



Pre-conditions for employee motivation to curb Zimbabwe's academic brain drain



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Orientation and research purpose: In this article we explore an applicable framework of pre-conditions for employee motivation so as to help curb Zimbabwe's current brain drain challenge.

Motivation for the study: After observing that current literature does not seem to address the questions around what actually compels employees to stay within their jobs, especially in politically and socio-economic unstable countries; we sought to understudy current employees in Zimbabwe's institutions of higher learning.

Research approach/design and method: The case study, which is qualitative in nature, studies two research sites, namely, one public and one private university. From the two sites, participants are purposefully selected to be interviewed.

Main findings: Through the interviewed participants, the study reveals a new wave of brain drain. As opposed to the traditional political and socio-economic push factors, the study highlights that the current brain drain is being driven by unresponsive administration systems which have failed to meet employee needs, although this task is achievable. Through the study, a range of needs, which vary in terms of priority from one age generation to another, are identified. The study reveals that the needs, although varying in their nature, should be considered as part of the processes to change.

Practical/managerial implications and contribution/value-add: The intervention required to address Zimbabwe's academic brain drain challenge is a sense of responsiveness on the part of the employer. In situations where dialogue is the required solution, collected data red-flags the manifestation of unresponsive administration systems in its place. This has left employees extremely frustrated.

Keywords: brain drain; dialogue; employee motivation; pre-conditions; unresponsive.

Introduction

Although measuring brain drain is a difficult task (Kaplan & Höppli, 2017), recent research indicates that there is a significant increase of brain drain of qualified African professionals from their home countries. A specific focus on higher education in Africa reveals that tertiary educated immigrants constitute a large part of this human migration (Marsh & Oyeler, 2018). In a research of over 20 African countries, it was revealed that the number of academic migrants are way above 50% of the total academic staff complement of sending countries (Darkwa, 2018). This trend is alarming.

The brain drain of skilled workers has greatly impacted Africa's development across all sectors, namely, social, economic and political sectors (Brock & Blake, 2017). This has caused regressive and delayed development. Because of a continuous drain of skilled human resources (HRs), countries of origin, that include Zimbabwe, are increasingly lacking in the provision of support services in critical sectors such as healthcare and education. Other ripple effects to this predicament include the lack of investment in infrastructure and compromised tax returns (Brock & Blake, 2017). Furthermore, there is hardly any involvement in the establishment of effective and legitimate governments in these countries and this has greatly compromised democracy in these nations (Brock & Blake, 2017).

Definition

Brain drain can be classified as:

[...] Geographical (the departure of individuals from one country to another to find better living conditions and better paid jobs), industrial (the departure of employees from one economic sector to

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another) or organisational (the departure of employees from one company to another). (Flanja & Nistor, 2017, p. 60)

Although brain drain can be localised, that is, the movement of skilled personnel between local institutions (Nyanhete & Bhebhe, 2014), it is the outward migration of individuals from one country to another in an effort to find better living conditions and well-paid jobs (Flanja & Nistor, 2017) that is of greater concern.

The brain drain phenomenon has always been of great concern among scholars to the extent that scholars have developed industry-specific literature on the phenomenon. The field of academia has not been spared in this regard. More recently, scholars have begun to identify brain drain with the loss of educated professionals from one country to another. The concept has evolved to be seen as the mass migration of highly skilled and experienced academics because of poor working conditions. Such industry-specific definitions, illustrate the growing fears on the brain drain of skilled academics from universities in developing countries such as Zimbabwe, to more developed countries that include but are not limited to South Africa, Australia and the United Kingdom (Tembeni, Nyoni, & Nyoni, 2017).

In comparison to other continents, in terms of HRs development and management, the African Continent is far behind (Atswenje Sikolia, 2016). Consequently, brain drain has affected Africa more severely than any other region (Atswenje Sikolia, 2016). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), out of every nine university degreed people born in Africa, at least one of them is a migrant in one of the 38 OECD member states (which are the world's most developed countries) (Atswenje Sikolia, 2016).

It is estimated that more than 30% of Africa's highly skilled workforce stock has been lost to brain drain (Atswenje Sikolia, 2016). On average, Africa loses an average of 20 000 top key professionals (which it cannot afford to lose) such as academics, doctors, engineers and scientists, among others (Joseph, 2005). In a continent that needs at least 1 million scientists and engineers to help sustain its development goals, only 20 000 remain, serving a population of about 600 million people (Atswenje Sikolia, 2016). To make up for this deficit created as a result of the drain, it is estimated that African countries are annually recruiting about 100 000 non-African skilled expatriates at an exorbitant cost of at least US\$4 billion per annum (Joseph, 2005).

Orientation

Although it is well known that the brain drain phenomenon cuts across trades and industries, this particular research focuses on the drain of faculty or academic staff from institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe. The reasoning behind the study of the loss of academic staff in particular has been motivated by the realisation that:

Academics themselves count not only as an elite segment of society, but are also those who educate the specialists of tomorrow, participate in science and technology production and even in the definition of scientifically valid knowledge. Their departure can cause consistent imbalances in society. (Panzaru & Reisz, 2017, p. 35)

To this end, academics are in fact a very critical HR whose absence creates instabilities in our societies.

Research problem

Since 1990, Zimbabwe has lost and continues to lose a significant number of skilled professionals at alarming rates. For critical sectors such as education, researchers argue that the situation is desperate (Bigirimana, Sibanda, & Masengu, 2016; Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010; Mkandatsama & Nyanhete, 2017; Shumba & Mawere, 2012) because this challenge is also negatively affecting the quality of graduates being churned out (Jones 2004). Consequently, this scenario is creating serious implications around the country's capacity to deliver on sustainable development goals (Brock & Blake, 2017; Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010; Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2013).

Research purpose and objective

Traditionally, the argument has mainly been that Zimbabwe's outward migration of skilled professionals has been greatly influenced by the economic crisis, which scholars argue, is deeply rooted in the political crisis within the country (Van Vuuren, 2012). Owing to government failures, Zimbabwe's once robust economy totally collapsed between the years 2000 and 2008. Mainly characterised by high unemployment, inflation, shortages of foreign currency, fuel, food, pharmaceuticals and other health consumables, the collapse of the economy has led to a major performance decline across all sectors, plunging the country into deep poverty (Mbizwo, 2019). Within institutions of higher learning, this has led to the failure to offer attractive remuneration packages, pay salaries on time, provide adequate resources and facilities for teaching, learning and research and provide desirable working conditions (Garwe & Thondhlana, 2019).

Because this has been the case for a significant amount of time, studies have begun to show links between employee working conditions and brain drain (Bigirimana et al., 2016). In a study conducted on academics who migrated outside Zimbabwe, researchers reveal that over 50% of the study's representative sample highlight work-related factors as the reason for leaving Zimbabwe (Chetsanga & Muchenje, 2003). With such staggering statistics, this rarely discussed dimension, offers a new platform for academic debate on which work-related factors in particular are fuelling the drain.

It is unfortunate that despite the vast literature on the brain drain topic, which has mostly focused on the factors that influence employees to leave their jobs to pursue career

prospects outside their home countries, much less is known about the factors that actually compel employees to stay within their jobs in their home countries (Sinha, 2012). Owing to this gap in literature, the researcher seeks to understand the conditions that can be put in place to motivate employees, particularly skilled academics, to stay and work in their countries amid the current socio-economic and political environment. It is expected that through understudying current faculty, a framework to curb faculty brain drain can be constructed from participant feedback. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that this framework can be used in other institutions of higher learning from non-developed countries.

Literature review

Causes

A combination of push and pull factors result in brain drain (Everett, 1966). While negative factors are responsible for the 'pushing out' of employees, the positive factors (which they usually seem to see in another organisation) become the 'pulling' factors (Bigirimana et al., 2016). Until now, research suggests that the major push factors for Zimbabwe's brain drain challenge are deeply rooted within the chaotic and unfavourable political and economic environment in Zimbabwe (Bigirimana et al., 2016; Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010; Netsianda, 2015).

Since the early 1990s, poor government policies have led to the collapse of the economy, plunging the nation into deep poverty. Growing discontent among the masses has also seen those who choose to be vocal as enemies of the state (Kriger, 2005). State imposed violence and intimidation has been employed to silence and stifle growing opposition. The violent targeting of academic professionals has been motivated by the fact that academics have influence over their local communities (Langa, 2012). This conflict has created the ideal platform for the mass migration of local academics from Zimbabwe (Van Vuuren, 2012). In fact, it is understood that within the first decade of the 21st century, Zimbabwe lost over 100 000 academics alone due to politically related violence (Langa, 2012).

The political crisis has in turn created an unimaginable ripple effect on the social and economic arena. In addition to the political turmoil currently raging in the Southern African country, Zimbabwe's brain drain continues to be worsened because of the ongoing economic crisis, which has come as a result of the political crisis in the country (Van Vuuren, 2012). The economic hardships have greatly contributed to a poor quality of life for the majority of Zimbabweans. Highly characterised by a hyperinflationary operating environment, unemployment, shortages of fuel, food, medical drugs and services because of limited foreign currency and extreme poverty (Mbizwo, 2019), the current crisis has been more than enough reason for Zimbabweans to jump ship.

Although it makes sense that a nation in crisis is prone to brain drain, there exists other dimensions within the body of extant literature that now call for inclusion as causes for brain

drain at national level. In a study conducted in Laos, Southeast Asia, obtained data reveals that in most circumstances, employees will opt to walk away from their employer as opposed to walking away from the job in general (DuPlessis, Sumphonphakdy, Oldfield, & Botha, 2013). Usually, the decision to leave is fuelled when staff feel underemployed, stagnant, redundant and irrelevant (Garwe & Thondhlana, 2019). In light of this, if one is to offer mechanisms to help curb the drain, they need to align the proposed interventions to the actual challenges at hand. The researcher believes that understanding this dimension will assist in developing working solutions to the brain drain challenge thereby curbing the drain.

To fully understand Zimbabwe's current brain drain phenomena, the researcher employs the use of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory or Theory of Motivation (Herzberg, 1959), to understudy what actually compels current employees to want to and choose to stay within their jobs. The choice of theory selection is influenced by the fact that Herzberg's theory has a set of general factors of what most likely compels employees to stay within their jobs (Alshmemri, Lina, & Maude, 2017). Together with two of his colleagues, Mausner and Snyderman, Herzberg developed the theory which argues that a combination of two factors, namely, Motivation (Intrinsic) factors and Hygiene (Extrinsic) factors, stimulate job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). Herzberg and his colleagues argue that motivation factors such as advancement, individual growth, responsibility, recognition and achievement, coupled with hygienic factors such as attractive rewards and remuneration, favourable policies and administration practices, healthy interpersonal relationships and a good working environment are all essential elements that help generate employee motivation (Alshmemri et al., 2017).

Magnitude and impact

In a study conducted to assess the magnitude of brain drain on academics in Africa, research reveals that the continent is losing at least 20 000 academics from the tertiary sector alone on an annual basis (Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010). In yet another study, specifically focusing on Zimbabwe, collected data redflags that at least a quarter of Zimbabwe's population has been lost due to brain drain (Shumba & Mawere, 2012).

As a result of the severity of the situation, different local institutions have been carrying out institution-specific research, all in a bid to try and come up with working solutions to help curb the Zimbabwean brain drain. For example, in a study conducted at a private university in Zimbabwe, Africa University, it was revealed that out of the 74 full-time academic staff members, the University lost (and replaced) close to 50 academic staff members between 2009 and 2013 (Bigirimana et al., 2016).

In another study, which took place at Zimbabwe's first state university, the University of Zimbabwe, studies show a University operating almost on auto-pilot because of the presence of only skeletal staff (Netsianda, 2015). For instance,

out of the 13 lecturers required for Veterinary Science and Computer Science Departments, respectively, the University only had one employee in each department. Other critical departments such as Engineering, Mining and Geo-Informatics also had one employee instead of the required 8, 10 and 16 lecturers, respectively (Bigirimana et al., 2016).

Zimbabwe's brain drain challenge has created a huge gap within local universities. Studies show that while in some cases faculties are understaffed, in other circumstances, the critical shortage of key academics has led to the full closure of other departments (Shumba & Mawere, 2012). In terms of institutional productivity, this scenario has been observed to be very costly (Ali Sha, Fakhr, Ahmad, & Zaman, 2010). In addition to this, studies also show that the loss of skilled academics negatively affects the element of continuity in teaching and research activities (Tevera & Crush, 2003). With regard to the teaching component, researchers have observed a disrupted skills transfer process from the lecturers to the students (Ali Sha et al., 2010). Apparently, this scenario is what is leading to the release of quality compromised graduates into industry (Jones, 2004).

Intervention strategies/framework development

In understanding the view that very little is known about what compels employees to stay working within their jobs in an unstable country (Sinha, 2012), the researcher seeks to understudy individuals who are currently employed with the hope of learning what possibly motivates them to stay in Zimbabwe at a time like this. As indicated earlier, owing to the new school of thought that indicates a probability of internally induced brain drain, more and more research studies have begun to show that the issue of employee brain drain does not necessarily have to be managed strictly at national or international level. Instead, institutions may have the opportunity and responsibility to address this challenge through correct employee motivation strategies, thereby achieving employee retention (Logan, 2000).

Defined as the voluntary move by an organisation to create an environment which engages employees for a long-term (Chaminade, 2007), employee retention strategies may be the only solution that can be used by Zimbabwean institutions to protect their staff from leaving the organisation, and the country today. Studies show that employee retention strategies have been proven to help increase motivation, thereby decreasing employee turnover (DuPlessis et al., 2013). In light of this, it is important that when HR managers prepare for employee recruitment, they also strategically plan for motivation and retention (DuPlessis et al., 2013).

Researches on employee retention reveal that employee motivation can be achieved through healthy work environments and encouraging work cultures, open communication, rewards and benefits, staff wellness, training and development programmes, appreciation, gifting, compliments and acknowledgements, good working conditions and flexible working, opportunities for career

advancement, growth and development, trust, alleviating stress from work overload and imbalance, performance based bonuses and staff access to institutional recreational facilities (Bigirimana et al., 2016).

The assumption from this brief is that the seamless management of all these factors and activities together can help curb internally induced brain drain (DuPlessis et al., 2013). However, the question of how all these factors can come together and actually help contribute to a well-established framework remains. The researcher therefore seeks to investigate the probability of managing internally induced brain drain from Zimbabwe.

Research design

Approach

This research in particular employs a purely qualitative research approach. 'Qualitative research refers to the methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analysing and interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics, and meanings of specific contextual features of a phenomenon under study' (Leininger, 1985, p. 5). The approach concerns itself with describing, rather than counting (as in quantitative research) (Perri & Bellamy, 2012). This approach befits this particular research as the research itself seeks to describe a social issue or occurrence through the collection of non-standardised data, analysis of texts and images as opposed to determining statistics (Flick, Von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004).

As the study seeks to investigate what can possibly make employees choose to stay within their jobs amid tumultuous environments, answers providing detail and not just numbers will constitute appropriate data. In this regard, qualitative research becomes key and central as it goes an extra mile in providing detail and explaining data received all in a bid to fully understand phenomena (Peräkylä, 2002).

Research method

Research setting

The proposed research is a case study, which is a critical examination of an identified target, either an individual, group or phenomenon (Sturman, 1997). It was carried out at two local sites in Zimbabwe, namely, Reformed Church University (a private church-related institution) and Chinhoyi University of Technology (a public university with special interests in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics).

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

To gain access to research sites, the researcher wrote to the Registrars of both academic institutions under study. A full copy of the research proposal and a detailed introductory letter explaining the purpose of the research and the procedures that would be undertaken to obtain data were made available to the Registrars, who occupy the position of Gate Keeper.

Research conducted in privately managed entities, such as universities, require researchers to obtain gate-keeper permission to gain access to the research site beforehand (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). In social research, gate keepers are considered to be the essential mediators for accessing study participants (Andoh-Arthur, 2019). Usually regarded as those persons who are 'in charge' of formal institutions (e.g. heads of institutions and principal officers), their permissions are required to gain access to people working within their vicinity and access to key formal documents under their care (Flick et al., 2004).

The choice to select the sector for Higher Education was motivated by the researcher's experience of working in the sector at the time of commencing the study. The researcher was given access to approach potential research participants. A careful selection of individuals who are knowledgeable on the issue was made and communication was extended to all potential candidates through office visits and telephone calls.

Research population, participants and sampling methods

The population for this research is extracted from the Reformed Church University in Masvingo and Chinhoyi University of Technology in Chinhoyi. Both universities are within Zimbabwe. While the former is a private church-related institution, the latter is a public and state run university. Although both research sites are institutions of higher learning, the researcher is of the view that the participants' different experiences and conditions of working in a public and private university may be different. This may give the researcher an opportunity to investigate the same phenomena from two different viewpoints, possibly offering enriched data.

For a case study, it is advised that at least five cases can present an adequate sample (Creswell, 2013). The argument behind the selection of such a seemingly small sample comes as a result of the nature of qualitative research in itself (Flick et al., 2004). Firstly, qualitative research involves a large amount of work; it may be impractical to analyse huge samples. Secondly, while frequencies are normal and can be recorded, one occurrence is potentially useful. This is because qualitative research focuses more on deducing meaning in an identified problem. Lastly, in qualitative research more participants do not necessarily lead to more data. This is because just one highlight within obtained data can be adequate to be a contributing factor to a framework (Flick et al., 2004).

The researcher targets to select double the sample size that has been recommended by (Creswell, 2013). This is because of the view that what constitutes a diverse sample size may help achieve data saturation. Although data saturation is not entirely concerned with numbers, it cannot be ignored that an adequate sample can provide for a depth in the information that is collected from all the participants and this is what is required (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The accomplishment of data

saturation paves way for the researcher to recognise data patterns and properties that are adequate for explaining the phenomena (Thomson, 2011). In view of this, 10 academic staff members from each of the two universities under study are initially targeted for sampling. As the study took place, a total number of 17 samples agreed to take part in the study. All participants representing the sample are purposefully selected to take part in the study.

In order to obtain highly enriched data, the researcher employs the stratified purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). The research solicited the participation of academic personnel with significant experience from Executive, Senior and Middle Management portfolios. As a result of the careful selection of participants, this selected sample is able to share information enriched contributions (Neuman, 2000).

Data collection methods

The study employs the use of semi-structured interviews to collect data. It was important to use this particular tool as the guide specifically addressed the issues that had to be explored by the researcher (Scott & Garner, 2013). With the use of semi-structured interviews, which allow for participants to give direct responses to particular questions (Fox, 2009), the researcher relied on an interview guide, which is a set of prepared questions that covers the basic topics and themes, which the researcher wished for participants to address (Scott & Garner, 2013). This assisted respondents in giving answers that are relevant to the research questions.

Eventually, 17 face-to-face interviews were conducted on current employees of Zimbabwean nationality from the selected sites. All participating respondents were selected from the following hierarchies within each institution as follows:

- Executive Management – Academic Staff occupying Principal Officer Positions
- Senior Management – Academic Deans / Directors
- Middle Management – Senior Lecturers / Lecturers

In constructing the questions, the researcher incorporated the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework. This serves as a guide, enhances the dependability of the schedule and ultimately improves the quality of data collected (Castillo - Montoya, 2016). The framework explains that for a protocol to be valid, it should primarily be able to meet the research objectives (Flick et al., 2004).

For this study, all sections have been designed in such a manner that they serve as a response to and help meet the research objectives. The first section, which discusses demographics, carries questions that have been asked to help show participant background and eligibility to take part in the study. Other questions that cover background

information such as age, work experience and education level, help feed into statistics which are quite crucial for this study. The second section carries questions on the brain drain phenomenon. These questions seek to address how knowledgeable participants are on the topic, rates and statistics of the drain, as well as causes and impact. Finally, the last section carries questions that will help answer the question of what is really required to make employees choose to stay within their jobs.

Another key result area as stipulated by the IPR framework is the ability to construct an inquiry-based conversation with participating responders. To fulfil this obligation, the researcher designed the protocol in such a way that encourages conversation between the researcher and each interviewee. With the majority of questions being open-ended, there was an opportunity for discussion and follow-up questions to help create clear understanding and also allow the researcher to collect as much information as possible.

Data analysis

The study employed a thematic approach for analysing data. All collected data was recorded manually. After the interviews, data was transcribed, duplicated and backed up electronically. To manage and analyse collected data, the researcher adopted the use of ATLAS.ti Version 8, 2020. The main reason for selecting this particular software was mainly influenced by the voluminous nature of the collected data.

In a bid to avoid the difficulties of manually bringing together different pieces of narrative from collected data and forming numerous collections of papers, notes and spreadsheets for the purposes of coding (Soratto, Pires de Pires, & Friese, 2020), through its features, ATLAS.ti offers an opportunity to centralise all information that is necessary (Flick et al., 2004). In addition to this, the software also carries within it mechanisms to enable data analysis to be performed in the software itself (Flick et al., 2004). Therefore, through its intelligence and with the aid of the researcher – who retains her role as the critical thinker (Flick et al., 2004) – the software easily makes it possible to perform the three crucial steps in data analysis process (data reduction, data display and verification and conclusion forming) as alluded to by (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Strategies employed to ensure quality and integrity

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher conducted case study tests as recommended by (Yin, 2009). As a way of establishing integrity in research findings, (Yin, 2009) recommends testing research integrity using construct validity, internal validity as well as external validity tests. While the use of multiple sources of evidence (literature review, and the 17 cases of samples) were consulted for information for this study under construct validity tests, under external validity, the researcher made use of existing theories (Everett Lee's famous Push and Pull theory and

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory), to help guide the study. Furthermore, using internal validity tests, the researcher conducted pattern matching on all collected data. Through this exercise, the researcher was able to identify key recurring themes or motifs, particularly in the area of the real causes of Zimbabwe's brain drain challenge.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management (IPPM) Research Ethics Committee, University of Johannesburg IPPM-2018-169(D)

Results

Causes

This research study was conducted with the overall aim of establishing pre-conditions of employee motivation for the retention of local academics within their jobs, in Zimbabwe. In order to develop these, it was crucial to first understand the causes of the brain drain, so as to use necessary interventions in the construction of the framework.

General causes

The study reveals that although it is a fact that Zimbabwe continues to lose skilled workforce because of the challenges resulting from the national crisis, this is no longer the only cause of Zimbabwe's brain drain. In fact, obtained data reveals that Zimbabweans have actually grown accustomed to what is happening around them and have developed for themselves coping mechanisms to help them in dealing with the predicaments associated with the national crisis (Moyo, 2019). Through comedy and political satire, studies show Zimbabweans have acknowledged that the political situation in the country is beyond their control and because they are not a confrontational people, they have grown passive aggressive instead (Gappah, 2016).

Internal causes

Amid this realisation, the researcher was drawn to find out what else could be triggering the drain. In analysing collected data, the researcher observed a new trend of employees who wish to leave work in Zimbabwe because of a host of challenges which are all linked to the internal administration system as illustrated in Figure 1.

Collected data reveals that poor organisational structures have largely contributed to inefficiencies and poor decision-making in local universities. In turn, the challenges illustrated above have created room for severe frustration among staff, thereby affecting job satisfaction and employee motivation.

Rates and statistics

In order to understand the impact of brain drain in Zimbabwe, one of the research objectives of this study was

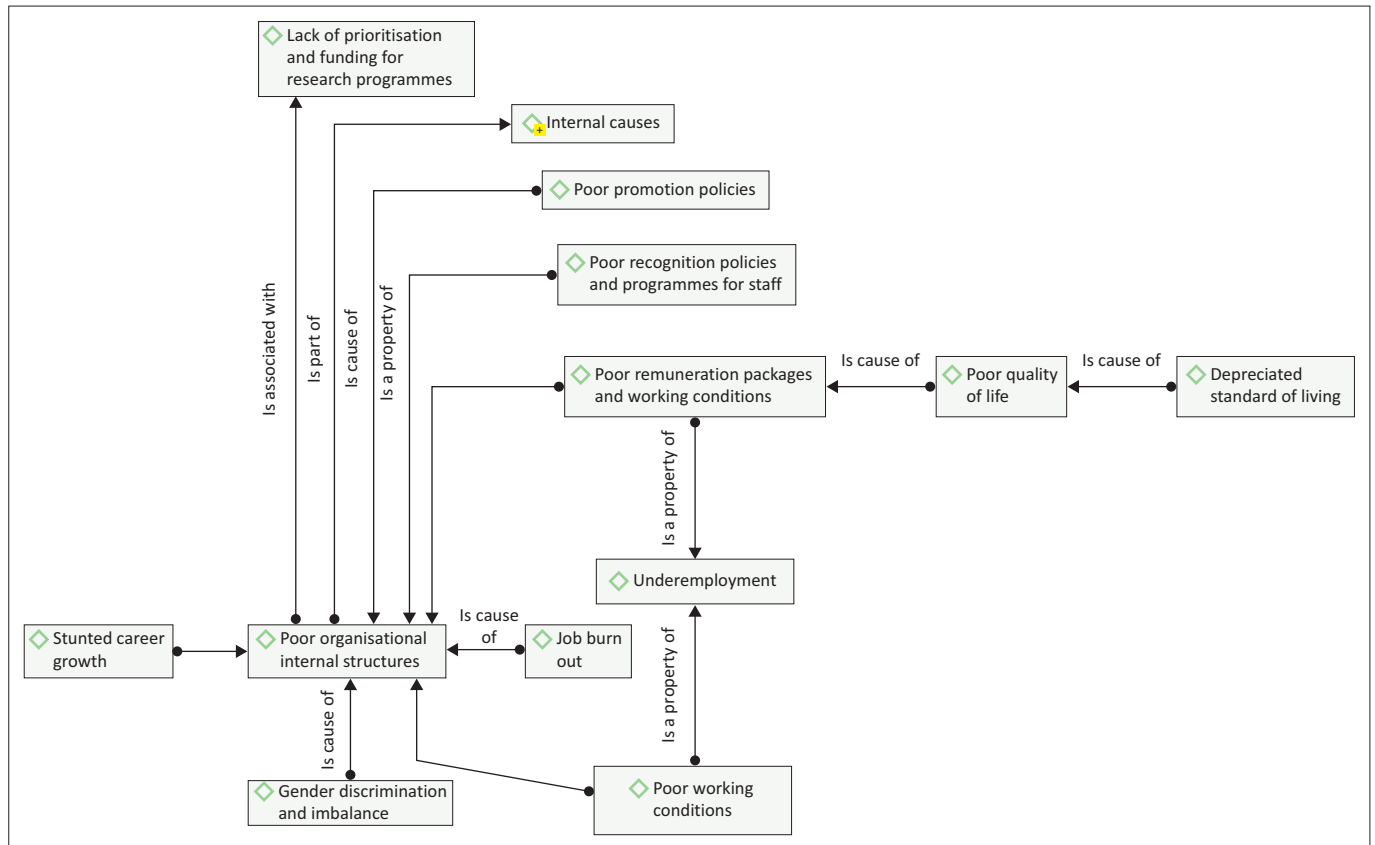


FIGURE 1: Internally induced brain drain causes.

to evaluate the rates and statistics of Zimbabwe's current brain drain. Although the literature review gives some insight regarding this issue and 82% of participating respondents revealing that they have witnessed an increase in people (through family, friends and colleagues) leaving Zimbabwe to pursue better job opportunities in other countries, it appears as if there is not enough information on the estimate rates and statistics that, to date, has been accurately provided.

The information gap in literature could be because Zimbabwe actually experienced some form of stability which encouraged return migration between the years 2009 and 2013 under the Government of National Unity (GNU), something almost 30% of participating respondents alluded to. The GNU managed to stabilise the economy and created a peaceful environment, although the political ground was uneven. The possible return migration phase is most likely because the GNU succeeded in making notable reforms in socio-economic and political development (Hlatywayo & Mukono, 2014).

Therefore, although participant responses managed to guide the researcher to arrive to a certain standpoint, which concludes that brain drain levels are currently escalating at alarming levels, actual data on rates and statistics appears to be missing. Instead, participants are using the rate of occurrences of this nature which they have encountered and continue to encounter with friends, family and colleagues within their circles.

Impacts

Although collected data from the study reveals some positives that come as a result of brain drain, which include but are not limited to diaspora remittances, individual growth, learning and development (as a result of exposure), brain gain for receiving countries and employment creation, the overall conclusion is that brain drain comes with far-reaching consequences for those countries that would have lost out on their workforce.

Impact on national development and investment

Fifty-eight per cent (58%) of the respondents reveal that brain drain has a negative impact on national development. This is particularly because brain drain causes skill gaps in critical industries such as health, education, science and engineering. In the sector for higher education, it has been the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related fields which have been hit the hardest. It is therefore difficult to make meaningful progress if staff members are lost in fields where they are urgently needed to help propagate a national developmental agenda. In addition to this, the loss of key professionals from industry is a financial loss in terms of the state regulated or subsidised tuition fees that would have been extended to these same individuals during their time of study.

Impact on higher education

As alluded to earlier, one of the major impacts on the sector of education is the skills gap, especially in areas where it is difficult to find replacements. For example, one of the

respondents revealed that the only Telecommunications and Signal Processing Lecturer at their university, one of only two in the country, left for Botswana at the end of 2019. It being a rare skill on the Zimbabwean job market at present, to date, this position has remained vacant.

The failure to replace faculty in such circumstances usually leads to the deployment of unqualified staff to take over, or suspension of the programme. According to respondents, when vacancies are not filled either on time or at all, 'staff workloads tend to be redistributed among the remaining staff, who are not compensated for receiving this additional work load' R7. 'Unfortunately, this is causing reduced level of motivation among staff members' R6 '...and severe job burnout' R14 '...because the workloads are a burden and difficult to manage' R13. 'This is quite strenuous for staff' R15. Furthermore, it is noted with concern that '...unmanageable workloads are making it difficult for staff to balance their obligations particularly in the area of research' R1

Furthermore, the study reveals how the skills gap has also disturbed the skills transfer process, thereby leading to compromised teaching standards and ultimately the release of half-baked graduates. The lack of experienced staff in our universities has led to a compromised quality of teaching, 'leading our students themselves to be of compromised quality' R3. '... The greatest impact of this challenge has been the diminished quality of graduates being fed into industry' R7. What this means is that '... students are graduating without the required rigour that they are supposed to encounter during the training process' R9.

It was also discovered that the loss of staff time and again is affecting continuity; hence development is either excruciatingly slow or merely at a standstill. It was also discovered that the loss of staff time, particularly in the middle of running projects, is affecting continuity; hence development is either excruciatingly slow or merely at a standstill. '... Due to brain drain, universities are experiencing a lot of downtime and productivity loss' R7:

'There is hardly an ounce of continuity in the work that is being done and several critical projects are being abandoned mid-way before completion as and when people leave for greener pastures. More and more time and money is being taken up by orientation and training programmes of new staff each semester.' (R5, 39, Female, Departmental Chairperson/Senior Lecturer); (R9, 40, Male, Departmental Chairperson/Senior Lecturer)

To this end, it is widely believed that the '... local institutions are lacking in terms of institutional development, efficiency and productivity' R16.

Impact on social issues

Obtained data reveals that brain drain is destroying cultural structures and impacting mental well-being. It was revealed that there is a huge risk of social ills and culture erosion. This is being brought about by foreign elements that are

being borrowed from foreign cultures from individuals who would have succumbed to the drain. In addition to this, participants reveal that individual mental health is also being affected. Two groups were revealed to be affected mostly with regard to the mental health issue:

1. The children whose parents have succumbed to brain drain and left them behind. It was reported that alcoholism, drug abuse and some cases, violence, are on the rise among affected children.
2. Frustrated staff in the work place. A number of employees express severe frustration with the system, with some even disclosing that they have lost hope and are failing to cope under the current set-up. Some employees even go as far as to suggest that the current working environment in Zimbabwe institutions is propagating chronic diseases and mental health problems among employees.

Pre-conditions of employee motivation

In submitting proposed pre-conditions for employee motivation, participating respondents more or less drew up opposites of the current challenges at hand. Therefore, the opposite scenario of the challenge being faced in the workplace today becomes the pre-condition that can possibly help bring about employee motivation.

After all suggestions were compiled, they were compressed and grouped under six key elements for purposes of coherence and comprehension. The six elements are as follows;

Clear, fair and favourable policies

Almost 30% of respondents argue that among employees, there is lack of knowledge when it comes to institutional policies and standard operating procedures. In addition to this, in circumstances that should simply be addressed by policy, there is rampant corruption and abuse of office. Respondents argue that an opposite scenario would be much more respected by employees.

Advancement

Although varying in form, the majority of respondents reveal that advancement is an essential requirement for employee motivation. While the much younger faculty aspire to advance in their academic profession through research and opportunities for continued education, the much older faculty aspire to be promoted to senior positions as they progress in their careers.

Research and development/innovation

One of the most-talked-about pre-conditions that is lacking in Zimbabwean universities today is the availability of funding for research opportunities. Participants emphasised that there is a huge gap between what academics can do versus what they are doing right now. The research

component has been severely neglected and despite the many solutions that are required for some of the country's challenges, not enough research is coming out of Zimbabwe.

Training and development

Almost 30% of all respondents indicate that limited opportunities available in the area of training and development is one of the causes of employee frustration. It is important to note that even as individuals, staff cannot afford to fund such programmes due to poor remuneration structures.

Enabling working environment

Respondents reveal that another key essential which encourages employee motivation is the presence of an enabling working environment. This can be achieved through the provision of attractive, well equipped work spaces, teaching facilities, equipment and infrastructure and social amenities with world class standards, as well as the presence of a healthy environment that would ordinarily refuse to entertain employee frustration which can be caused by job burnout, workplace tensions between management and employees, and so on. In achieving this, participating respondents argue that the physical and mental well-being of employees is guaranteed.

Rewards and remuneration

Almost 100% of all participating respondents stress the importance of attractive reward and remuneration packages, especially because the economic crisis has depreciated standards of living. There are urgent calls for benchmarking with other universities within the region so that local universities can learn from and also begin to offer reasonable offers which do not continue to demean the academic profession.

Discussion

Outline of results

The study reveals an emerging trend of internally induced brain drain from local universities. Studies show that employer negative behaviours, attitudes and treatment of staff is generally what is causing frustration. The lack of responsiveness, on the part of the employer has been exacerbated by the fact that dialogue for conflict resolution has been done away with.

The failure to dialogue, especially on the part of the employer has been due to the fact that there are currently high levels of unemployment in the country and employers are generally unwilling to spend time in dialogue over grievances anymore simply because there are so many other potential employees who are out of work and can take the very same position at any given time. Therefore, an employee can be replaced, anytime.

The proposed pre-conditions for employee motivation are not far off from existing theories. In fact, there are striking

similarities between indicators within the framework and other theories of motivation such as Herzberg's Theory of Motivation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Limitations and recommendations

The findings of the research study are specific to the sector for Higher Education in Zimbabwe. Although it would be appreciated to have the representative sample used for this study be paralleled across different sectors, it is advisable to carefully analyse the applicability of these findings across other industries.

With brain drain levels currently on the rise (Garwe & Thondhlana, 2019), the researcher recommends the urgent adoption for experimentation of the suggested pre-conditions of employee motivation as presented in this report for the urgent curbing of faculty brain drain from Zimbabwe today. These pre-conditions, are aligned to the current situation on the ground and will serve as solutions to the problems that faculty are currently facing, thereby creating employee motivation. She further recommends further study within a year or two following adoption to assess and measure the level of employee motivation within these institutions.

Conclusion

This research unearthed that although the national crisis in Zimbabwe has greatly fuelled the brain drain of academic staff out of Zimbabwe, Zimbabweans have generally adjusted to this problem and have created ways to help them cope with the stressful environment. Instead, the researcher establishes that there is a new wave of brain drain, one that is being fuelled internally by the institutions themselves.

The challenge which has been observed is that local organisations have developed a culture of being unresponsive to internal challenges which are at hand. There is no dialogue between the employer and the employee. In fact, it appears as if the employer is no longer interested in having a dialogue to help iron out the challenges. It is almost as if the Zimbabwean employer is taking advantage of the current national crisis which has largely contributed to high unemployment rate to say to the employee 'Take what is there or leave'. In the event that the employee chooses to leave, it is perfectly ok because there is someone already waiting desperately to take on the same job.

To give a clearer picture of this challenge, the researcher reflects on two key events which are currently taking place in the country. During the compilation of this article, the researcher learnt that the Zimbabwean government, through its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, has threatened to replace primary and secondary teachers who are currently on strike with 10 000 other qualified but unemployed teachers. In their justification, Government expresses that the teachers are holding the state ransom

65 Labour rights

(1) Every person has the right to fair and safe labour practices and standards and to be paid a fair and reasonable wage.

(2) Except for members of the security services, every person has the right to form and join trade unions and employee or employers' organisations of their choice, and to participate in the lawful activities of those unions and organisations.

(3) Except for members of the security services, every employee has the right to participate in collective job action, including the right to strike, sit in, withdraw their labour and to take other similar concerted action, but a law may restrict the exercise of this right in order to maintain essential services.

(4) Every employee is entitled to just, equitable and satisfactory conditions of work.

(5) Except for members of the security services, every employee, employer, trade union, and employee or employer's organisation has the right to—

- (a) engage in collective bargaining;
- (b) organise; and
- (c) form and join federations of such unions and organisations.

(6) Women and men have a right to equal remuneration for similar work.

(7) Women employees have a right to fully paid maternity leave for a period of at least three months.

Source: Constitution of Zimbabwe Citation 30 September 2018 (amended). *Veritas Section*, 65, 31–32

FIGURE 2: Section 65 (extract from the Constitution of Zimbabwe).

by participating in the ongoing industrial strike (which is calling for better wages and working conditions) (Zimeye, 2020).

In another separate but related event, through the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, government has issued a directive that all Junior Resident Medical Officers (JRMOs) will now be absorbed under the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) soon after graduating (Vinga, 2020). This is opposed to having the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare absorb them. The new order, issued on 2020 September 28, comes at a time when almost 250 medical graduates have finished their 5-year undergraduate training and are meant to be absorbed by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, within district public hospitals as JRMOs. Analysts argue that this new directive is aimed at '... militarising the health sector and stopping the health practitioners from going on strike' (Matenga & Chikandiwa, 2020, p. 1). What this means is that even if employees become aggrieved, there is no platform for dialogue or industrial

action because army officials are not allowed to strike. This turns out to be a complete violation of part 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe as illustrated in Figure 2.

Both events mentioned above, come at a critical time during the compilation of this article. It is apparent that workers across the board are frustrated. Because of fear, intimidation and lack of an opportunity to dialogue with the employer, they are choosing to leave their employment, either willingly or unwillingly (dismissal). Then, the question that comes to mind is where has the dismissed or frustrated employee gone to, in a country already reeling from high levels of unemployment? In addition to this, mentally, where is the employee who is still employed but frustrated by all of this and what are they planning? The researcher establishes that there is no data regarding this issue. Information on affected persons and those that have succumbed to brain drain in this manner could not be found.

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The authors declare that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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