with generally managing the relationship between employer and employees at the workplace that can be formal e.g., contract of employment or procedural agreement. (Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022). Recent studies have highlighted the role of leadership in influencing employee retention. Effective leadership styles, such as transformational and participative leadership, have been linked to higher employee engagement and reduced turnover rates. Poor leadership, on the other hand, leads to dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, and ultimately, employee attrition. Research suggests that organizations investing in leadership development programmes experience improved retention rates due to enhanced communication, mentorship, and employee support systems (Noorulkhathija and Hussain (2025).

### 2.2.5 Support

Employees today are asking for a workplace that helps them balance the demands of their work and family lives, rather than forcing them to one over the other. Schemes like special schemes for their children, scholarship, medical benefits, training etc have a positive effect on employee retention. The harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in

engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Employee engagement with the definition: an employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work. Employee engagement is a part of employee retention (Bindusha and Dineshkumar ,2022). The leadership style in an organization goes a long way in determining the perception of employees about the management of the organization. When leadership is perceived to be participative, that is, carrying workers along when formulating policies and taking decisions that has to do with them, they tend to be comfortable with such organization and are in turn committed to that organization. The role of leadership is very critical in employee retention. According to Doh, Stumpf, and Tymon (cited in Bindusha and Dineshkumar (2022) responsible leadership has three components namely, stakeholder culture where ethical and social behaviour is of paramount importance, fair and inclusive HR practices and full managerial support for employee development. Organizations where coercion and autocratic approach is being practiced will continually lack the capacity to keep and accommodate good talents. There is also a strong correlation between the working relationship between the management and the employees and employee turnover, where the relations are smooth employee turnover is minimal or eradicated while the opposite is true.

### 2.3. Research questions

The following questions were used to guide the research study: -

1. What staff retention strategies are being implemented in the Ministry of Health and Child Care's facilities in Gwanda urban?
2. What is the level of implementation of staff retention strategies in the Ministry of Health and Child Care 's facilities in Gwanda urban.?
3. What are the job satisfaction levels amongst staff in the healthcare institutions in Gwanda urban ?
4. What recommendations can be offered to the Ministry of Health and Child Care to improve the effectiveness of staff retention strategies being implemented?

## 3. Methodology

In any study, the methodology chosen must suite and guide the researcher to attain the envisaged results. In this regard, this study was grounded in qualitative research, defined by Struwig and Stead (2020), as an approach that allows the researcher to understand the participants' thoughts, feelings and viewpoints on certain issues. Mouton (2021) explains the qualitative method of research as a naturalistic method that describes and evaluates the performance of a program

in its settings. Mouton, (2021) further explains that the strength of qualitative research is the establishment of trust and rapport with research subjects. Qualitative method minimises the suspicion and distrust and allows for an increase in trust and credibility between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2018). The researcher opted for a qualitative study to capture, explore and assess the views and experiences of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the human resources retention strategies under review. In terms of the design, the study adopted an exploratory survey model. It was considered the most appropriate because of its investigative nature. Polite and Beck (2020) postulate that, expository survey is selected because of its high degree of representativeness of a large population leading to a greater ability to gather large amounts of data. Furthermore, it easily allows the researcher to obtain the participants' opinions and feelings on the question on hand in this case on the effectiveness of human resources retention strategies in the Ministry of Health and Child Care's institutions in Gwanda urban.

The study involved Gwanda Provincial Hospital and Phakama Poly Clinic employees made up of both management and non-management personnel from the two institutions. The total target population of the study was 400 from which a sample was drawn for further scrutiny to answer the research problem at hand. The study employed the convenience sampling method to select participants from Gwanda Provincial Hospital and from Phakama Poly clinic employees to participant in the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Magwa and Magwa, 2018). The strategy was to select participants who are information rich and illuminative (Creswell, 2018; Jansen, 2019) because studying information rich cases yields insights and understanding rather than empirical generalisation (Patton, 2018). These participants were selected because they were the focus of the study.

Data was collected from the participants through structured individualised interviews to maximise confidentiality. The interviews helped the researchers to elicit facts, statements and opinions that cannot be easily obtained through a questionnaire (Punch, 2020). The interviews provided a chance to clarify questions leading to more and correct information gathered. Guinness and Nagle (2019) point out that, interviews afford a high degree of flexibility and offer the opportunity of follow up and probing into interesting items. It offered the researchers the opportunity to ask more questions to get more facts from the employees on the effectiveness of the human resources employee retention measures being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Gwanda urban facilities. Qualitative data from interviews was analysed thematically. Thematic analysis involved coding the

data, categorizing the codes into themes, and identifying patterns that reflected the participants' experiences and perspectives. This method allowed the researchers to capture the complexity and richness of the participants' views and to identify key themes that were relevant to the research questions.

The following ethics procedures were considered:

- Permission was sought from the Gwanda Hospital and Municipality of Gwanda to conduct research.
- Permission to conduct the study in the health institutions in Gwanda town was granted by Gwanda Hospital and Municipality of Gwanda authorities.
- The authorities were assured that the research was solely for academic purposes.
- The respondents were advised not to write any names on the questionnaires for confidentiality reasons
- The information from the respondents was kept private and confidential.
- The participants were informed that taking part in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw anytime they wish to without any penalty.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The data collected from the participants revealed that the retention strategies were available in the form of allowances, bonding, uniforms, housing allowance and transport allowance (in the form of a bus that ferries employees to and from work daily). The research also revealed that health workers have what is known as 'RBP' (Retention Bonus Payment/Program) allowance as part of the retention strategy. This is a Retention Bonus Payment/Program, a targeted payment that is separate from the employee's regular salary. This package of allowances compares well with Bindusha and Dineshkumar, (2022) who posit that compensation constitutes the largest part of the retention process, the employees always have high expectations regarding their compensation packages. Compensation includes Salary and Wages, Bonus, Health Insurance, after retirement benefits.

The study revealed that although the employer is implementing some noticeable retention measures to benefit the employees, it was discovered that the measures are being implemented in a piecemeal and erratic fashion as the bus is not available every working day due to constant breakdown. On the other hand, the payment of allowances is not regular but paid as and when funds are available leaving employees anxious and frustrated. In line with the above scenario Babatunde and Onoja, (2023) argue that an organization that is well structured with a clear path for career growth and advancement will have better chances of

retaining the best of the best talents. Employees who have a perception of a steady mobility in their career will likely have a longer stay in an organization. Organization must plan and design its structures in such a way that gives room for upward movement of employees on the career ladder

The results from the study revealed that the satisfaction levels among the workers at health institution in the Ministry of Health and Child Care were very low due to poor remuneration associated with poor working conditions where workers were supposed to work longer hours but deprived of overtime and lack transparent promotion system resulting in stagnation especially among low grades due to unfairness and corruption. To this end Armstrong (2003) posits that sometimes the relationship with the management and the peers becomes the reason for an employee to leave the organization. The management is often not able to provide an employee a supportive work culture and environment in terms of personnel and professional relationships. A supportive work culture helps grow employees professionally and boosts employee's satisfaction. There are times when an employee starts feeling bitterness towards the management or peers, which leads to less satisfaction and eventually attrition.

On the effectiveness of the retention measures on the performance levels of employees, the study revealed that the retention strategies were not effective, because the allowances are erratic and meagre, promotion depending on the head of departments' relations with subordinates. If one has poor relations with authorities, it takes very long to be promoted or upgraded resulting in frustration due to stagnation. There is no transparency in the manner the so called retention measures are being implemented, as workers are left out in decision making, the measures are imposed upon them resulting in the employees feeling side-lined, consequently no worker works to fulfil these measures because they had no input on them leading to high staff turnover, understaffing and to poor service delivery. These results are in line with Daniel (2019)'s observation that to retain skilled workers for the job, proper incentives, that is competitive salaries and meaningful allowances must be provided. Similarly, Pitts et al., (2019) observe that compensation predicts turnover of employees, meaning that if incentives are far too low compared to other competitors in the market environment, employees tend to quit jobs opting for competitive salaries in other organisations. An organization that is well structured with a clear path for career growth and advancement will have better chances of retaining the best of the best talents. Employees who have a perception of a steady mobility in their career will likely have a longer stay in an organization. Organizations must therefore plan and design their structures in such a way that give room for upward movement of employees on the career ladder (Babatunde and Onoja ,2023)

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

From the data collected from the participants supported by the literature review above, the study concludes that the retention strategies being implemented in the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Gwanda urban facilities are not effective due to continued mass exodus of skilled employees.

The study further revealed that the Ministry utilizes a mix of strategies such as salary adjustments, training opportunities, and housing allowances. However, implementation varies between facilities, with some strategies being inconsistently applied. The level of implementation is generally moderate. Some facilities struggle with resource constraints, weak follow-up systems, and lack of training for HR officers. Most healthcare workers expressed dissatisfaction, citing poor working conditions, low remuneration, and limited opportunities for promotion and recognition. For retention strategies to be effective, the ministry of health and childcare must address both organizational and individual employee needs and be integrated with strategic HR planning.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several key recommendations can be made to address the complex issue of human resources strategies effects on organisational performance

1. The Ministry should consider the introduction of flexible working conditions where possible (Eiken & Saksvik, 2011), as this motivates and retains the younger generation.
2. The Ministry must avail training and development programs for employees which must be accessed by all equally and fairly. Implementation of leadership development succession and career progression paths must be considered. (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, (1992).
3. The ministry must establish transparent communication and feedback channels to involve employees in policy development. It is important to involve and include employees in decision-making especially on matters that affect them, their voice must be heard and considered as this make them feel recognised.
4. The Ministry should increase investment in healthcare infrastructure and wellness initiatives. This will motivate and retain employees as some will feel embedded to the organisational environment.
5. There should be regular review of HR policies based on employee surveys and exit interviews (Noorulkathija & Hussain, 2025), such that

adaptation of changes may be inline with prevailing environments in the market to retain skill.

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