

Labor Turnover in Clothing Manufacturing Companies in Harare Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate the factors contributing to labour turnover in the clothing manufacturing companies in Harare, Zimbabwe. By conducting this research, ideas on policies which are favorable and conducive for employees were highlighted. These were identified to be some of the important motivational factors which also have a direct impact on employee productivity. Three clothing manufacturing companies were used as a sample comprising of human resource managers, production managers, quality controllers, cutters, shop floor workers chosen by random sampling technique. Questionnaires and an interview guide were used to collect information from thirty employees in the clothing manufacturing companies. The study revealed that factors contributing to labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies in Harare are centered on motivational packages thus salaries, wages, and the type of management styles used by human resource managers. The study therefore recommends that management should dwell much on employee motivation, fair dismissal of workers, and also make use of democratic management styles. The study also recommends that the government should not allow import tariffs on clothing items to be flexible as this will encourage an influx of cheaper clothing imports which affect the local manufactures. Furthermore, findings recommend that the human resource management should also improve the working environment so that workplaces become less hazardous for employees.

Keywords: labor turnover, clothing manufacturing, labor act, employee, human resource management,

INTRODUCTION

The clothing manufacturing companies in Harare have been experiencing high labor turnover rates. Attempts to improve the situation have been done but to no avail as the number of employees continue to fall each and every year. These include liberisation of trade, intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), initiation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and the dollarization programme. This has led to low productivity levels in clothing manufacturing companies due to shortages of the workforce.

According to Cascio (2010:53), "labor turnover occurs when an employee leaves an organization permanently." The high labor turnover issues in clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe can be reflected back to the 1980s. When the government of Zimbabwe signed the initial stabilization deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1983, it abandoned the high wages it had established for workers. It also abandoned the laws that were supporting collective bargaining agreements between employer and employee. Workers were not happy with this move as they felt shortchanged and thus they left their workplaces in search of greener pastures.

In 1991 the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was initiated. Wage flexibility was introduced and restrictions on worker layoffs were removed. This also helped stabilize the high labor turnover situation in clothing manufacturing companies at first. ESAP was meant for the good but the bad also ruptured (Kanyenze 1995). ESAP created a situation where jobs were not being created fast enough to absorb new entrants into the labor market. This led to the increase of part time and contract workers in the industrial sector thus affecting the clothing manufacturing companies also. The increase of part time workers and contract workers led to the decline in working conditions. This, prompted workers to leave the clothing manufacturing companies since they felt the workplaces were no longer conducive enough for them.

In 1991 liberisation of trade was introduced by the government across all manufacturing sectors. This was a venture on globalization whereby trade links became international. This also meant the local clothing companies were now competing with some technologically advanced clothing companies. But it should be noted that at this particular time the clothing manufacturing companies were not ready to participate internationally. Second hand clothes from

first world countries flooded the markets as they were very cheap and most customers diverted from their suppliers and started buying these cheaper clothes. According to research by Field (2004) second hand clothes have a direct impact on the local clothing industries' efficiency. This also results in downsizing of the company resulting in skills flight to other countries whereby employees look for greener pastures in other countries.

Many manufacturing companies lost their customers and many companies scaled down and some closed to fit in the small market left for them. A record of 12000 job losses was recorded due to the scaling down and this was between 1991 and 1998 (Mlambo 2006).

In 2003, the Look East policy was launched that enabled the Zimbabwean trade links with Eastern countries. New low priced clothes flooded the market especially from China, leaving clothing manufacturing companies with a reduced market share and scaling down of operations took place resulting in job losses.

As the decade went by hyperinflation hit Zimbabwe and in 2007 continuous rise of prices was made illegal promoting hyperinflation and creating an exodus of workers fleeing to neighboring countries in search of well paying jobs. In 2009, the economic recovery programme was launched and the United States American dollar came into use and resuscitated the clothing manufacturing companies. The dollarization calmed the issue of high labor turnover a little bit in clothing manufacturing companies.

Musarurwa (2011) indicated that the Zimbabwe Clothing Manufacturing Association (ZCMA) noted that in August 2010, 12506 people were employed in 195 clothing manufacturing companies. In August 2011 the figure went down to 8627 workers in 131 clothing manufacturing companies. This indicated that 64 clothing companies had closed in a time frame of a year while 3876 people became jobless. These figures are an indication of high labor turnover in a short period of time. The way workers lost their jobs in clothing manufacturing companies was guided by the Labor Act which is a collection of policies that guide the companies' human resource management on how to treat workers. Unfair practices include unfair dismissal which if not handled carefully may lead to high labor turnover, forced labor and unfair labor standards. With the labor act the worker gets to know his or her fundamental rights.

Clarification of the policies in the labor act is going to help employees know their rights and how to handle their complaints. To policy makers this research will be a guideline on how to amend their policies basing on the findings. This research will

come up with ideas that will help the government in improving the high labor turnover situation in clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe aiming in minimizing high labor turnover. Other academic institutions are going to use this research as a base and platform for further researches.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The clothing manufacturing companies in Harare have been experiencing high rates of labor turnover resulting in low productivity. This has an effect on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country as a whole. Finding solutions to this problem in this area can result in significant growth of the economy as this clothing and textile industry was once a key driver of the Zimbabwean economy.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to:-

- Identify the causes of high rates of labor turnover in clothing companies.
- Investigate the conduciveness of the working environment of workers in the clothing industry.
- Recommend the best retention policies for the clothing industry in Zimbabwe.

LIMITATIONS

This study had limitations as it was confined only to clothing manufacturing companies in Harare. The area under study was chosen because it had the highest figure of clothing manufacturing companies as it is the capital city of Zimbabwe. Challenges were also faced in trying to convince some of the respondents on the protection to privacy of their information. Financial and time constraints were also experienced as it took longer to collect data from various respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ratio of the number of employees that leave a company through attrition, dismissal, or resignation during a period to the number of employees on payroll during the same period is referred to as labor turnover (Colvin 2008). If labour turnover prevails in a company it means a helping hand would have been missed out (Russo 2000). In clothing manufacturing companies labour is found in form of management, designers, tailors, cutting room staff and security guards. If these people leave the organization in high numbers the company will be at a disadvantage resulting in low production.

Labor turnover is caused by numerous reasons. Some decisions by management can lead to high labor turnover unknowingly (Harzing and Pinnington 2011). The criteria human resource management uses to recruit workers in the labour market can lead to the adverse effects of labour turnover. Cascio (2010:203) indicated that, "labor market is a geographical area

within which the forces of supply (people looking for work) interact with the forces of demand (employers looking for people) and thereby determining the price”.

Failure to be consistent on manager- worker signed plans can accelerate the rate of labour turnover in a company. This is because the workers will not be satisfied. A satisfied worker is keen to work and willing to stay in a company setup.

Some workers give priority to money as a need and if their needs are not met they tend to leave the workplaces in search of other companies where their needs are met (Gupta 2006). Likewise in clothing manufacturing companies some workers depend very much on money for their needs to be satisfied.

Chidza (2012) indicated that a sit-in was noted in one of the clothing manufacturing companies in December 2012 following issues concerning wages. The workers complained of not being paid very well since 2010. The company has not been remitting worker's pensions to the insurance company and their social security contributions to NSSA. These reports have made many workers to leave the workplace thus resulting in high labour turnover.

Fredrick Taylor a theorist coined that man is motivated by money (Dessler 2005). Money has become a determinant of worker satisfaction in clothing manufacturing companies. Money enables one's life to be easier since one can acquire what he or she yearns for by just using money. Jewel (2000) revealed that, theory of Maslow argues that man is motivated by five essential needs for them to stay at a workplace. The needs are physiological, safety, social, self esteem and self actualization.

At the bottom of the pyramid there are physiological needs or basic needs. These include salaries, food, shelter, clothing and sex. This contradicts with Fredrick Taylor's theory. Abraham Maslow's theory's of hierarchy of needs depicts that money is not the only a determinant of motivation of workers. There is need for other packages since not all man are economic in their needs. Other motivational packages can act as a backup to motivation if money is not fully satisfying workers.

Restrictions on workers to explore different sides of the organizational benefits can lead to high labour turnover (Parasad 2005).The hierarchy of needs has the platform of making the employee adventurous. Maslow indicated that after the worker has been satisfied physically he or she tends to look for safety and security needs. Armstrong (2006) concurs with Jewel (2000) on that, it is the duty of the human resource manger to check that the working environment of workers is okay and that employees

are guaranteed of job security. In clothing manufacturing companies the working conditions should be less hazardous to people's health. In clothing setups dusty masks are used so that the fluffy threads do not cause influenza and lung disease to workers.

Issues concerning high labor turnover in clothing manufacturing companies can be referred back to 1991 when the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme was initiated. Carmody (2001) pointed out that, when ESAP was launched the labour market become crowded. New jobs were not being created fast enough to absorb new entrants. This led to the increase of contract and part time workers. Human resource management in the clothing sector saw it as an opportunity to find cheap labour and they started to employ large numbers of people in companies. Decrease in production and quality resulted due to the inefficiency and inexperience of newly appointed workers (Carmody 2001). Clothing manufacturing companies incurred losses due to defective work and increased wastage in production resulted.

Man is social in his needs. The working environment should be stress free (Harold 2003). If the working environment is tense thus lack of flexibility between management and workers labour turnover may result .The third stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is all about being social. He indicated that canteen services can bring about a social scene that is worth to be enjoyed by workers. Being social creates room for friendship. Cressy (2003) purported that achieving one level gives the worker the zeal to check on what the next level offers.

Where work tends to be routine work recognition is of great concern. If there is absence of personal growth and career development, labour turnover will be high (Jewel 2000). Career development encompasses promotions and training of workers. In clothing manufacturing company an assistant designer can be given an opportunity to train as a full time designer .This is usually done after seeing the potential of a worker through performance appraisal. Performance appraisal refers to the systematic evaluation of the employee and to understand the abilities of the worker (Noe et al 2010).Performance appraisal can result in the human resource management identifying the best person for the post on offer.

According to Damon (2004) performance appraisal can lead to subjectivity .This can result in a form of nepotism .For example in the clothing manufacturing company a tailor can be promoted for a foreman's post through nepotism. If such a situation prevails a person who might feel being right for the post might leave the organization due to the unfair practice. If

this happens continuously in clothing manufacturing companies, labour turn over may result.

The last stage on Maslow hierarchy of needs is self actualization .This is sometimes labeled as the self fulfillment stage. Moreover, if a tailor has the zeal of becoming a designer, when he or she reaches that stage he or she will reflect back to the stage where he or she was before. If such workers who lack self fulfillment happen to be in large numbers in clothing manufacturing company labour turnover may result. Dowling and Welch (2004) cited that, if the root of high labour turnover is not noted it can become a historical adverse issue for the company .In clothing manufacturing companies a good image counts and instills a brand or label in people's minds.

Kandula (2001) reflected that, compensation of workers is the major motivational aspect that the human resources department should dwell on providing in a company set up. Working conditions are also of great importance when it comes to the motivation of workers. In clothing manufacturing company set up, free working space is greatly needed to avoid accidents. Training of workers, performance appraisal, job enrichment, career planning, communication, involvement and empowerment can be offered to the workers but as long as fundamental needs of workers are not offered thus compensation in particular, the worker will remain not motivated. With a fair value of money one can afford to pay school fees for the children, pay hospital bills, pay for luxuries and everything that has to do with family welfare and can even plan for the future. Human resource management should try at all coasts to maintain a well motivated workforce by offering the fundamental needs of workers.

METHODOLOGY/ RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Cresswell (2003), research design works as a systematic plan outlining the study, the researcher's methods of compilation and details on how the study will arrive at its conclusions. A descriptive survey was used in this qualitative research technique. A survey provides a high level of general capability in representing a large population (Marsden and Wright 2010). Due to the large number of people who answered the survey the data that has been gathered posses a better description of the relative characteristics of the general population involved in the study. In this study it was possible to derive possible solutions which can be applicable in reducing labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. This was so since the survey is the best and easy way to get people's thoughts and views (Fowler 2002). This resulted through the use of questionnaires.

According to Fowler (2002), a survey provides a good statistical significance. This is because multiple

variables can be effectively analyzed. In this study the multiple factors contributing to high labour turnover thus low wages, poor working conditions and poor management of workers have been clearly investigated with the aid of a survey.

The survey is disadvantageous in that it is not ideal for controversial issues (Grooves et al 2009). This is because questions cannot be precisely answered by participants if they bear information related to them as individuals. To counter this the researcher asked questions pertaining to labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe without pin pointing individuals and without blacklisting company names. This was done for the sake of image or reputation protection.

Sampling

The study used random sampling whereby three companies were selected. According to Lohr (2010), random sampling includes choosing subjects from a population through unpredictable means. In this study the three companies chosen are a representative of other clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe.

Research Instruments

The research used semi structured questionnaires to gather information from employees in clothing manufacturing companies. Thirty semi- structured questionnaires were issued to employees in the clothing manufacturing companies under study thus ten questionnaires in each company.

From questionnaires there is a high possibility of getting honest answers from respondents. With the use of questionnaire anonymity is protected, there is no mentioning of names (Fowler 2002). With identity protection respondents tend to answer freely thus enabling better solutions to be drawn on factors contributing to labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies.

An interview guide was used as a backup to the questionnaire. The research used interviews to get information from the human resource management of the three clothing manufacturing companies under study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was presented in descriptive form. In this study data analysis was done to reveal the concrete information on factors contributing to labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the findings, it shows ten percent (10%) of the respondents were between ages of sixteen to twenty years, twenty percent (20%) were on the age range of twenty-one to twenty five years, twenty seven percent

(27%) were on the age range of twenty six to thirty five years, twenty percent (20%) were between thirty six and forty years, thirteen percent (13%) were on the age range of forty one to fifty years old while ten percent (10 %) of the respondents were on the age range of fifty one years and above. This showed that in clothing manufacturing companies in Harare employees in the old age and working teenagers are few. The age which is a common with the high percentage of twenty seven percent (27%) is between twenty six to thirty five years old. The researcher anticipated that the age group in high percentage is in that state since it comprises of young adults, most probably with new families to take care of this is the age group that is contributing to high labor turnover in the clothing and manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. The age group is more vibrant and more sought after by other companies.

Gender of the Respondents

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents were males while forty percent (40%) were females. This showed that most of the workers in the clothing manufacturing companies are males. The researcher anticipates that this gender imbalance in numbers may be caused by women leaving workplaces to take care of social responsibilities such as marriages. Although the percentage for females is low, they contribute more to labor turnover.

Job Posts for the Employees

From the sample of thirty respondents, twenty of them are tailors, five of the respondents are designers, and three of the respondents are managers while two of the respondents are buyers. This shows that for clothing manufacturing companies to run effectively presence of tailors should be well considered. This is because they are the ones who run the whole production during the assembling of garments. Their absence entails a lot of adverse problems like work overload, failure to meet customer's deadlines. If failure to meet customers' deadlines becomes a common thing a bad image can be tagged for a company. This leads to loss of customers. A company can also face advertising costs to lure new customers if it gets to lose its major customers. In this case motivation of tailors should be well considered to minimize labor turnover.

Level of Experience of the Workers

The findings shows that seventy percent (70%) of the respondents have a work experience of one year to five years; twenty percent (20%) of the respondents have a work experience of six to ten years while ten percent (10%) have a work experience of eleven years and above. The researcher points out that seventy percent (70%) of the respondents with a limited working experience range are the ones contributing most to labor turn over.

Major Motivational Package(S) Given to Workers in a Company

Findings show that hundred percent (100%) of the respondents pointed out salaries/ wages as the major motivational package they are receiving in their companies. This was also at par with the interview findings. The human resource managers also pointed out salary/ wages as the major motivational package they were giving to their workers. It is the fair value of the major motivational package that really matters when it comes to reducing labour turnover. A fair value which is enough for ones upkeep with his or her family can make a worker stay at his or her workplace. Findings reveal that all the thirty respondents tend to prefer salaries/ wages as a motivational package. This tally with what the human resource managers of the three companies under study revealed. A theorist Fredrick Taylor also revealed that man is motivated by money (Dessler 2005). With money one can plan on anything without any hesitation as long as a fair value is given to him or her.

Working Environment

Of the thirty respondents twenty of them indicated that their workplaces are not conducive while ten of the respondents were satisfied with their working environment. Level of satisfaction differs from individual to individual. What other workers seem to be satisfied with is being of adverse to a large number of respondents in the sample. The human resource managers of the companies under study depicted the prevailing of good working environment within their companies. Most workers seem not to be satisfied with their working environment hence there is need for attention from human resource management to discourage labor turnover.

Four of the employees suggested an improvement in heating and lighting facilities, eight respondents suggested improvements on ventilation, seven respondents suggested the creation of free working space, six respondents suggested on the consistent delivery of dust masks while five of the respondents suggested the use of air conditioners. From the employees' suggestions there is a call for a non hazardous workplace. Dust masks prevent fluff which may cause lung diseases. Good ventilation enables free air circulation and in winter heating is needed so as to keep working environment at comfort of warmth.

Other Factors Anticipated to be Causing Labor Turnover

Twenty one employees anticipated that the clothing markets with China clothes are the ones making labour turnover exist. Five employees thought that selling of second hand clothes as a factor causing labour turnover causes lack of demand for locally manufactured clothes. This has led to the prevalence

of limited orders from customers. Limited orders mean limited job performances. The human resource managers revealed that in that case, scaling down operations by retrenching some of the workers was their only option so as to conform to the limited range of customers.

Management Styles

Ten respondents pointed out that the first company used autocratic management style. Ten respondents revealed that the second company used democratic management style. Ten respondents also pointed out the third company also used democratic management style. Autocratic management style entails use of directive orders on workers for them to work (Jewel 2000). Autocratic management style can instill fear in workers since there is no platform to reveal their views and comments. Adoption of the democratic management is favourable to the welfare of workers. Democratic management style involves a two way communication between superiors and subordinates. This management style is of good value since management can solve the problems leading to labour turnover before there are adverse results.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the problems which led to high labor turnover in clothing manufacturing companies in Harare in the 1980s now have additional problems. Liberisation of trade, Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, Dollarization and the Look East Policy have accelerated labor turnover in their own ways indicated in the background of the study. Look East Policy brought upon the flooding of clothing market with cheap china goods thus accelerating the rate of scaling down of operations in clothing manufacturing companies.

A conclusion made from this study is that absence of satisfactory motivational packages contributing to high labour turnover in clothing manufacturing companies. The workers tend to be in need of money thus fair salaries/wages for their needs to be met. Low wages and poor salaries has made most of the workers leave the clothing manufacturing companies in search of greener pastures thus good companies with good motivational packages.

With money one can acquire anything. However though salaries and wages are given to workers other motivational packages for backup has been considered from the findings. Not all workers give priority to money. Some tend to be motivated if they are put on medical aid schemes while some are motivated if they are considered on housing schemes. From the findings, the working environment is not really conducive for the employees in the clothing manufacturing companies. There is no good ventilation, no free working space, no medical aid facilities and no consistency in the provision of dust

masks. Good working environment eradicates the spread of diseases. Good working environment entails existence of a highly motivated workforce in a company. From the study most of the workers were complaining about poor working conditions. They pointed out other adverse aspects like poor ventilation, absence of first aid facilities, poor heating and lighting and overcrowded machine set ups leading to no free movement of the workers within the company.

In the clothing manufacturing companies management styles used are also important. Autocratic management style is characterized by use of directive commands thus one way communication. However, democratic management style offers a favorable platform for two way communication compared to autocratic management style. The autocratic management style has led some of the workers to leave their workplaces seeking employment in companies where democratic management style is practiced. This was so because some of the workers believed in two way communication and not directive one way communication.

The age group of twenty six to thirty five years is the one which is more vibrant in the labour turnover circle. This is because they are likely to be the ones taking care of people in the dependant range thus kids and old aged people. If these employees in the age range of 26-35 years are not well motivated they tend to leave their workplaces in search of better paying jobs so as to fulfill their responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking at the findings that have been drawn from this study, the researcher recommends that the human resource management in clothing manufacturing companies in Harare should dwell very much on worker's motivation. A motivated employee is willing to stay at a workplace. From the findings, money has been noted as the basic need, additional packages like housing schemes, transport allowances, medical aid schemes and buying of clothes on accounts can be arranged for workers. These additions of motivation will boost the level of worker satisfaction. This may also minimize competition in the labour market since workers will be satisfied at their work stations.

The researcher recommends that the human resources management in clothing manufacturing companies should exercise fair dismissal on workers. The labour act presents the fundamental rights of employees and they should be mastered in every aspect. Unjust dismissal of workers can lead to a creation of a negative company image.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends that the human resource management in clothing manufacturing companies should also dwell on improving the working environment so that workplaces become less hazardous for employees. Workshops should be well ventilated for free air circulation; there should be consistency in the delivery of dust. Also, the workplaces should have favorable heating and lighting facilities.

The use of democratic management style is also recommended. Democratic management style offers a platform for two way communication. This is advantageous in that problems leading to labour turnover can be relayed to management earlier during the course of two way communication and remedies can be worked on earlier.

The study recommends that the government should not allow flexible import tariffs on clothing items. Government must consider stopping imports of second hand clothing items. These are responsible for the scaling down of operations within the clothing manufacturing companies thus leading to the loss of jobs amongst the employees.

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