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THE RHETORIC OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION IN THE GAMBIA PUBLIC SECTOR: EVIDENCE FROM THE NATIONAL ROAD AUTHORITY

BY

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Abstract
Talent retention has increasingly become a major concern for organizations seeking to maintain a competitive edge and achieve long-term sustainability. This study examines the role of talent retention in enhancing organizational success and employee satisfaction, with specific attention to impact of training and development, work-life balance, reward systems and welfare policies on organizational performance. The research was conducted at the National Roads Authority the Gambia, targeting a population of 55 employees. A descriptive research design was adopted, utilizing a quantitative approach with survey questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to accurately summarize the variables and identify key patterns. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between the independence variable, talent retention and the dependent variable, job satisfaction. The findings revealed talent retention variables such as training and development, reward system, welfare policy and work life balance had significant influence on job satisfaction with p-values below 0.05. The study concludes that talent retention is not only vital for reducing employee exit but also for sustaining organizational growth and competitiveness. The study recommended that organizations must continuously assess their human resource practices and adopt modern practices that promote employee welfare, foster work life balance, and invest in training and development initiatives to strengthen long-term employee satisfaction and organizational performance.
Keywords: Talent, Development, Human Resource, Employee, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, organizations are increasingly focused on attracting top-tier employees and, more critically, ensuring their long-term retention within the company (Fox, Byrne, & Rouault, 2009). This dual focus stems from the recognition that human capital is a primary driver of sustainable competitive advantage. James and Mathew (2012) further emphasize that effective employee retention practices can be strategically adopted to reduce turnover rates, while simultaneously enhancing employee loyalty and organizational commitment. Retention, therefore, is not merely a reactive measure to stem attrition but a proactive strategy for workforce stabilization.

Defining the concept more precisely, Aruna and Anitha (2015) describe talent retention as the deliberate act of motivating staff members to remain with an organization, thereby preventing the loss of high-performing and high-potential employees. Importantly, the authors assign significant responsibility to supervisors and line managers, who play a pivotal role in retaining their best team members through consistent engagement, recognition, and support. The importance of maintaining high staff retention for elevating employee performance cannot be overstated. Organizations that struggle to retain high performers inevitably end up with a workforce that is a mix of both qualified and underqualified individuals, which directly undermines their competitiveness and overall productivity. Moreover, a review of contemporary workforce trends reveals a persistent shortage of highly skilled individuals possessing the competencies and knowledge required to function at an optimal level (Bindu, 2017). This scarcity amplifies the need for strategic retention, as losing a single top performer can be far costlier than losing several average employees, given the recruitment, onboarding, and productivity loss associated with replacement.

The consequences of neglecting employee retention are severe. Gayathri, Sivaraman, and Kamalambal (2012) assert that employee retention has a significant impact on an organization's competitiveness and performance. High turnover disrupts workflows, erodes institutional knowledge, damages team morale, and increases operational costs. Conversely, strong retention practices foster stability, continuity, and a culture of excellence. Central to understanding retention is the concept of job satisfaction. Basirudin et al. (2016) define job satisfaction as the degree to which employees feel positively or negatively about various aspects of their work, including the nature of tasks, supervision, compensation, and workplace relationships. Job satisfaction is not merely a soft metric of employee happiness; it is a critical lever for increasing employee retention, particularly when it comes to retaining talented individuals (Evans et al., 2011). Talented employees, who often have more external job options, are especially sensitive to dissatisfaction and will readily leave if their expectations are not met.

Further reinforcing this link, Mahal (2012) concludes that the level of job satisfaction noticeably influences an employee's propensity to leave the organization. When satisfaction declines, the intention to quit rises proportionally. The strong correlation between job satisfaction and employee retention has been empirically validated by a substantial body of research over several decades. Notable studies include those by Roland et al. (1996), Kotze and Roodt (2005), Gurpeet (2007), and Westlund et al. (2008), all of which consistently demonstrate that satisfied employees are far more likely to stay with their current employer. Conversely, dissatisfied employees actively seek alternatives or disengage, leading to voluntary turnover. Moreover, the relationship extends beyond mere retention to encompass deeper organizational commitment. Altinoz et al. (2012) found that satisfaction with one's job typically results in stronger organizational commitment an emotional and psychological attachment to the company's goals and values. Committed employees go beyond basic job requirements, advocate for the organization, and demonstrate resilience during challenging times. This commitment, in turn, leads employees to stay longer with the company, as noted by Bailey (2013). Thus, job satisfaction functions as both a direct predictor of retention and an indirect driver through its positive effect on commitment. In summary, organizations that prioritize talent retention through practices that enhance job satisfaction such as fair rewards, work-life balance, development opportunities, and supportive supervision are more likely to cultivate a loyal, high-performing, and stable workforce, securing a critical advantage in today's talent-driven economy.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of talent retention strategies on employee job satisfaction. The specific objectives were to;

i. examine the impact of training &development on job satisfaction.
ii. investigate the impact of work life balance on job satisfaction.
iii. determine the impact of reward system on job satisfaction.
iv. evaluate the effect of welfare policy on job satisfaction.

Research Hypotheses

$Ho_{1:}$ Training & Development does not have significant impact on job satisfaction.
$Ho_{2:}$ Work Life Balance does not have significant impact on job satisfaction.
$Ho_{3:}$ Reward System does not have significant impact on job satisfaction.
$Ho_{4:}$ Welfare Policy does not have significant effect on job satisfaction.

Literature Review

According to Majola (2020), employee retention refers to a phenomenon where employees voluntarily choose to stay with their current organization and not to actively seek other job opportunities elsewhere. It is viewed by some researchers as the opposite of turnover, where employees leave the company for a variety of reasons. Staff turnover, or the rate at which employees choose to disassociate themselves from the organization on the other hand is often associated with a number of significant negative impacts on the businesses including damaging workplace morale, deterioration of services and negatively impacting business profitability. According to Chimwene (2020), talent retention refers to retention effort by employers or organizations to retain talented and high-performing employees in order to achieve organizational objectives. Talent retention strategy is the deliberate effort by employers to retain high-performing employees in order to achieve organizational objectives. Retaining best professional talent is of great significance to organizations as it eliminates the recruitment, selection and on-boarding costs that would otherwise be incurred in replacing them (Tymon, Stump & Smith, 2015). According to Oivo (2023), talent retention can be referred as process and different procedures conducted by management to encourage employees to stay in the company. Effective employee retention is the key for long-term success for any organization (Casantham & Swarnalatha, 2016) Employee retention satisfy both management as well as employees. Creating supportive and healthy work environment with good benefits creates more motivated employees. Motivated employees save organization’s expenses, as for instance there is no need for new recruitment or training.

According to Chimwene (2020), training and development is the formal activities designed by an organization to help its employees acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform current or future jobs. Thus, training and development plays an important factor in career satisfaction of an employee in their career lives (Mathis & Jackson, 2004). Training provides employees with specific skills and knowledge and technical know-how and it also helps to labour then their performances while development is an effort to provide staff with abilities the organization will need in the future (Powell& Diamond, 2011). The availability for all employees having access to training and development programs is critical in facilitating organizational growth and development, more so with performance and technological improvements. According to Mulugeta (2022), when an organization invests in training and development, it results in the reduction of turnover and enhancement of organizational performance. (Mapelu & Jumah 2013) assert that training and development are an investment that an organization make in an employee, offering them new skills and better competencies. (Wallelegn 2013) states that “training often leads to work that is more intrinsically rewarding and combined with effective communication about how an employee’s efforts at developing skills will lead him or her to more challenging and meaningful positions within the company”.

According to Chimwene (2020), Work Life Balance is the appropriate and holistic combination of work private life. There are various aspects of one's personal life that can intersect with work including family, career, leisure, and health. Work-life balance is an area of increasing importance to both employees seeking to balance work and non-work roles and to organizations striving to improve their organizational effectiveness or competitive advantage. It is about helping employees to maintain healthy, rewarding lifestyles that will in turn lead to improvements in performance (Grimm, 2017). Work-life balance programs in organizations’ focus on employees’ interaction between work and family life activities, leisure and personal development. This makes organizations create a productive work environment and culture where traces of work-life conflict are reduced. Similarly, work-life balance is attained where there are shared benefits for employees and the organization (Mesimo-Ogunsanya, 2017). Omeoga (2023) opined that the balance between an employee’s work and life outside of work may have a link to whether they decide to stay or leave an organization. (Pasamar, 2020) noted that the presence of a work-life balance improves job satisfaction, performance, and commitment to work. The policy of the organization in creating opportunities for leisure prevents burnout and this is beneficial to both the employee and the employer, (Slowiak & DeLongchamp, 2022; Yu et al., 2022).

Chimwene (2020) found that reward system refers to all forms of financial returns and tangible services and benefits employees receive. Organizations get their competitive edge from a talent management system that helps them hire talented people, place them in the right place, at the right time and align their individual performance with the organization’s objectives, mission and vision, thereafter develop their abilities and reward performance commensurate with contributions to the organization’s success (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009). In organizations today, rewards system relies on performance management system through appraisal and performance contracting processes to obtain data relevant to decisions concerning merit pay, promotions, pay increases and demotions. (Cardy, 1998), argues that appraisals are linked with future performance, and demonstrate the connection of appraisals with motivation and performance improvement, showing that certain behaviours translate the core performance into organizational effectiveness. (Glen 2006) argues that it is possible to retain key skills within highly cash-strapped, extremely lean organizations; by focusing, as a necessity, on broader predictors of retention and motivation. In regard to these statement employees’ respond to positive reception at work, especially when it’s expressed through rewarding their efforts because it confirms their work is appreciated. According to Mulugeta (2022), defines rewards as something given to employees by the organization because of work completed or good performance. Recognition from Managers, supervisors, colleagues and team members enhances loyalty (Bidisha & Mukulesh, 2013). According to Yezina (2014) recognition and reward for employees who performed outstanding contribute to the working culture of respect and gratitude for employees and job well done, which in turn reinforces employee commitment to the organization and improves performance.

Agrawal and Bose (2023) found that employee welfare is a term including various services, benefits and facilities offered to employees by the employers. The welfare measures need not be monetary but in any kind/forms. This includes items such as allowances, housing, transportation, medical insurance and food. Employee welfare also includes monitoring of working conditions, creation of industrial harmony through infrastructure for health, industrial relations and insurance against disease, accident and unemployment for the workers and their families. Through such generous benefits the employer makes life worth living for employees. Employee welfare refers to anything that is done towards the comfort and well-being of employees. It is provided over and above their salaries or wages. However, the welfare need not be in the form of money, it could also take the form of insurance, better facilities and even team building trips and exercises. Ajuoga et.al (2024) found that employee welfare refers to an aspect of institutionalizing benefits, services and facilities that support the employer's effort and plan to provide a more comfortable and conducive work environment for employees (Beijer & Van-De-Voorde, 2015). It entails the identification and acknowledgement of employees' place or role in organizations and putting measures in place to motivate and retain them (Ekere & Onuoha, 2021). Over the years, studies done on employee welfare management majored on health & safety, referral programmes, intra-mural facilities, extra-mural facilities, workplace design, compensation, leaves, social security measures and statutory welfare as indicators of welfare management (Nkeiru& George, 2022, Ekere & Onuoha, 2021; Muruu, et.al., 2016; Raj & Julius, 2017; Waititu, Kihara & Senaji, 2017).

Ngozi and Edwinah (2022) opined that Job satisfaction is, quite simply, how content or satisfied employees are with their jobs. Employee satisfaction is typically measured using an employee satisfaction survey. Employee happiness may be influenced by a variety of factors, including as pay, workload, management perceptions, flexibility, cooperation, and resources. Companies that want to keep their employees happy and lower turnover should consider all of these factors, but employee satisfaction is only one component of the entire solution. In fact, some companies believe that happy employees are those who would be better off without them. High performance or involvement is not prerequisites for satisfaction. According to Agbitor (2021), job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which an employee expresses content with the features of his or her job. This definition avers that; individual employees has a level of satisfaction to the job he or she holds in the organization. (Reukauf, 2018) supported similar definitions by viewing job satisfaction as an employee's assessment of all aspects of the job. Personal feelings and the outward demonstration of those feelings is another definition of job satisfaction (Masum et.al., 2016).

More so, according to Ajuoga et.al (2024), Social Exchange theory developed in 1958 by George Homans was the anchor theory to this study. This theory elaborates the exchange nature of social behavior by suggesting that individuals and groups always relate as social systems and that the behavioral response exhibited by employees whether positive or negative is caused by the treatment employees receive from their employers. According to (Kanana, 2016), Social exchange theory practically denoted as the norm of reciprocity provides a framework for predicting employee motivation, commitment and retention programmes within organizations. The existence of a strong social exchange relationship among the tripartite employment players helps in maintaining positive working relations and building of trust which enhances employee satisfaction and commitment. The theory suggests that the commitment level of employees is based on the perceived support system and treatment they receive from their employers (George, Aboobaker & Edward, 2020). Social Exchange theory is salient in this study since workers

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show commitment to organizations if they perceive that they are receiving something worth like proper retention strategies in the long run (Kanana, 2016). Kimberley (2020) is of the view that social exchange theory concerns an assessment of social behaviour and interactions between the employee and employer. The theory is based on the premise that employees exchange desirable behaviour (such as loyalty) and outcomes if they see that management values and implements strategies that reinforce this. Consequently, the retention practices used by the employer will impact the employee's decision to leave or stay. This theory underlines the importance of investing in human capital in order to establish and maintain a relationship where both the employer and employee reciprocate. (Al-Emadi et al. 2015).

Chimwene (2020) conducted a study on talent retention strategies and competitiveness of public universities in western region of Kenya. The purpose of the study was to examine talent retention strategies and competitiveness of public universities in Western Region of Kenya. The study area was public universities in Western Region of Kenya namely; Maseno University, Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science & Technology and Kibabii University. The research adopted co-relational research design. Sampling techniques were stratified sampling and proportionate sampling whereby each university formed a strata and population was further grouped into academic and non-teaching staff. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 25) was used for data analysis. The questionnaires were given to 351 respondents out of which 316 responded which represents 90% of the respondents. The findings of this study established that work-life balance, training and development and reward systems affects competitiveness of Universities in western region of Kenya and therefore joint talent retention strategies are vital for Universities achieving University competitiveness.

Sang (2021) conducted a study on employee retention strategies and employee performance in tea industry: A case of James Finlay Kenya Limited, Kenya. The study specifically sought to investigate the relationship between rewards, welfare policies, employee development and adoption of technology, and the performance of employees in James Finlay Kenya. The study covered a period of five years from 2015 to 2019. This study was anchored on the wanted versus unwanted turnover theory, Vroom expectancy theory, and two-factor theory. The descriptive research design was adopted and targeted a population of 257 employees of James Finlay Kenya Limited who are composed of senior, middle and lower-level management. The study used a sample of 156 respondents. A pilot study of the research instruments was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version. The study findings showed that all the study variables investigated were positively correlated to the study dependent variable. A unit rise in reward leads to a rise in the level of employee performance by 0.359 units. A unit rise in welfare policies results in a rise in employee performance by 0.498 units. A unit rise in employee development would result in a rise in employee performance by 0.474 units. A unit rise of adoption of technology would result in a rise of employee performance by 0.102 rewarding its employees sufficiently that has made employees meet the expectation. Findings on welfare policies showed that James Finlay did not have clear policies in place for promoting employees. Training and mentorship programs rendered to employees have made employees efficient in discharging their roles. The introduction of the use of technology has led to an increased level of employee performance due to increased efficiency.

Mulugeta (2022) conducted a study on assessment of employee turnover and employee retention strategies: The Case of MIDROC Construction ETH PLC. The study employed a descriptive research design since it intends to gather qualitative and quantitative data that describes the nature and characteristics of employee turnover and employee retention strategies in the organization. The target population comprised a total of 390 employees working at MIDROC construction ETH Plc. head office and terminal branches. The sampling method used in this study was stratified random sampling for quantitative data and purposive sampling for qualitative data. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires and semi structured interview. Therefore, the study found out that the majority of the respondents stated low compensation, lack of promotion, lack of training and education, lack of recognition and appreciation are the major causes of turnover and most respondents agreed that the organization lack remuneration adjustments within time, did not recognize and appreciate work achievements, and didn’t have career growth plan and opportunity taken as retention strategies implemented by the organization. Omeoga (2023) conducted a study on employee retention strategies in selected small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Grounded in Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies business leaders use to retain their experienced employees. The participants were four business leaders of four SMEs in Nigeria who successfully implemented strategies that helped retain their experienced employees. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and a review of organization policy documents. Through thematic analysis, four themes were identified: (a) training and development, (b) management and leadership style, (c) organizational culture, and (d) financial and non-financial benefits. A key recommendation is for business leaders to invest in talent management and capacity-building courses to keep employees informed about new technologies in their areas of expertise. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to reduce unemployment and increase tax revenue for community development.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Kothari (2004) recommend that the use of descriptive research design enables the researcher to make certain predictions by narrating data and traits of the target population. However, the research design on this study explored the impact of training and development, work life balance, reward system and welfare policy focus on job satisfaction using a quantitative method. The study adopted survey strategy. Primary data with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The study population is the aggregation of element from which the sample is actually selected. The focus of this study consists of population of 55 employees at National Roads Authority Head Office. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to describe the data collected to characterize accurately and to summarize the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the effect of talent retention strategies on job satisfaction. This can be expressed by the model below to determine the quantitative association between the variables:

Results

H_{01}: Talent Retention strategies do not significantly impact job satisfaction

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the Impact of Talent Retention Strategies on Job Satisfaction

Model	**R-Squared**	**Adjusted R Squared**			**Root MSE**	
1	0.9328	0.9274			.30571	
Source	**Sum of Square**	**Df**	**Mean Square**		**F**	**Probability**
Model	64.854348	4	16.213587			0.0000
Residual	4.67292473	50	.093458495			
Total	69.5272727	54	1.28754209			
Variable	**Coef.**	**Std. Error**	**T**	**Sig**	**[95%**	**Conf. Interval]**
Training & Development	.3172471	.1006789	3.15	0.003	.1150275	.5194667
Work Life Balance	.1692476	.0752429	2.25	0.029	.0181178	.3203774
Reward System	.196838	.109785	1.79	0.079	-.0236717	.4173476
Welfare Policy	.235854	.1062135	2.22	0.031	.022518	.4491901
Cons	-.2420761	.1860726	-1.30	0.199	-.6158139	.1316616

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2025 Using STATA 11.0 (Statistically significant at 5%)

The regression analysis examining the influence of talent retention on job satisfaction yielded a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.9328. This indicates that approximately 93.2% of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by the independent variables included in the model. The adjusted R^2, which accounts for the number of predictors, stands at 92.7%, further confirming the model's strong explanatory power. The p-value associated with the model is 0.0000, which is below the conventional 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), providing robust statistical evidence that the observed relationship is not due to random chance. These results demonstrate that the set of independent variables namely Training and Development, Work-Life Balance, Reward System, and Welfare Policy jointly and significantly explain variations in job satisfaction. In practical terms, when organizations implement effective talent retention strategies, employees report substantially higher levels of job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the computed F-statistic of 173.48 is notably high, reinforcing that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The F-test examines the joint effect of all independent variables on the dependent variable. Given the critical F-value at the 5% significance level, the obtained F-statistic far exceeds the threshold, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (which posits no significant impact of talent retention on job satisfaction). Consequently, the alternate hypothesis—stating that talent retention does have a significant impact on job satisfaction—is accepted. In summary, the regression outputs collectively confirm that talent retention practices are not merely correlated with, but are powerful predictors of, job satisfaction. The high R^2 and adjusted R^2 values, combined with the significant F-statistic and p-value, offer compelling evidence that organizations seeking to enhance employee job satisfaction should prioritize retention-focused initiatives, particularly in the areas of training, work-life balance, rewards, and welfare policies. These findings underscore the strategic importance of retaining talent as a lever for fostering a satisfied and motivated workforce.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Talent retention plays a vital role in motivating employees to perform their assigned job. The ability to attract, keep and motivate high-performance is becoming increasingly important in today's competitive organizational retentions. There is consensus among scholars that the human resource is the most important resource of an organization. This is especially in the light of the complexities and dynamism that is associated with 21st century business organization. The position of scholars is that it is the human resources who bring their human capital into the organization that determines the extent to which all other type of resources is optimally utilized efficiently and effectively. This is why organizations must continually develop the human capital efficiently and effectively. Based on the findings of this study, the research concludes that talent retention significantly influences job satisfaction. Also, training and development significantly impacts on job satisfaction. Similarly, work life balance significantly influences job satisfaction even as there is significant difference in job satisfaction when work incentives are introduced. Based on conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Talent retention is one of the most essential parts in a company's development and success. It is therefore recommended that organization must continually understand what factors enhance talent retention and how to maximize their over job satisfaction. Organization must provide friendly work environment which will influences employees to work comfortable and perform their job.

2. Organizations should continually be abreast of environmental changes and global best practices which must be enshrined in the philosophy and culture of the organization especially as it relates to the nature and quality of talent retention that will facilitate work process.

3. Organization should continually investigate factors that result in the improvement of working conditions. Improving the talent retention will increase job satisfaction. Organization should have in place a good working condition for their employees in order to boost their morale and made them more efficient.

4. Organization must continually understand the work incentives that motivates the employees and how to maximize their overall job satisfaction while also stimulating their commitment and dedication. This would lead to talent retention thereby enhancing the organizations' job satisfaction.

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