Exploring the Factors that affect Retention of Medical Doctors: A Case Study of Jane Furse Hospital, Limpopo Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental problems facing the South African public healthcare sector is motivation and retention of the healthcare practitioners. Medical doctors in particular, tend to leave the public sector for the private sector, rural settlements for the urban settlements, the Republic of South Africa for other countries or entirely leaving the healthcare industry. This study seeks to identify the factors that contribute to retention of doctors in Jane Furse Hospital Limpopo, South Africa and suggests strategies that are important in retaining medical doctors in Jane Furse Hospital.

KEYWORDS: exploring, factors, retention, medical doctors, healthcare sector, public sector, private sector, rural and urban settlements, strategies, retention

INTRODUCTION

Retention is a complex concept and there is no single recipe for keeping employees within an organisation. Studies have indicated that retention is driven by several key factors, which ought to be managed congruently: organisational culture, communication, strategy, pay and benefits, flexible work schedule and career development systems (Logan, 2000: 48–50).

If appropriate employee retention strategies are adopted and implemented by organisations employees will too strongly remain and work for the successful achievement of organisational goals (Gberevbie, 2008; 11).

Employee retention issues are emerging worldwide as the most critical workforce management challenges of the immediate future. Studies have shown that in the future, successful organisations will be those which adapt their organisational behaviour to the realities of the current work environment where longevity and success depend upon innovation, creativity and flexibility. In fact, the dynamics of the work environment will have to reflect a diverse population comprised of individuals whose motivations, beliefs and value structures differ vastly from the past and from one another.

Critical analysis of workforce trends points to an impending shortage of highly-skilled employees who possess the requisite knowledge and ability to perform at high levels, meaning that organisations failing to retain high performers will be left with an understaffed, less qualified workforce that ultimately hinders their ability to remain competitive (Rappaport et al., 2008:55–56), with managers facing a difficult challenge of motivating and retaining the employees in an environment of increased uncertainties.

Retention rates generally fall as employee's become distracted, confused and preoccupied with potential outcomes immediately following an organisational transition. In fact, literature on employee retention shows that wooing existing employees through employee development or talent management programmes costs less than acquiring new talents, as organisations know their employees; their wants and desires; while the initial cost of attracting the new employees has already been expended (Davidow and Uttal, 1989).

The literature on employee retention clearly explains that satisfied employees who are happy with their jobs are more devoted to doing a good job and look forward to improve their organisational customers' satisfaction (Denton 2000:85–87). Employees who are satisfied have higher intentions of persisting with their organisation, which results in a decreased turnover rate (Mobley et al., 2009). Abundant studies have hypothesised and empirically validated the link between satisfaction and behavioural intentions and behaviour such as employee's retention (Anderson and Sullivan, 2005).

The availability of well trained and motivated health workers in underserved areas will improve access to essential health services to achieve the health-related United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals within the framework of a primary healthcare renewal. Yet there are stark imbalances in the geographical distribution of health workers, both in developed and developing countries.

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However, despite the vast literature on employee turnover, which is aimed at identifying factors that cause employees to quit (Griffeth et al., 2000), much less is known about the factors that compel employees to stay. For example, Maertz & Campion (1998) noted “Relatively less turnover research has focused specifically on how an employee decides to remain with an organisation and what determines this attachment and retention processes should be studied along with quitting processes”. Steel et al. (2002:245–293) added the fact is often overlooked, but the reasons people stay are not always the same as the reasons people leave.

Personal factors such as level of education, seniority, self perceived leadership skills, and learning attitude and organisational factors such as appreciation and stimulation, and pressure of work are of great relevance in employee retention (Kyndt et al., 2009; 27).

Human Resource Challenges

The South African labour-market suffers from a dearth of skilled manpower and a continuous brain drain suggesting that South African organisations are under pressure to retain available talent. The retention of talent has however become a major challenge to human resource practitioners since; a lack of satisfaction and commitment to the organisation can also cause an employee to withdraw and begin looking for other opportunities. Pay does not always play as large a role in inducing turnover as is typically believed (Allen, 2008).

The situation has tremendously increased competition for talent in South Africa with many organisations going to great lengths to retain their best employees. Competition has therefore put skilled employees who are already in short supply under pressure as they are being attracted by more than one organisation at a time with various kinds of incentives.

Retention of talented employees continues to be a big problem for a large number of employers thereby constantly challenging HR practitioners to formulate innovative strategies that will not only attract talent, but equally retain them in order for these employees to help in achieving organisational goals and objectives.

The issue of employee retention and motivation in contemporary organisations has become so dynamic that managers have to appraise and re-appraise their motivational strategies on an on-going basis. According to Czakan (2005:8), motivational variables used to attain retention in the past may no longer be appropriate to motivate talented employees to remain thereby increasing the rate of turnover. Scarcity of skilled manpower in the South African labour market is also contributing to the problem. For example, Howzit (2008) found that the South African health sector, particularly the nursing profession, is badly affected by employee turnover as scores of professional nurses and doctors seek alternative employment or leave the country in search of lucrative work overseas.

A study conducted by the Centre for Health Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, in April, 2005 estimated vacancy rates for nurses and doctors in public hospitals and clinics in the Limpopo Province at 22.6% and 26.5%, respectively. South African doctors, after acquiring some work experience, leave South Africa for more lucrative jobs overseas. The reasons often given by these professionals for quitting their jobs include poor working conditions, lack of career growth, poor salary incentives and general lack of motivation from employers. These are motivational issues which can be managed by individual organisations in order to reduce the high rate of employee turnover. In order to succeed in attracting and retaining talented employees, South African organisations have to consider the needs of their organisations and those of the individuals, as well as the environment in which they operate.

Shortage of Medical Doctors in Rural Areas

In response to this increased interest and perceived need, the World Health Organisation has recently launched a programme of work on “Increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention.” The programme aims to expand the knowledge base in this domain and to provide evidence-based global recommendations to address this problem, while at the same time to provide technical cooperation to countries that need to address this problem (WHO, 2010). The lack of health workers in remote and rural areas is a worldwide concern. Many countries have proposed and implemented interventions to address this issue, but very little is known about the effectiveness of such interventions and their sustainability in the long run. Many countries in middle- and low-income countries today suffer from severe staff shortages and/or maldistribution of health personnel which has been aggravated more recently by the disintegration of health systems in some low-income countries and by the global policy environment. One of the most damaging effects of severely weakened and under-resourced health systems is the difficulty they face in producing, recruiting, and retaining health professionals, particularly in remote areas. Low wages, poor working conditions, lack of supervision, lack of equipment and infrastructure as well as HIV and AIDS, all contribute to the flight of health care personnel from remote areas. In this global context of accelerating inequities health service policy makers and managers are searching for ways to improve the attraction and retention of staff in remote areas. But the development of appropriate strategies first requires an understanding of the factors which influence decisions to accept and/or stay in a remote post, particularly in the context of mid and low income countries (MLICS), and which strategies to improve attraction and retention are therefore likely to be successful.
Role of Managers in Employee Retention

Employee retention has therefore become a practical guide for managers in order to retain their talented employees and avoid spiralling costs that are usually associated with turnover. Indeed, retention practices have posed enormous challenges to managers considering the shortage of qualified manpower in the South African labour market. Managers in both public and private sector organisations have to devise innovative means of retaining high performing employees in their pool in order to avoid frequent recruitment which is costly and time consuming. According to Brown (2006: 2), lack of proper retention strategies is having an adverse effect on South African organisations, as replacing key employees is disruptive, expensive, time consuming and may even threaten the sustainability of an organisation.

The implication thereof is that South African organisations may not be able to favourably compete in the global market place if the phenomenon is not properly addressed. Research by P-E Corporate Services (2001: 1) estimates the rate of voluntary turnover of skilled employees in South Africa to be at 63%, involuntary turnover, 22% and others, such as death retirement and pregnancy, at 15%. The reasons often cited for voluntary turnover by employees revolve around the inability of employers to motivate them properly to remain. Thus, according to Penn-Kekana et al. (2005: 20), some of the reasons include a lack of promotion, insufficient pay, work overload, and some other motivation related issues such as opportunities for training and development, job insecurity, work autonomy and a lack of recognition of good performance. In the light of such evidence, there is a need to establish the extent to which managers in the South African organisations are using appropriate.

Motivational strategies to retain employees will help managers in the identification of reliable and sustainable retention programmes and practices that can effectively reduce turnover in both public and private sector organisations.

Research Objectives

In this regard, the specific objectives aimed at were:

- To examine the factors affecting motivation and retention of doctors working in Jane Furse Hospital.
- To assess the challenges faced in retention and motivation of doctors.
- To analyse the strategies to counteract the challenges to motivate the doctors.
- To make recommendations to address motivation and retention of doctors in Jane Furse Hospital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Medical doctors are essential to the efficient delivery of health care in South Africa and an unending conflict between them and their management imposes a great risk to the future of the South African healthcare system. Immigration of professionals is considered a global concern that is leading countries to reviewing their policies to manage brain drain.

The vast majority of jobs today require a great deal of formal education and application of theoretical and analytical knowledge. Knowledge workers are a scarce resources and organisation can no longer rely on the loyalty of highly skilled and marketable employees (Kinnear and Sutherland, 2000, cited in Pillay, 2000). In South Africa the problem is intensifying especially among designated groups of people. Medical doctors are one such group where organisations need to understand how to motivate, develop and reward employees for them to work to their best potential. The nature of the relationship between an organisation and its employee is governed by what motivates employee to work and the fulfilment they derive from it. The manager needs to know how best to obtain the cooperation of employee and direct their performance to achieving the goals and objectives of the organisation. The manager must understand the nature of human behaviour and how best to motivate employees so that they work passionately and effectively (Mullins, 2002). The relationship between medical doctors and public hospitals are transforming and public hospital managers are challenged to adopt innovative approaches in their pursuit to attract, motivate and retain doctors. Retention strategies are attempts by organisations to reduce the incidence of turnover.

Retention strategies should be viewed by top management as part of its strategic responsibility, given the realisation that the long-term loyalty of highly skilled employees to an organisation is no longer the norm considering the high mobility rate of skilled employees. This is as a result of the myriad job opportunities that are opened to them. Top management and HR practitioners should therefore have a long-term plan with the realisation and the acceptance of the changing labour market for highly skilled employees as the cornerstone of all retention strategies.

In China, the main concern is the shortage of qualified staff while Japan has this problem as its second biggest threat, in India, the shortage of medical staff was rated the fourth biggest concern (Dumont and Mayer, 2004). The shortage is therefore not just a South African phenomenon (Howzir, 2008). The brain drain issue is a constant subject in Sub-Saharan and Africa media, with the subject of inadequate health professional topping the South African dialogue. The migration of South African medical doctors has been cited as the contributing cause of the growing skill crisis in the country (Dovlo and Martineau, 2004, 10–12).

Previous Research in South Africa on Retention of Medical Doctors and Nurses


Kotze and Couper (2006) researched on what interventions do South African qualified doctors think will retain them...
in rural hospitals of the Limpopo province of South Africa? Almost all the doctors participating in the study stated that improving their salary was one of the three most important factors in retaining doctors in rural practice and almost half mentioned it as the most important factor. However, despite the importance of salaries, many doctors stated that other factors, such as job satisfaction and working conditions, were more important and the salary on its own would not retain them. It was also reported that recent increases in the salaries of doctors in the public sector in South Africa are already leading to a number of private general practitioners returning to public service. A few of the doctors interviewed in the study felt the current rural allowance was making a significant difference. However, all 10 doctors felt that the amount was not enough. Doctors often leave because of lack of or delays in rectifying problems with salaries, promotions and annual leave. The majority of the doctors in the study mentioned better accommodation as one of the three most important factors that would influence them to remain in rural areas. Many of the hospitals in rural Limpopo are old mission hospitals built in the early and mid 1900s and the quality of the hospital accommodation is often inadequate. Ensuring career progression has been suggested to be an important factor in retaining rural doctors. In this study, a number of doctors mentioned career progression as the most important factor in retaining them in rural hospitals.

Pillay (2008:13) researched work satisfaction, future plans and retention strategy for Professional nurses in the South African public sector and revealed dissatisfaction with pay and workload of them, followed by inadequate resources available for them to develop their career opportunities within the sector and outside it. Lack of safety at the work environment was also identified. Overall dissatisfaction among public sector nurses and plan of leaving the current position within the next 5 years were revealed. The research clearly identified job satisfaction and improvement of the work environment as key factors in the retention of nurses in South Africa.

Similarly, Pundit (2006) worked on nurse's satisfaction and identified more than 60% of surveyed nurses in South Africa being less than satisfied with their work environment and other related factors. There were higher satisfaction levels among nurses working in private sector nurses than their public sector counterparts. Pay and workload were identified as the dissatisfying factors for both public and private sector. Pundit (2006:42) concluded that health care managers need to identify and address those factors which are stumbling blocks to job satisfaction and therefore retention of nurses in South Africa.

Migration
Individuals choose certain professions for a number of reasons and the challenge facing the recruiter and organisations is to identify right mix of individual traits and organisational needs. Behling (1998) proposed that human beings have three main ways in which to choose where to work and then put forward the objective factor theory, the subjective factor theory, and the contact theory of recruitment. The objective factor theory suggests that a potential employee choose an organisation based on tangible factors such as pay and benefits, location, nature of work, opportunity for growth and educational opportunities (Hall and Erasmus, 2003:523–53).

The subjective factor theory contends that the compatibility of an individual personality and perception that he/she has of the image an organisation would important in choosing where to work (Meyer et al., 2002). On the other hand critical contact theory says because of limited contact or insufficient knowledge of an organisation, an individual may not be able to make choices based on subjective and objective factors. However contact with the organisation's staff at interview, employment fairness or in a personal capacity may greatly influence the choice he/she makes on whether or not to seek employment there.

Retention Factors for all Employees
Agrela et al. (2008) states the need to focus on the factors that affects retention leading to growth and success of organisations. Studies suggests that retention strategies, which effectively satisfy the needs of all employees consequently enhances the ability for companies to adapt more effectively to on-going organisational change (Gale Group, 2006). Research shows that trends redefining modern retention strategies go beyond the traditional salary and benefits package (Gale Group, 2006) and compensation (Feldman, 2000:1286–1301) embracing employee motivation (Thomas, 2000), as one of the key factors to cater to the diversity and long stay of the workforce in the organisation. Retention factors incorporating the needs and desires of employees at any age enhance levels of individual job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Boomer Authority, 2009). Cunningham (2002) states that employees rank employee recognition, flexibility and training as top priorities for prolonging individual employment, while Walker (2001, 6–8) and others call for establishing a supportive learning and working climate for employee retention. Further, career development (Boomer Authority, 2009), organisational commitment (Patrick and Owens, 2006, 163–71), communication (Gopinath and Becker, 2002, 63–83) and superior-subordinate relationship (Zenger et al., 2000: 22–27) are also the factors known for prolonged stay of the employees in the organisation. The list of retention factors is not meant to be exhaustive of all possible theories or variables related to employee retention and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2007, 463–88).
A brief introduction and review of the 12 retention factors working towards the preservation of an organisation’s most valuable asset – employees (Yazinski, 2009), examined in this study are provided in the following section.

**Skill Recognition**

Providing skill recognition of personal job accomplishments is an effective retention strategy for employees at any age (Yazinski, 2009). Studies indicate fulfilling peoples need for acceptance by acknowledging individual work accomplishments prolongs employment of employees (Redington, 2007). A study by Yazinski (2009) show trends of an increased number of job applicants seeking out companies that encourage employee input, growth, education, and teamwork, beyond the traditional compensation/benefit packages offered by employers.

The Gale Group (2006) states organisational benefits of personal recognition are priceless, yet statistics supports that the impact of verbal praise has the ability to enhance company loyalty, motivation, and perseverance at no extra charge. Individual skill recognition is restricted by age, and motivates positive behaviour, ethics, teamwork, confidence, and growth in all employees (Redington, 2007). Thus; both skill recognition (ranging from verbal praise to incentives/rewards) and learning opportunities (growth/development) enhance individual performance, effectiveness, and retention (Agrela et al., 2008).

**Learning and Working Climate**

Since learning and development opportunities appear crucial for the retention of talented employees (Arnold, 2005; Hytter, 2007; Walker, 2001), an organisation must establish supportive learning and working climate. The concept “learning and working climate” is derived from previous research (Abrams et al., 2008). In general, it refers to the environment wherein employees both learn and work. More specifically, the concept could be described by referring to: guidance and appreciation at work; pressure of work; the amount of empowerment and the responsibility that employees experience; choice in job tasks and development; provision of challenging and meaningful work; and advancement and development opportunities.

Results from previous research show that the appreciative approach, operationalised through an appreciative learning and working climate, positively influences employee retention (Abrams et al., 2008; Christiaensen et al., 2009; Kyndt et al., 2009; Van Hamme, 2009; Visser, 2001; Verheijen and Dewulf, 2004).

**Job Flexibility**

Job flexibility is vital for retaining employees of any age (Boomer Authority, 2009). Researchers describe the importance of employment flexibility such as scheduling variations that better accommodate individual work times, workloads, responsibilities and locations around family responsibilities (Cunningham, 2002; Pleffer, 2007). Studies show that flexibility empowers individuals to facilitate a healthier balance between work and personal obligations, something that appeals to all ages of employees (Eyster et al., 2008; Scheef and Thielfodt, 2004). Prenda and Stahl (2001:30) say that employees having job flexibility options report having higher levels of individual commitment, concentration, satisfaction, productivity, loyalty and mental capacity at any age.

**Cost Effectiveness**

Studies support the conclusion that organisations providing cost effective job flexibility options benefit from satisfying the needs of all employees, independent of age, which allows for the reallocation of expenses related to recruitment, work space changes, sick time, absenteeism and commuting costs (Agrela, et al., 2008; Boomer Authority, 2009; Cunningham, 2002). Eyster et al. (2008) state organisations can cost-effectively fulfil the needs for job flexibility options to promote employee retention. Thus, the provision of “cost-effective” flexibility options is critical in the retention of all employees despite disparity in age, position, skill/knowledge level, and duration of employment (Eyster et al., 2008; McIntosh, 2001).

**Training**

Training is a key retention factor for employees at any age. Statistical evidence indicates job training is a critical factor for personal (behavioural) and professional (technical) development (United State Department of Labour, 2009). The availability for all employees programmes is critical in facilitating organisational growth particularly with performance and technological improvement (Boomer Authority 2009). Research supports that both the organisational benefits and cost savings associated with training programmes outweigh the initial cost incurred (Prenda and Stahl, 2001). Eisen (2005) states that training programmes available to all employees correlate with a 70% increase in employee retention rates.

Research indicates training methods that engage worker with carrier challenges, advancement opportunities, work incentives, competitive wages/benefits and supportive work environment are effective retention strategies. Environment are effective retention strategies for employee of any age (Eisen, 2005). Evidence supports the conclusion that access to regular training programmes enhances growth, prosperity and retention for both employees and employer (Amble, 2006).

Training benefits (tangible or intangible) correlate with a higher level of consistency, competency, productivity, adaptability, independence and loyalty in employees at any age (Agrela, et al., 2008, Boomer Authority, 2009;
Training and development is one of the important retention programmes incorporated in an effort to retain any employee (Pritchard, 2007; 26).

Benefits:

The relationship of benefits with retention is another aspect of making people stay is often investigated by researchers. Maccoby (2001) identified the job satisfaction of employees and supervisors of Bell Systems over a five-year period and found that the employees and supervisors were satisfied with their pay and benefits and were also motivated to work productively.

Career Development:

The purpose of career planning as part of an employee development programme is not only to help employees feel like their employers are investing in them, but also help people manage the many aspects of their lives and deal with the fact that there is not a clear promotion track. Employers can no longer promise job security, but they can help people maintain the skills they need to remain viable in the job market (Moses, 1999). Eyster et al. (2008) state that job flexibility along with embracing career and life options, are critical incentive for all employees.

Research shows growing trends of employers providing greater job flexibility that includes flexible career options (i.e. training, mentoring, workstation accommodations, job mobility, and reduced work hours) and life options (i.e. counselling services, health and wellness programmes) (Boomer Authority, 2009; Eyster et al., 2008). The challenge to organisations is that they must accept that this process may lead some employees to leave the company and pursue outside opportunities (O’Herron and Simonsen, 1995: 103–106).

Retention of Medical Doctors

It is generally agreed however, that successful recruitment and consequent retention of staff requires that the organisation find the right mix of individual traits and organisational goal. In the medical profession, this is the most important factor as it is viewed as more than just a job but a profession. However in the current climate of high unemployment; it is not known whether doctors still see this profession as a calling or as a mean to an end.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME, 2006) report on medical doctor shortage suggests that there is no real shortage of doctors but rather a shortage of doctors willing to work under current employment conditions. Recruiting and retaining doctors subsequently requires a delicate balance between what hospital require and what potential/current medical doctor expect from the job.

This research drew from work of this nature to create a conceptual framework for the retention strategies of medical doctors. Hoyal (1995) proposed that important factor influencing rural medical doctor retention in Australia is professional. He also highlighted the need for community support as well as emotional and financial hospital support for the doctors.

Hays (1997) in a survey of Queensland state doctors in Australia emphasised the positive aspect of rural practice to be professional autonomy and support, community relationships, life style, work variety and continuity of care. In proposing retention strategies; Hays et al., (1997) developed a conceptual model of a balance between influences to stay or to leave and triggers that could shift the balance, which include management training for doctors and educational packages for families.

Research Methodology

Overview

This research made use a descriptive survey tool employing a self administered pre-tested questionnaire. A decision to use self administered questionnaire as the preferred research methodology was made after considering a number of important reasons. One of such reasons was that the questionnaire allowed for uniformity of questions and the data processing, which in turn, enhanced the possibility of taking a broader view of findings which are especially needed for such kind of research where generalization was relevant.

Research Strategy

The decision about the use of a broadly qualitative or quantitative research strategy serves as a useful orientation on the road to performing a research project.

The debate (choice) between these two types of research is similar to the differences between the positivist and naturalist paradigms. Positivist researchers believe that the researcher and subject are independent, whereas the naturalist axiom believes that there is no way to separate the researcher and participant, and that people and relationships are always in a state of change. As a consequence, the choice of a qualitative or quantitative approach to research has traditionally been guided by the paradigm/subject discipline (natural or social sciences). However, this is changing, with many “applied” researchers taking a more holistic and integrated approach that combines the two traditions. This modern day methodology reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of many contemporary research problems.

Sample and Target Population

A simple random sample of 30 qualified medical doctors in employment with Jane Furse Hospital was used for
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this research using lottery method. The target populations were a total of 36 doctors.

This survey was geared towards medical doctors in Jane Furse Hospital who were registered with Health Professional council of South Africa (HPCSA).

The population under study consisted of post-community service (community service is a one-year period of compulsory public hospital service after completion of internship), medical officers, dentists, sectional doctors and doctors who resigned from the hospital between 2013 and 2014.

The questionnaires were distributed among the 30 of these medical doctors.

Pilot Study

Piloting of the questionnaire was conducted prior to commencement of the study.

Pilot study procedures are:

- The questionnaire was distributed to pilot subjects in exactly the same way as it will be administered in the main study.
- The doctors were asked for feedback to identify ambiguities and difficult questions.
- The time taken to complete the questionnaire was recorded to check if it was acceptable.
- All unnecessary, difficult or ambiguous questions were discarded.
- Assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses.
- Establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required.
- Check that all questions are answered.
- Re-word or re-scale any questions that are not answered as expected.

A pilot study was completed in an attempt to further assess the face, content and construct validity of the questionnaire and to ensure that data collected was adequate for testing of the hypothesis has been recommended (Cooper and Schindler, 2001; Saunders, 2000). Some changes were made on the questioner after the pilot study, this changes includes job flexibility, support by specialist consultants; improving the physical hospital infrastructure, ensuring adequate senior support for junior doctors.

Limitations of the Study

- The study used the Likert Scale questionnaire thus constraining respondents from expressing their own ideas.
- The research was limited to doctors of Jane Furse Hospital, Limpopo Province. Hospitals in industrialised and urban provinces were not surveyed due to financial and time constraints. This factor may therefore limit the extent to which the findings of the present study can be generalised.
- In the circumstances the study was mainly limited to serving doctors at the hospital. It was not possible to include many who had already exited.
- The future study should involve other departments in the hospital which includes nurses, pharmacist, audiologist, optometrist and physiotherapist.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

The demographics of the doctors involved in this study are presented first and thereafter the themes identified in response to the main question. This is followed by the themes identified from the follow-up questions.

The majority of the doctors were mostly South Africans. The rest were from other African countries.

Gender

Examining Fig. 1, majority of the participants in this study were male. Although there were fewer females included in the study, the distribution may be representative of the population of employees within the hospital, as there are generally larger numbers of males employed. And 70% of the participants are males, the remaining 30% are females.

Age

The participants were all within 25 to 55 age range, with the majority of the participants between 25 and 40 years old (Fig. 2). With the absence of individuals under 25 years of age as well as those above 55 years of age in the study, it is difficult to determine whether individuals within these age ranges are employed within the hospital. However, the hospital does appear to possess a diverse age grouping of employees, many with experience that is necessary for imparting knowledge and skills to younger employees.
Nigeria, Congo, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone (Fig. 5). Although the precise distribution of the participants’ countries of origin may differ from the total number of employees within the hospital, the finding indicates the multinational make-up of the employee compliment at the hospitals.

Years of Service

Across the 30 participants in this study, the mean number of years of service for the hospital was 9.78 years (standard deviation = 6.38). This suggests that the participants in this study possess extensive experience working in this particular hospital, and, as a result, possess the necessary knowledge and experience associated with working in the hospital to provide appropriate and meaningful responses to the questionnaire items that relate to the purpose and main objectives in this study.

Motivational Influence of Variables on Retention

According to Fig. 6, 50% of the respondents’ reported strong agreement with ensuring career progression as a variable influencing their retention within the hospital (Fig. 6). Hence, for many of the participants, the prospect of future career advancement appears to be a strong motivating factor influencing the retention of employees.

Similar to the prospect of career advancement, ensuring continuing educational opportunities was also
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Fig. 6 Ensure career progression.

Fig. 7 Ensure continuing education.

Fig. 8 Alleviate understaffing and heavy workloads.

Fig. 9 Creating more senior posts.

Fig. 10

Approximately 53% of the participants strongly agreed that alleviating understaffing as well as heavy workloads is a motivating factor influencing their retention within the hospital. Thus, by ensuring appropriate workloads are allocated and adequate staffing is provided, employees are more likely to be retained within the hospital. This is, amongst others, an area that needs to be considered when attempting to retain employees within the hospital. Fig. 8 tends to further explain that most of the doctors want more staffs employed in the hospital which includes nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, audiologist and dieticians, respectively. Employing more staffs and reducing the work load has being one of the major challenge encountered by the management of this hospital.

Examining Fig. 9, the largest proportion of participants strongly agree that creating more senior posts is a motivational factor that impacts on the retention of employees within the organisation. Approximately 33% reported some degree of disagreement with this view, suggesting that, although the factor may be of interest, it is not among the most critical factors affecting the ability to retain employees. By creating more senior posts by the management this will be one of the solutions retaining doctors in Jane Furse hospital.

Approximately two-thirds of the participants indicated that employing more doctors is an important factor impacting the retention of employees within the hospital (Fig. 10). This is in accordance with the response pattern to the item presented in Fig. 8 denoting the importance of alleviating heavy workloads and reducing understaffing issues within the hospital. Therefore, the hospital appears to be experiencing employment shortages across various positions, which may have detrimental effects on the ability to retain the current employees because of extensive workload requirements.

There were mixed responses in relation to whether job flexibility is a factor that influences the retention of the participants included in this study. Although close to 46% expressed some form of agreement, the highest single percentage fell within the neither agree nor disagree category (Fig. 11). This may denote ambivalence to the importance of such

considered to be a strong factor influencing the retention of a large number of the participants. This is indicated through the approximate 70% of the participants who either agreed or strongly agreed with the item (Fig. 7). Thus, providing continued educational opportunities to employees is likely to assist in increasing the likelihood of retaining employees within the hospital.
factor to retention. Perhaps, many of the employees are unconcerned about whether their jobs possess flexibility or not. In addition, approximately 27% reported disagreement with the statement, all of which may provide further evidence to suggest that job flexibility is not a critical factor influencing the retention of employees at the hospital.

The results in Fig. 12 indicate that almost 67% of the participants reported some degree of agreement that improving working conditions is an integral motivational factor that impacts their retention within the hospital. This may be particularly important in a hospital setting, where equipment and resources directly impact the ability to provide quality healthcare services. The designated importance by the participants along with the necessity to provide quality healthcare services provides an account of the importance of this area to retaining the employees within the hospital.

According to Fig. 13, the largest percentage of the participants indicated strong disagreement with the influence of the HR policy in terms of doctor benefits and leave management on their retention at the hospital. Perhaps, the current benefits and management of leave is appropriate, and as a result, is sufficient to retain the current employees. There were, however, some participants who reported some extent of agreement with the item, possibly denoting the discrepancy between the HR policy on benefits and leave management for some employees as compared to others. That is, the hospital management may need to re-examine and ensure that all hospital employees receive equitable benefits and leave that are reflected in the relevant HR policies.

There were a range of responses about whether strengthening the hospital management is a motivating factor that influences the retention of employees within the hospital. In particular, large proportions demonstrated some degree of agreement and disagreement with the item (Fig. 14). Possibly, since some management personnel were included in the study, they may consider the current hospital management to be appropriate. However, the proportion that reported agreement suggests that some aspects of the management may need to be examined or improved in order to ensure that employees are adequately retained. By strengthening the Jane Furse Hospital Management this will offer of the preferred solution for doctors to stay.
Almost 57% of the participants suggested that ensuring more doctors are on call during public holidays and weekends is an important motivational factor that plays a role in the retention of employees in the hospital (Fig. 15). This is an area that management should designate sufficient attention towards in order to ensure that adequate staffing provisions are made. Those that neither agreed nor disagreed may correspond with those that are either not involved or knowledgeable about the assignment of doctors for on call duty or that they may not be certain about the requisite number of doctors that should be on call during public holidays and weekends.

According to Fig. 16, almost half of the participants reported agreement or strong agreement that providing support through consultants is essential to retaining employees, whereas approximately 40% indicated some degree of disagreement. This may signify the different perceptions about the adequacy of current employees’ abilities and capabilities, as selected participants may consider the current staff compliment sufficient to accomplish what is required without additional support. These discrepancies may relate to the employment levels of the individuals included in the study, with those employed in management perhaps more likely to report adequate staffing abilities and support structures.

The largest proportion of the participants (approximately 33%) denoted neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the granting of more study leave as a factor impacting the retention of employees (Fig. 17). This may signify that, at least from the participants included in this study, sufficient study leave is being granted currently or that it really does not have retention implications, regardless of the amount of study leave provided. Approximately 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed, further suggesting that the factor has little influence on the retention of employees.

A large proportion of the respondents reported some form of agreement that improving the physical infrastructure has some influence on their retention within the hospital (Fig. 18). Clearly, for some employees, infrastructure is an important consideration and needs to be appropriate in order for them to be retained. However, approximately 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, possibly denoting that the factor is not devoted much attention by employees as a critical retention factor. On the other hand, it
may be that the current infrastructure is sufficient and needs little redress.

The majority of the participants agreed that providing more hospital accommodation for doctors is an important retention factor, clearly suggesting the requirement to improve the current hospital accommodation provided to doctors in order to ensure that more doctors are retained within the hospital (Fig 19). Based on the pattern of responses, the hospital management needs to consider this aspect as critical and requiring attention in order to reduce the likelihood of losing additional medical doctors due to accommodation issues. Accommodation has been a major challenge in the hospital. The numbers of accommodations provided are not enough for the number of doctors employed. Most doctors want to leave the hospital because they are not willing to share accommodation.

Examining Fig 20, approximately 53% of the respondents reported agreement that receiving compensation for doing more than 80 hours of calls per month is a motivating factor impacting employee retention. However, almost one-quarter of the participants strongly agreed with this item. Perhaps these discrepancies reflect the divergent employment perceptions, as employees may consider this more important compared to that of managers. Nonetheless, it may be that providing compensation to employees for working more than 80 hours of calls per month may actually increase the likelihood of being retained as well as working additional on call hours beyond the 80 hours. According to government policy the maximum calls per month for each doctor should not be more than 80 hours, getting doctors to do the remaining is quite difficult without any form of incentives.

According the largest proportion of the respondents, there is general agreement that providing a socially and academically stimulating environment impacts the retention of employees within the hospital (Fig 21). Evidently, for almost half of the participants, there is a need to work within an environment of intellectual stimulation that fosters further development and growth. However, approximately 33% of the participants expressed some degree of disagreement, possibly indicating that this is not an important aspect that employees within the hospital consider in relation to continuing their employment within the hospital. Most doctors will like to work in Jane Furse if the management can provide an academically stimulating environment.
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The majority of the respondents (about 47%) indicated agreement with the importance of participating in the decision-making process as impacting the retention of employees within the hospital (Fig. 24). Thus, for selected employees, the ability to engage and contribute to making decisions as part of employment is a contributing component to the retention of such employees. Approximately 40% of the participants reported disagreement with the statement, suggesting that, for other employees, participation in the decision-making process is not a critical factor that impacts on whether they are likely to remain employed in their current position of employment.

In the context of the item presented in Fig. 22, there was a general trend from the participants’ responses to disagree, to some extent, with the importance of having the freedom for innovative thinking in executing tasks in relation to their retention at the hospital. This appears to demonstrate the lack of significance the participants, and, perhaps the employees, place on having the ability to personally employ innovative methods of completing tasks. This is not further supported by 33% of the respondents who indicated neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement, possibly denoting that the participants have devoted little attention to the importance of executing tasks with innovation and freedom.

Approximately 50% of the respondents reported some degree of disagreement with a strong sense of belonging to the organisation as influencing the retention of employees, denoting that a cohesive and socially intimate working environment and relationships with colleagues appear to have little impact on the ability to retain employees (Fig. 23). An additional 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting that the participants may not have thought extensively about the influence of this type of factor on their retention, as it may be one of the least considered aspects to influence their decisions to remain in their current form of employment.

Equal proportions of the participants expressed some degree of agreement and disagreement with the influence of recognition and reward for good performance on their retention (Fig. 25). Clearly, the participants have divergent opinions about the importance of such facets, with many of the participants seemingly not impacted by the provision or lack of provision of recognition and rewards for poor performance. Perhaps, for these employees, other factors are considered more important for their retention or they consider the remuneration they receive appropriate for the position of employment they are in.
According to Fig. 26, approximately 60% of the participants reported some degree of disagreement with the influence of granting more leave on their retention. Few participants reported agreement with the statement, suggesting a clear trend from the participants to suggest that granting more leave is not a factor that would influence their retention. Perhaps, the leave they are granted is sufficient already or that the participants would be more inclined to be retained through addressing other factors.

Examining Fig. 27, the majority of the participants expressed some extent of agreement with the impact of improving the referral system to provincial hospitals on the retention of employees, providing support for the necessity to address this issue in order to improve the retention of employees within the hospital. A further 33% neither agreed nor disagreed, perhaps indicating that many of the participants have spent limited time assessing the importance of this factor to their retention or that they may not be entirely aware of the referral system that is currently in place and the manner in which improvements to it could enhance their employment experience.

Almost three quarters of the participants agreed, in some form, to the influence of the availability of potable water supply on the retention of employees within the hospital (Fig. 28). Whether this refers to the hospital’s current water supply or the residential water supply to hospital employees, it appears as though this is a critical factor affecting whether employees are likely to be retained within an organisation. Without the availability of a potable water supply, it is likely that lower retention rates are to be experienced in an organisation, even the hospital included in this study.

Examining Fig. 29, approximately 47% of the respondents reported some degree of disagreement with the provision of recreational activities as a motivational factor influencing their retention. Clearly, for almost half the participants, this is not an important aspect that hospital management needs to consider in order to ensure retention of employees is achieved. This is also supported 30% of the participants that neither agreed nor disagreed, possibly indicating their indifference towards recreational facilities in relation to their retention.

The highest percentage of the participants agreed that better communication with hospital managers is a factor influencing the retention of employees within the hospital (Fig. 30). The ability to communicate openly and honestly with hospital managers appears important for many of the participants, with the absence of...
Exploring the factors that affect retention of medical doctors

Better Communication with the Hospital Managers

Improve Staff Relations

Better Communication with the Heads of the Departments Both at the District and Provincial Level

Availability of Senior Doctors Especially in Training the Younger and Community Service Doctors

Fig. 30 Better communication with the hospital managers.

Fig. 32 Improve staff relations.

Fig. 31 Better communication with the heads of the departments both at the district and provincial level.

Fig. 33 Availability of senior doctors especially in training the younger and community service doctors.

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such communication or the inability to communicate appropriately with managers’ likely to impact their retention. A further 40% reported disagreement in some form, possibly signifying that communicating with hospital managers is relatively influential or unimportant for their retention.

Almost two-thirds of the participants reported disagreement that better communication with the heads of departments at both district and provincial levels influences the retention of employees at the hospital (Fig. 31). Perhaps the lack of a necessity to communicate with and report directly to such heads of departments may explain the lack of importance indicated by many of the participants. In accordance with this, the employees may not consider communication with such individuals relevant to their employment, which may be the reason for the unimportance reported.

The largest proportion of the respondents indicated neither agreeing nor disagreeing that improving staff relations influences their retention as employees (Fig. 32). It appears as though many of the participants have ambivalence as to the necessity or importance of employee relations and may be one of the factors of lesser importance in relation to their retention. Approximately 40% disagreed with the statement, suggesting further that the factor is of little importance as to whether employees decide to remain employed or seek employment elsewhere.

According to Fig. 33, the majority of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the availability of senior doctors to train the younger and community service doctors influences their retention. It would appear that possessing senior doctors is critical for ensuring that other types of staff are retained. It may also be important for obtain younger employees and retaining them; as such employees are more inclined to obtain maximum benefit from early working experiences when senior employees are employed.

Although the highest category (neither agree nor disagree) contained approximately 33% of the participants’ responses, almost 47% of the respondents reported some degree of disagreement with the statement, suggesting the general trend among the participants to consider organisational commitments to doctors’ welfare as a relatively unimportant retention factor (Fig. 34). Perhaps employees, especially doctors,
are comfortable with taking the necessary measures to personally ensure that their welfare is attended to during their tenure at the hospital.

The majority of the participants exhibited some degree of disagreement with the influence of providing support for families and doctors as an important retention factor (Fig. 35). Similar to other forms of employment, organisations are typically not responsible for providing additional support outside of the context of employment, which the participants appear to be cognizant of and accept because it appears to have little influence on their retention as employees. Hence, the participants may not expect any form of additional support from the hospital, which may explain the general direction of the results.

Examining Fig. 36, almost 47% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that improving security at the doctors’ hospital residences is a critical retention factor. Therefore, maximising security and placing additional emphasis and resources for the security of doctors and their residences is likely to assist with the retention of such doctors. Approximately 33% neither agreed nor disagreed, possibly signifying that the participants have devoted limited attention to this area, and, as a result, may denote sufficient security provisions already.

The results in Fig. 37 depict mixed opinions from the participants. Although the highest single proportion reported neither agreeing nor disagreeing with money not being the most important retention factor, similar percentages expressed some amount of agreement and disagreement with the statement, suggesting that money and financially-based factors are extremely important or among the most important factors for some and of relatively little importance for others. Perhaps, the hospital management should take this into consideration when providing rewards and devising strategies to retain employees, which may benefit from an individualised design of rewards.

Approximately half of the respondents reported agreeing, to various extents, with the impact of the provision of basic medical equipment on the retention of employees (Fig. 38). For many of the respondents, it appears as though providing the necessary medical equipment for ensuring that quality healthcare services are provided is essential for retaining them. Based on these findings, failing to provide basic medical equipment...
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Disagreement pattern was obtained. These results suggest divergent perceptions of whether up-to-date technology to perform their jobs influences participants’ retention. Perhaps, for some, the incorporation of technological advancements and developments are considered important for providing adequate healthcare and performing their jobs to the highest ability, whereas for others the latest technological incorporations are not essential for retaining them.

The majority of the participants tended to disagree with strengthening the relationships between doctors and community as a motivating factor influencing the retention of employees (Fig. 42). It would appear that for many of the participants, this is something that they see limited importance towards and are not more likely to be retained if efforts to strengthen relationships between doctors and the community are initiated.

According to Fig. 43, there was a general trend for the participants to agree (either strongly agree or agree) that the preceding items are motivational factors influencing the retention of employees within the hospital. Thus, although the importance of factors differs according to the type of factor, it appears as though many of the items that were presented to the participants for perceptions about the importance of items in relation to employees is likely to result in them seeking alternative forms of employment.

Examining Fig. 39, the highest percentage of the participants indicated neither agreeing nor disagreeing that job rotation based on areas of preference is a critical factor impacting their retention as employees. Although perceptions were mixed, a slightly greater proportion of the participants denoted disagreeing with the statement, possibly indicating a greater propensity for the respondents to consider job rotation less important for ensuring they are retained, particularly when considering other factors.

Figure 40 indicates that approximately 50% of the participants disagreed to varying extents with the influence of job rotation based on clinical skills on their retention. There were selected participants, however, that reported agreement, signifying divergent opinions across the participants. This may be a matter of individual job preference, as some individuals may enjoy varied roles and responsibilities throughout their working experience as opposed to a singular role, whereas others may prefer a single role.

Although the result in Fig. 41 demonstrates the highest percentage of participants responding with agreement (approximately 37%), a similar general
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The outcome of this study will benefit the management, the doctors and the patients. If all the recommendations are implemented by the management the quality of care will be improved, the doctors will be able to work under less tension, and patients waiting time will be reduced.

Human resources are finally being recognised as the most important aspect of healthcare systems but, despite this recognition, health personnel continue to be scarce in services where they are most needed. The reasons for this are the numerous ‘push and pull’ factors that combine to form a serious challenge to rural health care systems. However, despite the importance of salaries, many doctors stated that other factors, such as job satisfaction and working conditions, were more important and the salary on its own would not retain them.

The interventions proposed by the participating doctors in this study will assist in prioritizing the multitude of factors impacting on the retention of doctors working in Jane Furse Hospital. The next step will be for hospital management to develop interventions based on these recommendations. In addition to the multiple health system and policy recommendations discussed in detail in previous sections, Ensuring career progression could provide recognition for time spent in Jane Furse Hospital. The retaining strategy for doctors extends beyond pay and although this study has identified this as not a core retaining factor, it is still one aspect of satisfaction. The provision of more accommodation within the hospital, employing more doctors and creating more senior posts, recognition of dedicated employees and ensuring access to skills improvement and career opportunities are examples of the almost immediate relevant solutions available to retain doctors working in Jane Furse Hospital. Flexibility on the part of doctors’ working hours is what needs to be encouraged during these challenging times.

Comparisons between Strength of Variables as Retention Motivators

Examining Table 1 and the mean values reported for each of the items presented in Section B of the questionnaire (excluding the final item measuring the overall motivational influence of all factors), it is evident that the mean values were highest for several variables, and, as a result, the strongest influences on retention amid these participants include ensuring career progression, ensuring continued education, alleviating understaffing and heavy workloads, employing more doctors, providing more hospital accommodation for doctors, improving the referral system to provincial hospitals, and the availability of a potable water supply. The hospital management, in attempting to increase the retention levels of employees, is encouraged to focus on and address these areas in order to ensure that retention levels are maximised within the hospital.

The least strong influences were evidenced by comparatively lower mean scores among such items, as strong sense of belonging to the organisation, granting more leave, having better communication with the heads of the departments both at the district and provincial level, organisational commitments in terms of doctor welfare, providing support for the families and doctors, such as assistance with the employment of their spouses, job rotation based on clinical skills, and strengthening relationships between doctors and the community. Although these factors may still have some influence on employee retention, considering it is difficult to attend and address all areas that impact retention, it is suggested that the hospital management attempt to address these issues once the more influential retention factors (outlined above) have been attended to and addressed.

Fig. 42 Strengthen relationships between doctors and the community.

Fig. 43 Considering all the above items as motivational variables used by the management to influence my retention in the organisation.
Table 1: Means and standards deviations for retention motivator variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Ensure Career Progression</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Ensure Continuing Education</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Alleviate Understaffing and Heavy Workloads</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating More Senior Posts</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Employing More Doctors</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Flexibility</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Working Conditions</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Human Resource Policy in Terms of Doctor Benefits and Leave Management</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the Jane Furse Hospital Management</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure More Doctors on Call During Public Holidays and Weekends</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Support Through Consultants</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant More Study Leave</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the Physical Infrastructure</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* More Hospital Accommodation for Doctors</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation for Doing More Than 80 Hours of Calls per Month</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Socially and Academically Stimulating Environment</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom for Innovative Thinking in Executing Tasks</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Strong Sense of Belonging to this Organisation</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the Decision-making Process</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and Reward for Good Performance</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Grant More Leave</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Improve Referral System to the Provincial Hospitals</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Availability of Potable Water Supply</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Recreational Facilities</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Communication with the Hospital Managers</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Better Communication with the Heads of the Departments Both at the District and Provincial Level</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Staff Relations</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Senior Doctors Especially in Training the Younger and Community Service Doctors</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Organisational Commitments in Terms of Doctor Welfare</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Providing Support for the Families and Doctors, such as Assistance with the Employment of their Spouses</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Security at the Doctors Hospital Residence</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money is not the Most Important Factor</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of Basic Medical Equipment</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Rotation Based on Areas of Preference</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Job Rotation Based on Clinical Skills</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-to-date Technology to Perform my Job</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>† Strengthen Relationships Between Doctors and the Community</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * represents highest rated items, † represents lowest rated items.
The recognition of doctors’ invaluable contribution to the delivery of healthcare must not go unnoticed. Rewards for dedicated service is an excellent example of giving doctors their much-needed recognition and with indication of lack or participation of doctors by management, this will go a long way to enhancing a closer channel of communication.

Findings from the Literature Review

Kotze and Couper (2006) researched on what interventions do South African qualified doctors think will retain them in rural hospitals of the Limpopo province of South Africa? Almost all the doctors participating in the study stated that improving their salary was one of the three most important factors in retaining doctors in rural practice and almost half mentioned it as the most important factor. But most of the doctors that participated in this study believed that money is not an important retaining factor.

The findings from this study agree with Arnold, 2005; Hytter, 2007 and Walker, 2001 that learning and development opportunities appear crucial for the retention of talented employees; an organisation must establish a supportive learning and working climate. About 50% of the respondents’ reported strong agreement with ensuring career progression as a variable influencing their retention within the hospital.

Findings from the Primary Research

The resolution of two related factors, for example alleviating understaffing and heavy workloads, is unlikely to lead to significant long-term improvements in the retention of doctors working in Jane Furse Hospital. The challenge to health systems is to identify the most pressing needs of doctors and to address them appropriately within the restrictions of available resources.

Career opportunities and skills training offers doctors the prospect to further their knowledge and improve their skills as some of them can then move on to become specialists. This translates not only to improved efficiencies for the institution, but also personal satisfaction and growth among doctors in Jane Furse Hospital.

A direct means of addressing one of reason identified by doctors for leaving Jane Furse Hospital is the involvement of doctors in managerial decisions so that doctors with intentions of progressing further may be given enrolment for (doctors’) management educational degrees, which in turn would effectively improve the doctors’ rewarding careers.

Recommendations

For the intention of retaining medical doctors in Jane Furse Hospital to achieve results; concrete strategic measures must be put in place in order to sustain recommendations.

- Ensuring career progression has been suggested to be an important factor in doctors in Jane Furse Hospital. The creation of more senior posts is offered as a potential retention mechanism. In this study, a number of doctors mentioned career progression as the most important factor in retaining them in Jane Furse Hospitals. The managements must sort out the issue of career progression among doctors.
- Employee Survey – By surveying employees, Jane Furse management can gain insight into the motivation, engagement and satisfaction of the doctors. It is important for organisations to understand the perspective of the employee in order to create programmes targeting any particular issues that may impact doctor’s retention.
- The management should sort out the issue of accommodation. The accommodation in the hospital is not enough for the number of doctors employed. Most of the doctors who participated in the study mentioned more hospital accommodation as one of the retention strategies.
- The workplace environment is a determinant of how well an individual performs at his or her work. The research findings reported makes a contribution to the awareness of hospital managers understanding the concept of job satisfaction and the effect of underlying variables to medical doctor’s work like the hospital infrastructure and referral systems; and ensuring the availability of essential medical equipments, medicines and improving the working conditions of doctors.
- Meyer et al. (2002) maintain that it is crucial to protect the supply of scarce skills in order to meet with societal needs. It is therefore recommended that the provision of medical doctors access to better accommodation; career progression; continued medical education; increasing support by specialist consultants; will immensely demonstrate a greater determination by management in improving the dignity of the medical profession in society.
- Management of Jane Furse Hospital, need to employ more hands (doctors), to reduce the work load on the present number of doctors presently in the hospital. The present doctors all complained of the work load, which is having adverse effect on their performance level. This is a major factor when considering staff retention in any organisation. They need to double their work force to get the best out of their doctors in delivering best/adequate services.
- Jane Furse Hospital should invest heavily in the education, training and development of their employees. Training and development appealed greatly to employees in all sectors and remain one of the best ways of retaining key employees. Employees’ performances are enhanced through training and development and this encourages retention especially in a programmed training system where the training programme is tailored towards employees' career progression in the organisation.
• The issue of doctor's timely promotion must be addressed by creating more senior posts. Most of the young doctors complained of not being promoted in time, compared to their colleagues in other provinces.
• The clinical manager must ensure that more than three doctors are on call especially on weekends and public holidays because those days are quite busy in the hospital.
• Improving the poor working conditions, hospital infrastructure and lack of hospital equipment were mentioned by a number of doctors as among the most important interventions to retain them in Jane Furse Hospital. All of these could be the result of poor management. Lack of basic hospital equipment frustrated many doctors and caused them to leave.
• Respondents emphasised the need for more involvement in decision making processes in Jane Furse Hospital. Strengthening hospital management and doctor's relationship can be enhanced by increasing the role of doctors in management, ensuring adequate senior support for junior doctors; improving hospital environments and providing recognition of the work doctors do. By no means are these expected to be all put in place at once; the onus lies on management to develop the best strategic ways of implementing a sustainable long term plan concrete enough to convince the doctors.
• Align exits Interviews – By including exit interviews in the process of employee separation, organisations can gain valuable insight into the workplace experience. Exit interviews allow the organisation to understand the triggers of an employee's desire to leave as well as the aspects of their work that they enjoyed. The organisation can then use this information to make necessary changes to their company to retain top talent. Exit interviews must, however, ask the right questions and elicit honest responses from separating employees to be effective. Clinical managers and Human resource department should regularly conduct one-to-one interviews with doctors. This should include entry, follow up, and exit interviews. This could help to identify concerns and lead to their resolution.
• The empirical findings of this study suggest that poor accessibility to potable water is identified as one of the most important factors that leads to medical doctor's departure from hospital. The management should sort out the issue of water in the hospital.
• Doctors believed that the quality of their work can be improved by consultants (specialist) visits. Visiting consultant could assist doctors in Jane Furse Hospital by attending to complicated patients and by teaching. The management should ensure more consultants visit Jane Furse Hospital.
• The lack of an academically stimulating environment was mentioned by a number of doctors. The management should arrange short courses and provide internet access for the purpose of distance learning education.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

• The future study should involve other departments in the hospital which includes nurses, pharmacist, audiologist, optometrist and physiotherapist.
• More work could be done on doctors who have already left and where they have gone.
• Comparison could be made between provinces about their retention strategies for doctors working mostly in rural hospitals.
• Future research can be carried out to determine the effect of demographics on retention and turnover in order to predict the turnover tendencies of various groupings in the organisation.

**REFERENCES**


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