EXIT INTERVIEWS: A MIRROR FOR THE EMPLOYER

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper investigated the extent to which employers in Botswana use exit interviews to reflect on the feedback provided by the leaving employees for improvement. It is essential in any organization, division or company to reflect on its objectives, goals, achievements and setbacks for its growth and development. Employees may choose to quit their unpleasant jobs or express concern in an effort to improve the situation.

Methodology: The study adopted mixed method approach and employed in-depth interviews and questionnaires for data collection. The informants of this study were the University of Botswana academic employees who previously had other jobs before being employed by the university.

Findings: Findings indicated that exit interviews could assist in improving the performance and growth of an organization, division or company. The leaving employee could reveal information that could contribute towards the strengths and development of a company, division or an organization. It is anticipated that the results might significantly contribute to companies and organization in Botswana that could otherwise overlook the importance of exit interviews to reduce exit.

Key Terms: *exit interviews, employer, employee, organization, institution*

INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge based economy, skilled employees and resourceful manpower are critical to the success of the company or institution. In this regard, each company or institution should make effort to retain its skilled manpower through meaningful discussions between managers and their employees to revamp their relationships. Hence, it should be the company or institution's mandate to avoid high turnover of its employees. This study investigated the extent to which employers both governmental and non-governmental take advantage of departing employees and explore the reasons why they leave their jobs. It was important to find out whether employers do make an effort to make exit interviews through the voices of employees because it is the employees who can build or destroy the company or institution. The researcher was curious to found out from the University of Botswana employees as they come from different government institutions, departments and private companies where they were previously employed, to check whether they were interviewed before they left or not. The purposes of exit interviews are for learning especially where the company can improve itself, making sure that employees leave feeling good about their services and, in some cases, to retain the employees under better improved services.

The researcher problematizes the exit interviews because it is important in any organization, division, department or company to always reflect on the objectives, achievements and setbacks through the voices of employees. This can be done in various ways depending on what is suitable to the company or institution such as genuine discussions on one to one basis or with a group of people or through questionnaires. In most cases each company, organization, department or division has a vision and mission statement as well as long and short term goals to achieve. These can be achieved if the employer and the employees work together effortlessly to achieve the target goals. It can be a setback if in an organization employees there is mass exodus without the company getting concerned why the employees are leaving. The reasons for departing may vary, but the company or organization should make it a point to ask the departing employees why they are leaving.

Botswana's Vision 2016 articulates that by the year 2016, Botswana should be an open, democratic and accountable nation (Republic of Botswana, 1997). This objective should allow organizations to open up and discuss issues in a democratic way with employees and also be accountable for their actions. A departing employee should be allowed to express freely in a constructive way why he/she is leaving the company. If the employee is leaving because of dissatisfaction, then the company should accept such criticism and use it as a strength for growth and development. By so doing the organization will be accepting its flows and therefore being accountable for its weaknesses.

In addition to the above, openness should not be considered as a weakness because for an organization to be prosperous and productive, it can reflect through its employees by using exit interviews. This is not to say that the company should always wait for someone to depart and then start reflecting. Reflection should be a continuous process that should be done quarterly or yearly. It can be very costly to lose an employee who was

greatly contributing to the success of the company to a salary increase which can be negotiated internally. Therefore, for organizations to achieve Botswana's vision 2016 target goals they have to consider exit interviews for reflection.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The University of Botswana is one of the highest learning institutions in Botswana with about 2, 848 00 employees. The university draws employees from various sectors of Botswana such as government, parastatals and non-governmental organizations as well as students who have just completed their studies and are ready for further training, especially academic staff.   Workers are an integral part of every organization or institution, they contribute to the success or failures of the company they are working for and therefore it is the responsibility of the management to see to it that employees' contribution does not bring the organization production down.

On the other hand, employees' educational background, experience and capability add to their strength and weaknesses towards building the company or organization they are working for. Among other things the task of the management is to promote high production and for them to succeed in this endeavour employees need to be motivated time and again in order to be productive. In the absence of motivation and development of employees, they tend to hop from one job to another in search of job satisfaction and other things. In addition, the working conditions, job descriptions, working hours should be clear to everyone. In fact regular contact and communication with employees can take the company or institution far.

In the Millennium Development Goals Report (MDG) (2004) foreword, where the Minister of Finance and Development Planning highlights that commentators appreciate Botswana's good performance in effective delivery of services to the people and also institution building the question that remains unanswered is whether organizations are playing a crucial role in institution building especially through exit interviews that could be mirroring what the institutions are doing. Forde, in the preface of the MDG report (2004) believes that mobilization and coordination among stakeholders is important in bringing the MDGs all the way to Vision 2016 goalpost. Management and leadership in all organizations contribute towards the success or failures of their organization. Therefore, the feedback from departing employees could be essential to this exercise.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section discusses the review of literature related to exit interviews. The concept seem to have limited research internationally, regionally and locally, hence information used in this section was posted in social media blogs and posters, but with names of authors. The section defines what exit interviews is, its purposes, the reasons, who should conduct exit interviews, advice to senior personnel on how to conduct exit interviews, asking relevant questions and what the interview team should be cautious on when conducting exit interviews.

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An exit interview is a conversation, dialogue or discussion between the employer and the employee who is terminating his/her services with the company or organization for one reason or another. In addition, Heathfield, (2019) sees an exit interview as a meeting with a terminating employee that is generally conducted by a human resources staff member. Muller (2020) sees exit interviews as offering a deeper look at the workplace's culture, day-to-day processes, management solutions and employee morale. From the definitions above, we can gather that in an exit interview, ideas are exchanged or information is shared and mostly through face to face interaction. Therefore, such an interview cannot be ignored looking at its outstanding purposes in the organization. Further, Muller (2020) argues that exit interview could be used to identify opportunities to improve retention and engagement. In this regard, it is vital for companies or organizations to have a clear set of standards in place for conducting exit interviews. On a positive note, exit interviews can be used to foster positive relationships, bring value to the company and build a welcoming working environment. Therefore they can give direction on policy and code of conduct.

Scholars have highlighted reasons why exit interviews have to be done. Boogaard (2020) states that it is a way of collecting data and getting insights needed to create a more positive environment and also protect your organization from unnecessary risks. Boogaard (2020) argues that exit interviews are a way of obtaining frank and honest feedback from a terminating employee. Further, the terminating employee can discuss concerns about misconduct within the company. In this regards, it is vital for the terminating employee to be honest and provide constructive feedback while leaving a positive note behind.

According to Boorgaad (2019), another reason why exit interviews should be conducted is that it could assist in identifying areas that can improve staff retention of staff and reduce mass exodus of employees. The feedback could assist leadership to identify areas that can help improve staff retention if there are evaluations done by the management team. This could further improve opportunities for management and leadership to develop into better managers and directors and find strategies and measures that are suitable and appropriate for their corporate culture. Again, exit interviews could identify matters that may require immediate attention such as whether it is necessary to recruit or train employees to improve the image of the company or organization (Boorgaad, 2019). Therefore, the leadership could assess how the corporate progresses, what its challenges are and how they could best address the challenges.

Another important is raised is that exist interviews should be conducted by senior personnel. For example, Heathfield (2019) argues that in a study involving 88 executives and 32 senior leaders from 210 organizations in 33 industries that were headquartered in more than 35 countries, Harvard Business Review researchers found that nearly three-quarters of the organizations conducted employee exit interviews. According to the study, "Of those, 70.9% had their Human Resource departments handle the process; 19% had the departing employees' direct supervisors do it; 8.9% delegated the job to the direct supervisor's manager, and 1% turned to external consultants." This means that the senior management or leadership should be responsible for interviewing terminating employees.

Spain & Groysberg (2016) advice that exit interviews should not focus on salaries and benefits only because there could be underlying issues related to the Human Resource practices that can propel the mass exodus of employees. Once these have been unearthed, the management could reflect on them and give the corporate an improved face. Further, it is essential that terminating employees should be treated with respect and gratitude by the leadership. The reason for such is that the departing employees could recommend the company's products and services wherever they go as well as creating business alliances with former employers.

Authors share that an exit interview is driven by questions to tease out information from the terminating employee. For example, Miller-Merrell (2018) advices management to ask relevant questions that would help tease out information from terminating employees such as: Why did you begin looking for a new job? What ultimately led you to accept new position? Did you feel that you were equipped to do your job well? Did you have clear goals and objectives? How would you describe the culture of our company? What could have been done for you to remain employed here? Did you share your concerns with anyone at the company prior to leaving? If you could change anything about your job or the company, what would you change? How can our company improve training and development programs? Would you consider coming back to work here in the future? In what area or function? What would need to change? Some of these questions could assist the management and leadership to reflect on issues on short and long term basis.

Simpson (2020) begs for respect on the part of the terminating employee by avoiding being too negative, too personal and not close doors for future relationships. Further, Simpson argues that the best thing is to leave the company with grace by focusing on the positives. This is important advice because the employee does not know where he/she is going and might decide to go back one day.

Lastly, Bhasin (2019) believes that although the benefits are high, exit interviews can be problematic especially if not properly handled. For example, Bhasin (2019) argues that the terminating employee can live to regret at a later stage especially when he/she said too much during the interview. Further, the author cautions that if the terminating employee has strong negative feelings the interview can turn out into a battle field with lots of arguments and heated words. Finally, Bhasin (2019) posits that an exit interview can be a waste of time if the management does not have mechanisms or corrective measures in place to evaluate data collected, hence, the interview can prove to be meaningless and or just a formality. In this regard, the management has to be careful and sensitive.

Basing on the above review of literature, information provided here is from international authors who provided tips on how to handle exit interviews. This issue has not yet been researched robustly regionally and locally, Botswana included. Therefore, there was need to conduct this study to find out whether employees who have left their former employees were interviewed or not. To the best of my knowledge, such research does not exist in Botswana hence a gap that needed to be closed. It was important to conduct this study to provide insights into leadership and management practices regarding exit interviews.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was based on a theoretical concept by Albert O. Hirschman (1970) on exit and voice. There is a third concept on loyalty which will be deliberately ignored. Hirschman (1970) raised critical issues regarding the employer and the employee from different perspectives. He targets themes that address issues in different environments such market, politics and school environments. First, he gives an example of an organization or market where employees or customers are unhappy such that they can either exit the unpleasant job or not buy the product or alternatively voice out their concerns. Both the exit and the voice could be done if employers observe that there is a decline in quality of service and therefore the employer may do them in an attempt to repair or improve the quality of service.

Secondly, Hirschman (1970) gave examples of politics, economics and school environment. He assets that politically, when citizens are unhappy with the way the country is ruled they can immigrate to other countries where the environment could be better and conducive or they can protest such that their grievances maybe heard and propose for a change for the better. It is interesting to point out that politically, if citizens are unhappy with the ruling government they may not immigrate but decide not to participate in the system. They can decide to be disloyal to the party or not voice their grievances. They can do the latter probably to avoid being imprisoned, killed or sent into exile. In essence, exit cannot only be physical but also be emotional or mental.

Thirdly, he pointed out that economically when customers are unhappy with a product they can also exit and go to buy in other stores or they may choose to complain. Customers can exit silently without notifying the management and as they do this, it might form or destroy the relationships between customers and the market concerned. If customers are disgruntled they may ask to see the manager or they may choose to shop elsewhere if they feel that voicing out their grievances is a waste of time. The sales and income may decrease and this will leave the management to look for answers for their questions if they are concerned. If they do not act they can end up with a huge loss and therefore the management should be able to detect the problem and address it accordingly. Customers in most cases resort to exit especially if there are other available opportunities elsewhere.

Fourthly, Hirschman (1970) highlights an example of public and private schools. He argues that if parents are not happy with the public school system they would take their children to a private school without bothering to voice out their grievances and concerns. As a result the public schools would not reflect on feedback because the parents decided to quit silently. On the contrary, if a private school also starts to deteriorate, the parents could voice out their concerns if there is nowhere to take their children, but they could also opt to take their children to other schools.

In essence, Hirschman pinpoints to the importance of exit interviews and the reasons why they cannot be simply ignored. Hirschman's ideas have been found to be relevant to this study because it addresses issues of advantages and why employers need to

take heed of exit interviews. Notably, exit alone is used to measure a decline in an organization; on the other hand the voice is informative and provides opportunity for feedback and criticism. In addition, if voice is effectively used it can reduce exit. However, if employees exit in great numbers it is less likely that they can voice their grievances and therefore, it is essential for organization to craft the means to better communication and address the concerns and issues of the employees to improve the situation. Voice can play a significant role in public happiness. It can improve the quality and services of products or an organization. If exit and voice are available to customers they chose to exit in order to search for better opportunities and alternatives. On the other hand, customers choose voice if they believe and know that the management would listen and respond appropriately, but this is based on a lot of uncertainties. Hirschman cautions that when employees exit the implications can be enormous. Failure to understand and address issues of concerns can lead to the organizational decline and possible failure. Therefore, it could be beneficial if lapses could be attended to and efficiency restored.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the qualitative interpretative approach to explore the extent to which employers do make an effort to make exit interviews with departing employees. The study was conducted at the University of Botswana in 2008 to 2012 where there is a diverse background of academic and non-academic staff from different departments, companies and organizations before being employed by the university. The idea behind choosing these employees was for them to share experiences with what happened when they exited previous employment. The participants were chosen conveniently because some employees from the University of Botswana are not all from the government or parastatals. Some of them started working for the university; hence, it was important to identify the ones who exited previous employment.

The employees were from different departments and faculties such as Humanities, Education, Library, Mathematics and Science. However, the Faculty of Education had most participants as it has a large pool of employees who once worked for the government as educators, education officers and school principals. The study involved 65 participants, 30 males and 35 females working as lecturers and administrators. Their ages ranged from 45 – 65 years. Important to note is that the responses provided were about previous employment and not the current employment they are involved in. Hence, the participants views do not represent the University of Botswana even through the study was conducted within the institution. The participants were requested to sign a consent form after agreeing to participate in the study while other simply agreed to participate to vent out their grievances with former employers.

The key research questions of the study were: a) were the participants interviewed by their employer when they exited their previous jobs or not? b) do you think it was necessary for the employer to have interviewed you? Elaborate on the issue; c) what were the reasons for leaving your previous job? The data were collected through the use of in-depth structured interviews, informal interviews and open ended questionnaires. First, the open ended questionnaires were issued out and a follow-up was made with in-depth

interviews to have face to face interaction with the participants. Informal interviews were conducted with two participants but later their views were recorded as they provided an in-depth insight into the information collected.

Data were analyzed according to each key research question to make sure that each question has been answered. Data were categorized into thematic statements and it was interpreted and analyzed qualitatively according to the key research questions. Some data were tabulated to give clearer statistical information. For reliability and validity purposes, data in open ended questionnaires and interviews was compared to see if there were variations or same message was portrayed by both instruments.

This study had limitations. The researcher studied employees at the University of Botswana only. Their voices may not necessarily represent other employees who were not covered in this study. The University has more than 2000 employees and the study involved only 65 participants. It must be pointed out that some employees were directly employed by the university hence, it was not necessary to interview them because they have not been previously employed. Hence, the idea was to share information and ideas and contribute towards new knowledge to the field of management.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the results of the study. The results indicated that participants who were once government employees especially school principals and education officers reported that they have been with the government for five and seven years, and they have not had any teachers who were leaving the teaching fraternity coming to the offices to be interviewed on why they were leaving. The reasons advanced for such were that teachers are many and scattered all over the country and it was going to be cumbersome to call them to the headquarters and even to the school heads' offices to interview them on why they are leaving, because even school heads are not direct employers of the teachers but only supervisors. According to most participants, the assumption made by the employer (government) is that they leave for greener pastures. But the two officers noted that it is not always the case. This suggests that employers make assumptions why employees exit to other jobs without necessarily taking the trouble to find out.

The other point reported by participants from other companies was that, the employers seemed not to be aware of the exit interviews in the past, it is only recently when there was an indication of mass exodus that the employer thought of interviewing some of the employees. But it is not a norm because they are not aware of it either; it has not been done on them and the other employees. This suggests that management and leadership do not use employees as a mirror to see what is happening in their companies and therefore some of the information will forever remain hidden.

Some of the employees also reported that it could be important to find out from teachers why they exit, because it could improve their relationships with their supervisors in schools. However, the officers reported that they solve some of the sour relationships between supervisors and teachers by transferring some of them. According to the participants, if employers are not interested in exit interviews, they may not know the

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reasons why their employees are leaving. If employees leave because they are disgruntled then it is important for the mother body to know the reasons and address them for the future. The table below shows statistical information on whether the employees were interviewed or not.

Table 1: Exit interviews conducted or not in government and non-governmental organisations
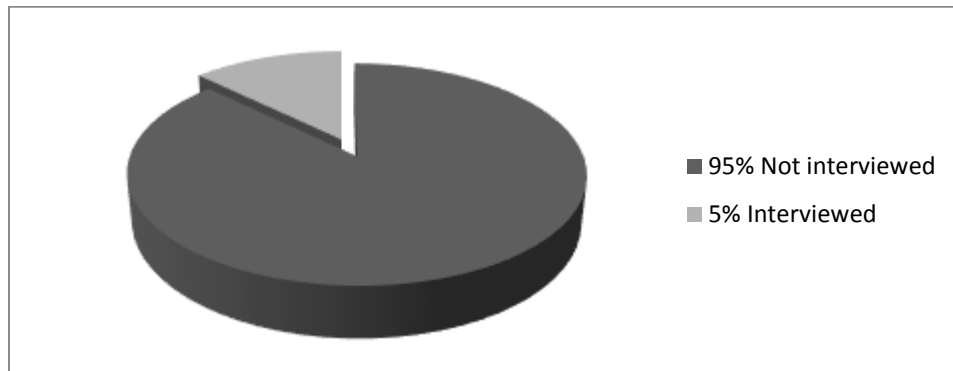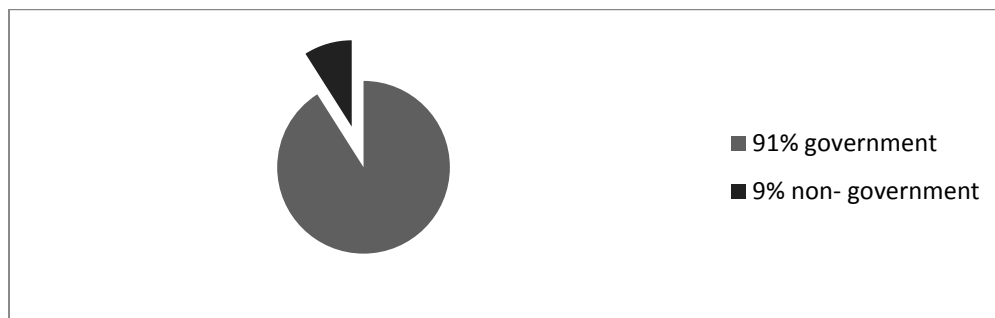

Source: Data collected

The table above indicated that 95% left their previous jobs without being interviewed and only 5% of them were interviewed. This is a message that the employers seem not to understand the importance of exit interviews hence employees left without the employer noticing their exit. The table above suggests that employees seem to leave with answers that could improve the image of the government or institutions and yet there are immediate supervisors who could do exit interviews on behalf of the senior personnel and report back.

The table below showed institution or organizations where employees were formerly employed.

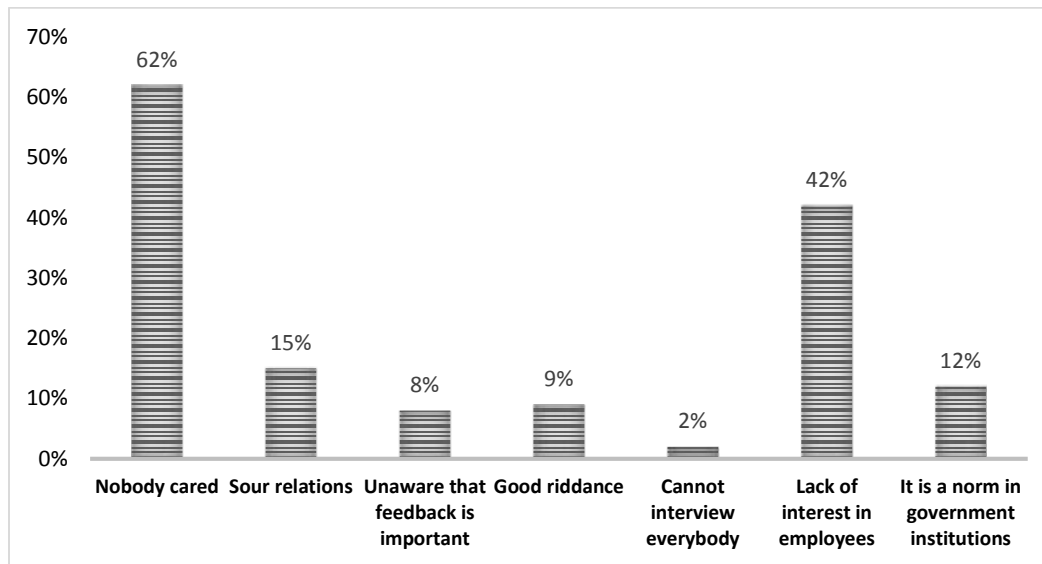**Table 2: Institutions where participants worked**

Source: Data collected

The table above indicated that the majority of the participants were working for the government while only 9% worked in non-governmental organizations. This means that the government seems not to take heed of their employees when they exit. This suggests that the government is still lacking behind in terms of interviewing employees who are

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leaving their jobs to others. It could be that those in power seem not to understand the reasons why employees leave their government positions to private companies or parastatals.

The table below stated the reasons why participants believed they were not interviewed.

Table 3: Reasons for not being interviewed
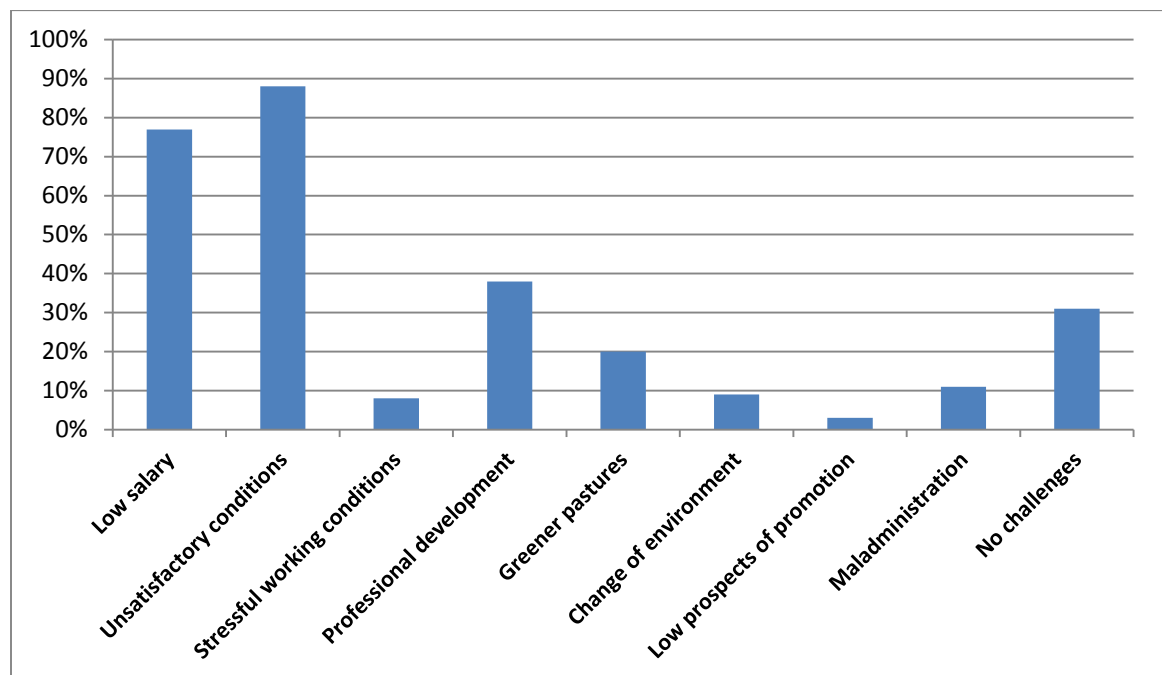

Source: Data collected

According to the table above, participants believed that the institutions, companies and divisions they worked for did not care about their welfare, hence, the 62% says that nobody cared whether they were departing or not. This was followed by 42% that the organizations and companies lack interest in their employees; this was related to the latter response where participants stated that the company seemed not to care about them. The latter was followed by the 15% who believed that they were not interviewed due to the sour relationships between them and their leadership. This was substantiated by the 9% that said that they were not interviewed because their supervisors thought their departure was good riddance. From the table above, 12% said that the government divisions do not make effort to interview people when they depart. Although the other reasons carry the lowest percentages they cannot be ignored, for example 8% of the participants stated that the organizations, government, and companies were not aware that exit interviews were very important because they could help the company to grow and improve its services to its employees.

Some of the reasons reported by the participants were that there were no challenges and no prospects for improvement in the company. These indicated that employees too would like to work under conditions where their academic abilities match the work they were doing. Further, employees would like to see themselves moving up the ladder. The signs indicated in this table are of non-reflective organizations or companies that need revamping to improve production level. Kransdorff (1996) raised a critical point that, if

employees are not interviewed because nobody cares when they leave, the incoming person is not going to learn how their predecessors did things and might try to invent the wheel. Notably, in the Millennium Development Goals Report of 2004, Forde stated that if employers do not care about their employees they might not achieve the goals of institution building and working towards the same goal. Hence, an exodus of employees should raise an alarm for employers to find out why they leave.

The table below indicates the reasons for leaving previous employment

Table 4: Reasons for leaving previous jobs

Source: data collected

According to the table above, 88% of the participants left due to unsatisfactory working conditions. Some of the reasons employees could have voiced might have helped the employers to reflect on the company or institution's administration problems and try to mend the quick ones. Related to this is the stressful conditions that carry 9%. Although the percentage is low, it cannot be ignored. Stressful conditions do affect the production level as well. A high percentage of 78% goes to low salaries in government sectors. According to the employees the government seemed not to match the annual inflation rate and their salaries and this made them want to look for jobs that were well paying. All in all the results of the study indicated that the government seem not to consider the importance of exit interviews for exiting employees.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Maladministration Issues

The findings indicated that participants exited due to maladministration. The issue of maladministration needs to be unpacked to hear the voices of the participants. When interviewed, some of the participants reported that supervisors have a tendency of favouritism, holding grudges, being victimized when expressing their dissatisfaction, stigmatization if one is sick and issues of ethnicity. However, Kransdorff (1996) posits that if the employer does not make any effort to conduct exit interviews, the employees walk away with experience, knowledge and skills and it might be difficult for the company to find another equally experienced person. In another local newspaper, The Monitor of Monday 21 February, 2011: 3, it was reported that, 'mass resignation of experienced prosecutors that recently rocked the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP) have brought the wheels of justice to a stop.'   This is a concern raised because the prosecutors were going away with experience, knowledge and skills. However, it was not clear why these prosecutors were leaving their jobs. If they were leaving because of maladministration the government should do something about it. Consequently, this could affect productivity and competitiveness within the country. On the same breath, it cannot be overemphasized that it is important for the employee to give constructive feedback and leave on a positive note with good relations and mutual respect (Raman & Sharma, 2004).

Lack of Communication

Lack of communication was an issue indicated by with participants. Hirschman (1970) stated that customers can exit silently without notifying the management because if they do, it might destroy the relationship between customers and the market concerned. On the same note, government employees may silently leave the government to look for answers for their questions as to why they depart, that is, if at all they reflect and are concerned about their employees' departures. When there is lack of communication between the two parties regarding the employees' exits, the government may end up with huge loss of skilled manpower. Communication through exit interviews can assist in transferring knowledge and experience from the outgoing employee and the incoming one for a smooth handover (Niznik, 2007). Since exit interviews are a dyadic exchange of information where two or more people converse, it is crucial for the interviewee to open up for communication purposes (Capp, Capp & Capp, 1990). Kransdorff (1996) shared the same sentiments by cautioning that having the experience and expertise dispersed elsewhere, organizations struggle to reinvest in the new placement who needs to be inducted into an entirely new organization. Further, the new employ takes time to fit as part of the wider community he/she has just joined.

Employer's denial to accept their weaknesses

The findings revealed that some of the employees pointed out that the employers may not want to hear and accept their weaknesses. Important to note is that the voice of an employee is informative and promotes the opportunity for feedback and criticism which some institutions, organizations and divisions may not want to face. This may lead to denial

about the maladministration issues that exists in the organization (Kransdorff, 1996). Some organization may not want to face criticism that they are not treating their customers well. Some employers may always be pointing fingers at employees but not necessarily reflecting on how they treat their customers and employees because it could also lead to downfall of production (Hirschman, 1970). However, Kransdorff (1995) raised an essential notion that if an employee goes without interview, there will be discontinuity which could mean a lost momentum. It could also lead to new members adapting to new environments, new cultures and new ways of working on their own. An employer who denies reality to accept its own weaknesses offsets the rich feedback that it could gain from individual's broader experience accrued even from other companies. An additional point was made by Hatcher (2002) that it is important for the interviewee to be always honest as the organization might benefit from the revelations the interviewee is giving to improve performances and practices. On a critical note, Hatcher points out that the employer should avoid being defensive or deny realities on the ground as this could cloud the mirror he/she is supposed to be using.

Using feedback to build the organization

Interestingly, findings indicated that all participants agreed in one voice that feedback was critical to the company, organization or division growth and development; a notion that companies should hold up for their development. Had they been given a chance to reflect on the organization, the organisations, institutions and government could have benefited. The few companies that interviewed their employees got constructive feedback to benefit the company. Hirschman (1970) also embraced the idea that feedback acts as a mirror for the organization. Kransdorff (1996) pointed out that feedback could be used as a specific learning tool to ensure that companies do not lose its benefits. Again, not learning from feedback is like treating knowledge and skills as trash. Exit interviews can help diagnose problems and detect the root cause of such and apply appropriate prescription (Capp, Capp and Capp, 1990).

Gender Issues and Inflation

The findings also revealed that most males were clustered around the following responses; low salary, professional development, promotion opportunities, jobs not challenging and greener pastures. A picture could be painted that most males exit because they want higher paying jobs. Maybe it could be that society expects them to have an upper hand in supporting their families. This argument was substantiated by evidence from a local newspaper – The Botswana Gazette of 23 February – 01, March 2011 which stated that 'figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that an increase in the private secondary, pre-primary and primary education school fees and the development fees for public primary schools at the beginning of the year pushed headline inflation to 7.9 % compared to 7.4% in December, 2010.' Further, the CSO figures also showed that inflation rose for most commodity groups, including food and non-alcoholic beverages, alcohol and tobacco, housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, health, transport, education, restaurants and hotels and miscellaneous goods and services. These were the issues that caused mass exodus for employees to meet these demands. Further, they are interested in

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moving up the ladder than women. Most women left their previous jobs because they were working under stressful conditions, maladministration and hence, they wanted to change their environment. This could mean that women and men have different reasons for moving from one job to another. The employers could be benefiting from such disparities so that issues could be addressed. If the employers could be getting this feedback, they could be retaining some of the employees especially women.

Interviewed employees

Despite the large number that was not interviewed, there were parastatals who took the trouble to reflect through their leaving employees. This number was limited but it indicated that at least some companies or organisations had time to listen to them in order to improve their services to avoid high turnover. The employees argued that the companies they worked for learnt the hidden truths and the differences that prevailed between the employer and employees. This resulted in some managers trying to persuade the exiting employees to stay. While these were the realties that companies may not want to face, it was useful for them to reflect.

In essence, this study has revealed that the government, organisations, divisions and institutions in Botswana have not yet considered the importance of exit interviews despite their importance. This revelation is important for boosting production rates, improving retention, mending broken pieces and having closure. This could mean that education and awareness could be the way forward for companies and institutions to reflect and improve their image, services, discover bottlenecks and adopt best practices.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has implication on the employer. First, the employer may not get a true picture of how they handle employees if feedback is not provided by those exiting. It may be necessary for the employer to get true insights on the realities of the company or institution. This could mean that companies and institutions may not improve their services or how they handle employees if they do not conduct exit interviews. Again, it may be difficult to retain employees without feedback from the employees. Second, the study may have implications of the employee. They may never trust their previous employer and forever stay with grievances because they never 'emptied their bag'. Third, the study have implications on further research to investigate on what employers think about the exit interviews.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the findings of this study indicated that employers still do not understand the importance of exit interviews and the role they play, hence minimal effort was put to interview departing employees or in most cases employees depart without anybody interviewing them. Important to note is the fact that if employers overlook the role played by exit interviews then they miss out on information that could otherwise build and further develop their companies, organizations and divisions as this could help them grow. The effects could be notable at senior positions where individuals are expected to

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make changes, strategise and make operational decisions within months of their appointments. Further, new employees take time to adjust and this can disrupt longstanding cultural and belief systems which could lead to breakdown of the company.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that the directors, supervisors and coordinators especially from the various departments of government of Botswana should consider interviewing people who are leaving their departments in order to learn, reflect and improve from the feedback they provide. It should be a policy in each unit where people are able to vent issues but used positively to build organization or company.

Both parastatals and government should be educated on the importance of exit interviews because if they become aware of how useful it could be, it could shape their companies, organizations or unit into better environments where the employee is seen as a key player towards the development of the economy.

A form in every department should be readily available, whether online or in hard copy for employees to fill in. It should be the responsibility of supervisors to make sure that whoever is departing should fill in the form after an oral discussion with the leaving employee, this could be a way of monitoring that exit interviews are done.

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