

Impact of Informal Human Resource Practices on Employee Outcomes in Private Tertiary Education Institutions

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of informal human resource practices on academic turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism, and a decline in employee development in private tertiary education institutions. It proposes a formal human resource management model for private tertiary education institutions based on a mixed-methods approach, through which the researcher concurrently collected quantitative data using a questionnaire and qualitative data using structured interviews. Combined purposive sampling and stratified sampling produced 171 academic questionnaire responses and eight human resources business partners' online interviews. The study found that career development and growth, working conditions and work-life balance, performance management and recognition, recruitment and selection, employee training and development, and remuneration contributed to the key challenges faced by private tertiary education institutions. Adopting a formal human resource management model may enhance academic performance, employee development, reduce absenteeism, and retain academic staff while improving their institutional reputation as both an employer and a preferred choice for students.

Keywords: Human resource practices, tertiary education institutions, academic turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism, employee development.

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Saruchera, S., & Gie, L. (2025). Impact of Informal Human Resource Practices on Employee Outcomes in Private Tertiary Education Institutions. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 11(2), 84-119. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v11i2.17433>

Résumé

Cette étude examine l'impact des pratiques informelles en matière de ressources humaines sur la rotation des enseignants, la détérioration des performances, l'absentéisme et le déclin du développement de la carrière des employés dans les établissements privés d'enseignement supérieur. Elle propose un modèle formel de gestion des ressources humaines pour les établissements privés d'enseignement supérieur, basé sur une approche mixte, grâce à laquelle le chercheur a recueilli simultanément des données quantitatives à l'aide d'un questionnaire et des données qualitatives à l'aide d'entretiens structurés. L'échantillonnage raisonné et l'échantillonnage stratifié ont permis d'obtenir 171 réponses à des questionnaires universitaires et huit entretiens en ligne avec des partenaires en ressources humaines. L'étude a révélé que le développement et l'évolution de carrière, les conditions de travail et l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée, la gestion des performances et la reconnaissance, le recrutement et la sélection, la formation et le progrès statutaire et développement des employés, ainsi que la rémunération ont contribué aux principaux défis auxquels sont confrontés les établissements privés d'enseignement supérieur. L'adoption d'un modèle formel de gestion des ressources humaines peut améliorer les performances académiques, le progrès et développement des employés, réduire l'absentéisme et retenir le personnel académique tout en améliorant la réputation de l'établissement en tant qu'employeur et choix préféré des étudiants.

Mots-clés : Pratiques en matière de ressources humaines ; établissements d'enseignement supérieur ; rotation du personnel académique ; détérioration des performances ; absentéisme ; développement du personnel.

Introduction

Namibia's tertiary education system comprises public and private institutions. Public institutions include the University of Namibia (UNAM), Namibia University of Technology (NUST), Vocational Training Centres (VTC), and the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). Meanwhile, private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs) in Namibia, including the ones under study, are family-owned. Family-owned businesses are prevalent across various sectors globally, and this trend extends to educational institutions in emerging economies where privatisation is more prominent (Mustafa et al., 2018). Family ownership in such institutions may influence decision-making, governance, and sustainability strategies, though further research is needed to explore its specific impact on the education sector (Muntahanah et al., 2021). A factor of concern is human resource (HR) practices in family-owned private tertiary institutions, emphasising reliance

on informal HR practices, often leading to improper job placements, as observed by Steijvers et al., (2017).

Private institutions often adopt informal HR practices due to limited financial and administrative resources, which can hinder the establishment of formal HR systems. This is evident in smaller institutions or those in developing economies, where resource constraints prioritise operational survival over formalised HR processes (Coetzer, Kock & Wallo, 2017). The selected PTEIs in Namibia, being self-sustained, face challenges of academic turnover potentially linked to these informal practices. Accordingly, the study aims to investigate the informal HR practices triggering academic turnover and then propose a tailored formal Human Resources Management (HRM) model for PTEIs with the aim of mitigating turnover, enhancing academic performance, encouraging employee development, and reducing absenteeism.

Literature Review

Human resource practices encompass institutional activities and policies designed to enhance employees' commitment, motivation, and retention, ultimately contributing to the institution's goal achievement and competitive advantage (Maurya & Chatterjee, 2018). These practices must align with the legal requirements of the country in which the institution operates (Mathi & Malathi, 2013). Establishing documented policies, rules, and regulations is essential for formal HR practices to aid decision-making and institutional recognition (Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Hashim et al., 2016).

Scholars like Nguyen and Bryant (2004), Hashim et al. (2016), Steijvers et al. (2017) and Dundon and Wilkinson (2018) classify HR practices as formal or informal. Informal HR practices are those HRM activities that lack formal structure, standardisation, or documentation, violate employment laws, and lack training budgets (Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Hashim et al., 2016; Dundon & Wilkinson, 2018). Consequently, employees may not receive formal employment contracts, and performance appraisals may be used primarily for monitoring rather than for development. Additionally, training is not based on needs analysis, and owners may be unwilling to offer market-based salaries and benefits (Bassanini et al., 2013; Hashim et al., 2016).

Notably, larger institutions tend to adopt formal HR practices, while family businesses, prevalent among PTEIs, often opt for informal HR practices (Hann, 2012; Horváthová et al., 2020). The latter may result in challenges,

such as poor working conditions and work-life balance, leading to issues like absenteeism, low productivity, and employee turnover (Singh et al., 2016; Garba & Jacob, 2021).

Employee Turnover

Research indicates that the issue of employee turnover in Namibian higher education institutions (HEIs) dates back to 2010, with studies primarily focused on public universities (Deloitte, 2015; Amushila & Bussin, 2021). Specifically, there is a lack of literature on employee turnover in PTEIs in Namibia, although these institutions also face the challenge, which is evident in their annual reports. Academic turnover in Namibian HEIs has been linked to factors such as limited career growth, insufficient non-monetary incentives, traditional HR practices causing job dissatisfaction, informal performance management, limited training opportunities, job insecurity, scarce job resources, poor employee relations, low remuneration, and undervaluation (Amushila & Bussin, 2021; Naris & Ukpere, 2010; Pieters et al., 2022; Baporikar & Smith, 2019). These factors may cause stress, frustration, and anxiety (Qin et al., 2021). To address turnover, Mabaso & Dlamini (2018) suggest paying salaries based on market value, or even higher, and adopting a total reward system. Additionally, having a comprehensive employment relations policy was highlighted as crucial for enhancing HR practices related to employee relations and involvement (Meyer, 2011). It is important to note that policy helps to promote consistency in the implementation of HR practices.

Performance Deterioration

The growth and development of HEIs, including selected private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs) in Namibia, depend on employee performance (Shirbagi & Aryamanesh, 2017; Delbari et al., 2021). Employee performance is the effort invested to complete tasks according to organisational procedures (Inuwa, 2016). Academic performance is influenced by recruitment and selection processes, which affect job compatibility and the likelihood of resignation (Lee et al., 2018). To address this, effective recruitment strategies, including sound policies, job specifications, descriptions, and equity statements, are essential (Meyer, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2016).

Performance management measures may contribute to dissatisfaction and subsequent performance deterioration and turnover, as seen in Namibian universities (Naris & Ukpere, 2010; Amushila & Bussin, 2021). HR practices in Namibian HEIs reportedly lack the capacity to address performance issues, resulting in limited skills, negative impacts on employee development and academic performance, and an absence of a

conducive learning culture (Coetzer et al., 2017; Baporikar & Smith, 2019; Barnes et al., 2021). To address these challenges, HEIs should adopt a performance appraisal system that minimizes subjectivity, prejudice, and the halo effect, identifying strengths and weaknesses while promoting consistent recognition (Saraih et al., 2017; Ramchandani & Aggarwal, 2018; Bansal et al., 2018).

Studies reveal that HEIs in Europe and South Africa also grapple with poorly implemented performance management, impacting teaching activities (Krausert, 2017; Tanveer et al., 2018). In this regard, Okeke-Uzodike and Gamede (2021) and Miller (2019) propose implementing a workload management system (WMS) that encompasses academic responsibilities, that is, administration, teaching, research, teaching and learning, research supervision, community engagement and academic citizenship, aiming to enhance performance across all areas without compromising others. It is important to note that as PTEIs work to manage workloads, there will be cost implications. Therefore, this study proposes formal HRM practices tailored to align with the commercial realities of PTEIs, ensuring both effectiveness and financial sustainability.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism has a negative effect on organisational performance, organisational costs, and employee productivity (Onikoyi et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2016). The research conducted by Kamati (2020) at a Namibian higher education institution that had a 28% rate of absenteeism from 2014 to 2016 noted the causes of absenteeism as job stress, inequalities in rewards, problems with relocation issues and employee personal problems. It can also be a result of employee dissatisfaction that can be caused by the informal implementation of the HR practice for employee relations and involvement (Samwel, 2018; Tewari & Kumar, 2019). Furthermore, the academics in HEIs in Namibia were experiencing job stress because of the institutional demands, and this has resulted in absenteeism and a high rate of turnover in these institutions (Kamati, 2020; Simushi, 2020). Given this, it is important for PTEIs to have effective wellness programmes, as suggested by Helvacı et al., (2017), to combat absenteeism. Research indicates that while absenteeism has been extensively studied in higher education institutions, there is limited focus on private tertiary institutions.

Employee Development

Employee development can be conducted in a formal setting or 'on-the-job' (Tam & Gray, 2016). Employee development methods include formal education, 'on-the-job' training and experience, professional relationships, assessment of personality, skills and abilities that help employees'

professional growth and self-directed learning (Dachner et al., 2019). Even though employee development is imperative in the workplace, some public and private institutions experience problems in fostering employee development (Coetzer et al., 2017). Employee development in HEIs has been hindered by individual, departmental, institutional and external challenges (Barnes et al., 2021). However, this study focuses on institutional and departmental HR practices. Departmental HR practices include workload allocation, role transition and understaffing, career management policies and support systems, performance review and feedback, financial resources and role conflict, lack of a learning culture (Barnes et al., 2021), lack of knowledge needed to facilitate learning and development and proper feedback structures (Coetzer et al., 2017). Consequently, there will be talent stagnation and limited opportunities for promotion, leading to attrition in PTEIs (Azeez, 2017). It is important to note that the obstacles hindering employee development in the literatures cited are not in the Namibia context. This study, therefore, focuses on the obstacles hindering employee development within the context of selected PTEIs, specifically in Namibia.

Methods

This study adopted mixed methods research (convergent parallel design) that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data. The convergent parallel design aims to compare the statistical results with the qualitative findings for validation purposes (Shoonenboom & Johnson, 2017), and to consolidate interrelated results from both methods, thus giving a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2011). It assists in improving the quality of the study as it blends the different advantages and non-overlapping disadvantages of the quantitative method with those of the qualitative method (Patton, 1990, cited by Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Furthermore, the study used structural equation modelling (SEM) to verify the HR practices that have a direct or indirect relationship with employee turnover, absenteeism, employee development and performance deterioration.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilising a survey questionnaire and structured interviews to collect data from participants in three selected private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs). The questionnaire, based on Labaw's framework (1980) as cited by Gendall (1998), consisted of two sections: one gathering demographic information and the other exploring HR practices through closed-ended questions on a 4-point Likert scale and open-ended questions for participant reflections. Distribution was done online using SurveyMonkey; the target sample was

176. Of these, 171 questionnaires were completed, representing a 95.5% response rate. The three PTEIs contributed different proportions of responses: PTEI-1 contributed 103 (60.23%), PTEI-2 contributed (14.04%), and PTEI-3 contributed 44 (25.73%) completed questionnaires. The number of completed questionnaires was determined by the number of academic staff in a PTEI. The sample size was guided by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table while adopting the purposive sampling method.

The study identified a prevalence of generations X and Y (92.4%) among academic staff. Most had Master's degrees (42.1%), while 9.94% held Doctoral degrees, making this qualification unique in the selected PTEIs.

Structured interviews were conducted to complement the survey data and provide deeper insights into HR practices. These interviews were designed to maintain consistency in questioning (Stuckey, 2013), using an interview guide aligned with the research objectives and literature review. Interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform based on the availability of participants from the three PTEIs. Most of the interviewees were from PTEI-1, with a representation of four interviewees, whereas PTEI-2 and PTEI-3 had a representation of two interviewees each. Among the interviewees holding HR positions in these institutions, only 12.5% do not have HR qualifications, indicating a highly qualified HR workforce within these institutions.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The results indicated strong reliability for most HR domains:

- Performance management and recognition ($\alpha = 0.724$),
- Working conditions and work-life balance ($\alpha = 0.844$),
- Career development and growth ($\alpha = 0.707$),
- Employee relations and involvement ($\alpha = 0.842$), and
- Absenteeism ($\alpha = 0.844$).

However, the remuneration domain had a lower reliability score ($\alpha = 0.5097$), thus suggesting that the questions in this domain may not have adequately captured the relationship between remuneration and employee turnover. Internal consistency was also checked by comparing responses to ensure that they were consistent across different participants, as recommended by Saunders et al., (2007).

The study adopted Guba's construct for trustworthiness to ensure the validity of qualitative data. First, to ensure credibility, member checking was conducted. After the interviews, summaries were shared with the participants to verify the accuracy of the captured data. Second, for

transferability, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings were provided to allow readers to judge the applicability of the results to other settings. Third, for dependability, an audit trail was maintained, documenting all the research steps, from data collection to analysis. This audit trail includes notes on decisions made during the research process, changes in the research plan, and reflections on the data. Lastly, to ensure confirmability, researcher bias was minimised through triangulation (Shenton, 2004; Stahl & King, 2020).

Quantitative data were analysed using STATA version 17, while qualitative data were processed and coded using ATLAS.ti 22. This combination of tools enabled a robust analysis of both data types, thereby ensuring that the findings reflected a comprehensive understanding of informal HR practices and their impact on key employee outcomes.

Results

This section presents both qualitative and quantitative findings. The quantitative results will include descriptive summaries, factor loadings, and reliability coefficients of various HR practices, such as performance management and recognition, career development and growth, working conditions and work-life balance, labour relations and involvement, and remuneration (Table 1). These results will also identify the HR practices that predict performance deterioration, employee development, absenteeism, and employee turnover. In contrast, the qualitative results will provide narrative insights related to these HR practices.

The findings, as presented in Table 1, reveal significant issues in the implementation of performance management and recognition practices within private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs). To analyse participants responses, the category, "disagree was determined by combining the percentages of participants who selected "strongly disagree" and "disagree." Similarly, the "agreed" category was calculated by summing up the percentages of participants who chose "strongly agree" and agree". Most participants (71.3%) disagreed that their PTEIs have a formal policy to ensure the equitable distribution of academic workload, and 78.9% felt that they do not receive adequate recognition for good work performance. Additionally, 66.7% of respondents believed that their PTEIs do not value their employees. Despite these challenges, 62.6% and 73.1% of respondents acknowledged the existence of a performance management policy and the provision of training for evaluators and employees, respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, and Reliability of Performance Management and Recognition Items

Performance management and recognition	Strongly disagree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median (IQR)	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
The institution has a formal policy on academic workload to ensure equitable distribution of academic activities amongst lecturers.	24.56	46.78	22.81	5.85	2(3-3)	0.853	0.591
The institution has a performance management policy.	7.6	29.82	43.86	18.71	2(2-2)	0.712	0.635
The institution provides training for evaluators and employees.	8.77	18.13	70.18	2.92	3(2-3)	0.288	0.755
Employees receive recognition for good work performance.	16.37	62.57	16.96	4.09	2(2-2)	0.324	0.734
The institution values its employees.	14.04	52.63	33.33	0	2(2-3)	0.751	0.644
Employees are provided with all the job resources that are required to complete their work.	5.26	38.01	49.71	7.02	3(2-3)	0.441	0.719

Source: Authors' compilation

Qualitative data supports these quantitative findings, indicating that HR practices for performance management and recognition are not effectively fulfilling their purpose of enhancing employee performance and satisfaction. Seven out of eight interviewees highlighted inconsistencies in the recognition system, with one respondent noting that monetary rewards were discontinued due to financial strain following COVID-19.

Additionally, the data reveal that performance management practices in these PTEIs are often driven by external or administrative motives rather than a genuine commitment to enhancing employee performance. Six out of eight respondents indicated that appraisals were primarily used for promotions or to meet regulatory requirements, such as those set by the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA). For instance, Respondent 2 noted, *"Since last year, we have started performance appraisals for promotions. In previous years, we used them to award bonuses to those who earned 65%, but now the university is undergoing a financial crisis, and bonuses are no longer available."* Similarly, Respondent 6 stated, *"Performance management is a requirement for NQA, so it is supposed to be done every year,"* while Respondent 8 confirmed, *"Since I have been in this office, performance appraisals are filed to meet the requirements for the NQA."*

Furthermore, all respondents agreed that the current performance appraisal system lacks a clear methodology, further diminishing its effectiveness. Although the system is implemented annually, inconsistencies in its execution and structure were evident across responses. Respondent 1 explained, *"We have a performance management system which we use yearly. The supervisors manage this, and the performance appraisals come to the HR department in September–October. The supervisor is the only one that appraises the staff."* Similarly, Respondent 5 noted, *"We have a performance tool, and it applies to everyone. Lecturers are evaluated by their supervisors in their departments based on their performance as per their job description every year in November."* However, a contrasting approach was described by Respondent 8, who stated, *"We usually do that every end of November each year, where the students appraise employees, [through an] appraisal committee that consists of the supervisor and a quality assurance officer."*

The existing HR practices for performance management and recognition are contributing to a decline in employee motivation and job satisfaction, leading to performance deterioration within the PTEIs. This is due to lack of a feedback mechanism, poor recognition and rewards systems, and an unclear appraisal process, highlighting the need for formal HR practices.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, and Reliability of Career Development and Growth Items

Career development and growth	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median (IQR)	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
The institution applies a career development policy that enables employees' career growth.	14.04	57.31	21.05	7.6	2(2-3)	0.504	0.674
The career progression pathway is clear within the institution.	30.99	45.03	15.2	8.77	2(1-2)	0.395	0.689
The institution provides a policy for promotion.	9.36	52.63	32.75	5.26	2(2-3)	0.522	0.679
The institution rewards additional qualifications.	53.22	36.84	8.19	1.75	1(1-2)	0.325	0.711
The institution sponsors its employees for formal learning and development.	14.62	50.29	31.58	3.51	2(2-3)	0.715	0.636
The institution has a training and development policy that promotes employee development.	24.56	50.29	16.37	8.77	2(2-3)	0.616	0.646
The institution has a learning culture.	2.92	30.99	61.4	4.68	3(2-3)	0.381	0.698
I am not motivated to learn.	11.11	66.67	21.64	0.58	2(2-2)	0.071	0.741

Source: Authors' compilation

The findings, as presented in Table 2, reveal gaps in the career development and growth policies within the selected private tertiary education institutions. To analyse respondents responses, the category, “disagree” was determined by combining the percentages of participants who selected “strongly disagree” and “disagree.” Similarly, the “agreed” category was calculated by summing up the percentages of respondents who chose “strongly agree” and agree”. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the existing career development and growth HR practices. They highlighted the lack of clear pathways for career progression, inadequate promotion policies, and insufficient support for formal learning and development. Specifically, 71.4% of respondents disagreed that their private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs) have a career development policy that fosters career growth, and 76.02% felt that career progression pathways are unclear. Additionally, 90.1% strongly disagreed that their PTEI rewards employees for obtaining additional qualifications, indicating a widespread perception that their professional development efforts are not valued.

Despite these challenges qualitative data offered a deeper and more detailed perspective, showing that some PTEIs do offer supports such as study assistance for qualifications provided by the institution and in-house training aligned with current industry trends. For instance, PTEI-2 and PTEI-3 offer full financial support for relevant qualifications, while PTEI-1 requires academics to pay 40% of the costs. Moreover, some respondents indicate that there are opportunities for lecturers to publish in institutional journals and attend conferences, although often without financial sponsorship.

These responses indicates that while some efforts are made to support career development, these initiatives are limited and may not fully meet the needs or expectations of academics. For example, is 42.1% of the sample population who have acquired masters and doctorate degrees will not benefit from this career development and growth policy.

The findings presented in Table 3 highlight challenges faced by academics in private tertiary education institutions (PTEIs) regarding work-life balance, job security, and workload. To analyse respondents responses, the category “disagree” was determined by combining the percentages of participants who selected “strongly disagree” and “disagree.” Similarly, the “agreed” category was calculated by summing the percentages of respondents who chose “strongly agree” and “agree”.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, and Reliability for the Working Conditions and Work-life Balance Items

Working Conditions and Work-life Balance	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median (IQR)	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
To meet my job requirements, I often work longer hours than stated in my contract of employment.	1.75	12.28	52.05	33.92	3(3-4)	0.819	0.802
I frequently work during weekends to complete my weekly tasks.	5.26	9.36	61.4	23.98	3(3-3)	0.611	0.833
My job does not negatively impact my family life.	23.39	45.61	12.28	18.71	2(2-3)	0.386	0.856
The institution cares about its employee welfare.	9.36	45.61	42.11	2.92	2(2-3)	0.631	0.826
I can accrue leave days and use them when there is a need.	9.94	70.76	16.96	2.34	2(2-2)	0.613	0.828
Employees are provided with assistance on work-related issues.	5.26	14.62	78.36	1.75	3(3-3)	0.692	0.822

Source: Authors' compilation

The majority of respondents (85.97%) reported working longer hours than stipulated in their employment contracts, and 85.4% frequently work on weekends to complete their tasks. This excessive workload, combined with insufficient support for balancing work and personal life, is further evidenced by the fact that 69% of respondents acknowledged a negative impact on their family life. Additionally, 55% of respondents felt that their PTEIs do not adequately care for employee welfare, and 80.7% disagreed

that they could accrue and use leave days when needed, thereby exacerbating the strain on academics' well-being.

The qualitative data supports these findings, with interviewees emphasising a lack of job security as a key reason for staff turnover among expatriate employees who face uncertainty regarding contract renewals. Six out of eight respondents specifically pointed to job insecurity as a critical concern, noting that all lecturers are employed on fixed five-year contracts with no pathway to permanent employment. As Respondent 1 explained, "The lecturers are leaving our institutions for better opportunities and job security. Everyone is employed on a 5-year contract no one is permanent." This concern was echoed by Respondent 8, who added, "There is no job security, especially for expatriates, as renewal of the contract is based on the non-availability of a Namibian with the same qualification.

Moreover, a heavy workload was cited by five out of eight respondents as a significant factor leading to staff turnover and absenteeism, as it hinders their ability to meet professional development goals.

Restrictive leave policies emerged as an HR practice contributing to absenteeism. The allocation of only five leave days during the year, coupled with a 19-day break at the end of the year, was seen as insufficient by academics, leading to their frequent use of sick leave to cope with the demands of their workload.

The findings in Table 4 indicate a generally positive outlook on certain aspects of labour relations within private tertiary education institutions. To analyse respondents' responses, the category, "disagree" was determined by combining the percentages of participants who selected "strongly disagree" and "disagree." Similarly, the "agreed" category was calculated by summing the percentages of respondents who chose "strongly agree" and "agree". Most of the respondents acknowledged good working relations (56.1%), the presence of written procedures for managing disciplinary cases (60.8%), and grievance resolution (64.9%). Additionally, 87.1% agreed that employees receive written job descriptions at the start of their employment, and 52.6% concurred with the performance objectives set by management.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, and Reliability for Labour Relations and Involvements Items

Employee relations and involvement	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median (IQR)	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Generally, employees enjoy good working relations within the institution.	9.94	33.92	53.8	2.34	3(2-3)	0.206	0.783
The institution has a written procedure for managing disciplinary cases.	1.75	37.43	43.86	16.96	3(2-3)	0.748	0.687
The institution has a written procedure for resolving grievances.	5.85	29.24	55.56	9.36	3(2-3)	0.664	0.714
The performance evaluation is fair and consistent.	12.87	53.8	29.82	3.51	2(23)	0.742	0.677
Top management communicates the vision, mission and values of the institution to employees.	14.04	49.71	31.58	4.68	2(2-3)	0.487	0.737
Employees agree on performance objectives set by management.	9.36	38.01	43.27	9.36	3(2-3)	0.592	0.715
Employees are given written job descriptions on the commencement of employment.	4.68	8.19	81.29	5.85	3(3-3)	0.117	0.791

Source: Authors' compilation

However, the qualitative data reveals significant gaps in the implementation of HR practices, particularly in the monitoring and management of absenteeism. At PTEI-1, the reliance on Sage payroll software, which only tracks authorized leave, leaves the institution without an effective mechanism to monitor unauthorized absenteeism. In contrast, PTEI-2 and PTEI-3 employ a manual logging system where staff sign in and out, but this method lacks the robustness and accuracy of more advanced technological solutions, as indicated by some respondents:

We have a Sage payroll where we note all the leave taken through their supervisors. (Respondent 1).
Lecturers clock in when they arrive showing the time of arrival and clock out when leaving showing the time they left. (Respondent 5).
Signing in of all lecturers when they come to work and sign out when leaving. (Respondent 7).

Furthermore, PTEI-3 has taken an additional step by employing a quality assurance officer to physically monitor lecturer attendance in classrooms, demonstrating a more proactive approach to ensuring adherence to schedules leading to micro-management: "We have employed a quality assurance officer who conducts a physical check of attendance of lecturers for classes." (Respondent 8)

Despite these efforts, none of the institutions had a formal absenteeism policy in place at the time of the study, and 50% of the interviewees highlighted the reliance on manual systems, which are prone to errors and inefficiencies.

These findings reflect the need for PTEIs to develop and implement formal HR practices for management of absenteeism. Without such improvements, the institutions may struggle to maintain consistent labour relations, potentially impacting employee satisfaction and leading to turnover, performance deterioration and absenteeism.

Recruitment and Selection

The aim of examining the recruitment and selection HR practices in PTEIs was to understand their methods for attracting and screening qualified individuals since recruitment impacts employee turnover. This data helped to determine the impact of these practices on the challenges faced by selected private tertiary education institutions. The data collected revealed a range of HR practices related to recruitment and selection. These practices

include advertising job openings on their websites, noticeboards, and newspapers, and conducting interviews and induction processes, which all the respondents consistently highlighted. Especially, PTEI-1 is the only institution that includes a non-discrimination disclosure in its job advertisements.

However, the findings indicated that PTEI-2 and PTEI-3 HR practitioners use "headhunting" as a recruitment method, as reflected by 4 out of 8 respondents. This approach is typically adopted when there is limited time to follow formal recruitment procedures, resulting in deviations from established policies. As Respondent 5 noted, *"There are times when we do headhunting due to limited time. Sometimes we do not interview the candidates—they just start work immediately."* Similarly, Respondent 7 stated, *"There are times when we do headhunting, and we need to fill the position immediately, and the recruitment and selection process is ignored."*

The data from the selected PTEIs exposed various positive HR practices associated with recruitment and selection. However, the data indicated that PTEI-2 and PTEI-3 HR staff use "headhunting" as a recruitment method. PTEI-1 included the non-discrimination disclosure in its job advertisements. These facts showed that the selected PTEIs implement informal recruitment and selection HR practices.

The findings presented in Table 5 indicate a dissatisfaction with the compensation and benefits offered by private tertiary education institutions, which has implications for employee retention, performance, absenteeism and employee development. To analyse respondents responses, the category, "disagree" was determined by combining the percentages of participants who selected "strongly disagree" and "disagree." Similarly, the "agreed" category was calculated by summing the percentages of respondents who chose "strongly agree" and "agree". Most of the respondents (82.5%) disagreed that they were fairly rewarded compared to similar jobs outside their institutions, and 77.2% noted the absence of fringe benefits such as housing or transport allowances. Furthermore, 85.8% of respondents reported that their institutions do not participate in annual salary negotiations, suggesting a lack of engagement with employees on issues of compensation.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics, Factor Loadings, and Reliability of the Remuneration's Items

Remuneration	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median (IQR)	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha
I am fairly rewarded compared to similar jobs outside my organisation.	36.26	46.2	16.37	1.17	2(1-2)	0.271	0.537
The institution provides fringe benefits (housing allowances, transport allowances)	30.99	46.2	22.81	0	2(1-2)	0.395	0.511
Salaries are always paid on time.	10.53	25.15	38.01	26.32	3(2-4)	0.679	0.252
The institution participates in annual salary negotiations with employees.	28.65	56.14	12.87	2.34	2(1-2)	0.397	0.461
Salaries are paid during the vacation period.	2.34	11.11	65.5	21.05	3(3-3_)	0.401	0.461

Source: Authors' compilation

Qualitative data corroborates these findings by showing that low salaries are a major driver of turnover among academic staff. Many academics are compelled to supplement their income by seeking part-time jobs, which not only contribute to absenteeism but also lead to fatigue, stress, and a decline in job performance. Six out of eight respondents explicitly mentioned that the low remuneration offered by PTEIs pushes academic staff to leave for better-paying jobs, particularly in public universities where salaries are higher.

These findings suggest the need for selected private tertiary education institutions to review their compensation practices. Without such changes, selected private tertiary education institutions risk increasing employee turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism, and a decline in employee development.

Table 6: HR Practices That Cause Performance Deterioration, Employee Development, Gaps, Absenteeism and Employee Turnover

Outcome variables	Predictors	Coefficient (95%CI)	P-value
Performance deterioration	Performance management and recognition	0.003(-0.009 to 0.016)	0.547
	Career development and growth	-0.028(-0.069 to 0.011)	0.164
	Remuneration	0.002(-0.006 to 0.011)	0.602
	Working conditions and work-life balance	-0.005(-0.016 to 0.006)	0.366
	Employee relations and involvement	0.002(-0.014 to 0.017)	0.851
Employee development	Performance management and recognition	0.133(0.088 to 0.178)	<0.001***
	Career development and growth	0.215(0.068 to 0.362)	0.004***
	Remuneration	0.005(-0.024 to 0.038)	0.72
	Working conditions and work-life balance	0.097(0.057 to 0.137)	<0.001***
	Employee relations and involvement	0.053(-0.004 to 0.110)	0.071
Absenteeism	Performance management and recognition	0.361(0.211 to 0.512)	<0.001***
	Career development and growth	1.676(1.186 to 2.167)	<0.001***
	Remuneration	-0.023(-0.127 to 0.069)	0.562
	Working conditions and work-life balance	0.173(0.039 to 0.307)	0.012**
	Employee relations and involvement	-0.273(-0.464 to -0.082)	0.005***
Employee turnover	Absenteeism	0.005(-0.009 to 0.02)	0.453
	Performance deterioration	0.239(0.096 to 0.384)	0.001***
	Employee development	-0.006(-0.051 to 0.039)	0.794
	Performance management and recognition	0.004(-0.01 to 0.019)	0.547
	Career development and growth	-0.012(-0.056 to 0.033)	0.600
	Remuneration	0.003(-0.005 to 0.012)	0.431
	Working conditions and work-life balance	0.014(0.003 to 0.025)	0.012**
	Employee relations and involvement	-0.001(-0.012 to 0.015)	0.991
	Job satisfaction	-0.375(-0.723 to -0.027)	0.043**

Source: Authors' compilation

As indicated in Table 6, no factors were significantly associated with performance deterioration since all the predictors were not significant, with a p-value > 0.05. However, the qualitative findings revealed that the HR practice for performance management contributed to performance deterioration in the participating PTEIs. Respondents mentioned practices such as lack of feedback mechanism and performance appraisal method, poor recognition and rewards system, and lack of motivation.

The predictors of employee development in selected Windhoek PTEIs were identified in Table 6 as performance management and recognition with a p-value of 0.001, career development and growth with a p-value of 0.004, working conditions and work-life balance with a p-value of 0.001. In this regard, the results showed that there was informal implementation of the HR practices of working conditions and WLB but that it was linked to work policies that were not promoting employee development. The findings also show that formal mentoring was only implemented for Namibians with limited experience. Areas of employee development were determined by trending skills in the environment and suggestions from academic staff. The HR practice for leadership was also hindering employee development in these selected Windhoek PTEIs because of lack of financial resources and commitment from the PTEIs. Furthermore, employee development in these PTEIs was limited to face-to-face facilitation conducted by peers.

According to the findings, presented on Table 6 the factors contributing to absenteeism in selected Windhoek PTEIs were: performance management and recognition with a p-value of 0.001, working conditions and WLB with a p-value of 0.012, employee relations and involvement with a p-value of 0.005, career development and growth with a p-value of 0.001. Quantitative and qualitative findings converged on the results of job dissatisfaction, employee relations, working conditions and work-life balance. Hence, other HR practices included were significantly represented either in qualitative or quantitative findings. Additionally, the qualitative findings revealed that the participating PTEIs lacked an effective formal monitoring system for absenteeism.

According to the data in Table 6, academic turnover in selected private tertiary education institutions was triggered by performance deterioration with a p-value of 0.001, working conditions and work-life balance with a p-value of 0.012, job satisfaction with a p-value of 0.043, remuneration (low salaries) was indicated by 73% of the respondents. Recruitment and selection practices were highlighted by 50% (4 out of 8) of the interviewees, with specific mention of methods such as headhunting and the inclusion of non-discrimination disclosures in job advertisements. Headhunting was

noted as a strategy used by some institutions to quickly fill positions, often bypassing formal selection procedures. Meanwhile, non-discrimination disclosures, although less common, reflect a commitment to equity and diversity in hiring practices, particularly in one institution that adheres to the Affirmative Action Act. The results of the working conditions and work-life HR practices (excessive workload and job security) obtained from the quantitative findings converge with the qualitative findings. The other HR practices were significantly represented either in qualitative or quantitative findings.

Discussion: Formal HRM Practices Model for Private Tertiary Education Institutions

This study aimed to propose a formal HRM practices model that PTEIs could adopt to improve employee retention. Therefore, the model used findings generated from quantitative and qualitative analysis, as suggested by Shafique and Mahmood (2010). It is worth emphasising that most of these perceptions and experiences aligned with the quantitative analysis. This model will assist these institutions in comprehending why the HR practices they are currently implementing fail to yield positive outcomes – an intervention that is needed and the tentative outcome.

The formal HRM practices model from this study (Figure 1) was based on the systems theory model that comprises three phases: inputs, transformations, and outputs. Within this framework, the selected PTEIs in Namibia faced challenges such as academic turnover, absenteeism, performance deterioration, and a decline in employee development. These challenges stemmed from the informal implementation of HR practices. The development of a formal HRM practices model for PTEIs helped to identify the informal HR practices.

Model Presentation

First, the input phase shows the informal HR practices implemented in selected PTEIs that are currently causing academic turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism, and reduced employee development. Second, the transformation phase outlines the interventions that PTEIs need to implement to shift from informal HR practices to formal HR practices within each specific area currently governed by informal HR practices. This will be guided by the HR strategy of these institutions. Lastly, the output phase will provide the outcomes of implementing formal HR practices in selected PTEIs.

Inputs

The input phase shows the informal HR practices implemented in selected PTEIs that have triggered employee turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism and shunned employee development. The informal HR practices include performance management and recognition, career development and growth, working conditions and work-life balance, employee relations and involvement, recruitment and selection, and remuneration.

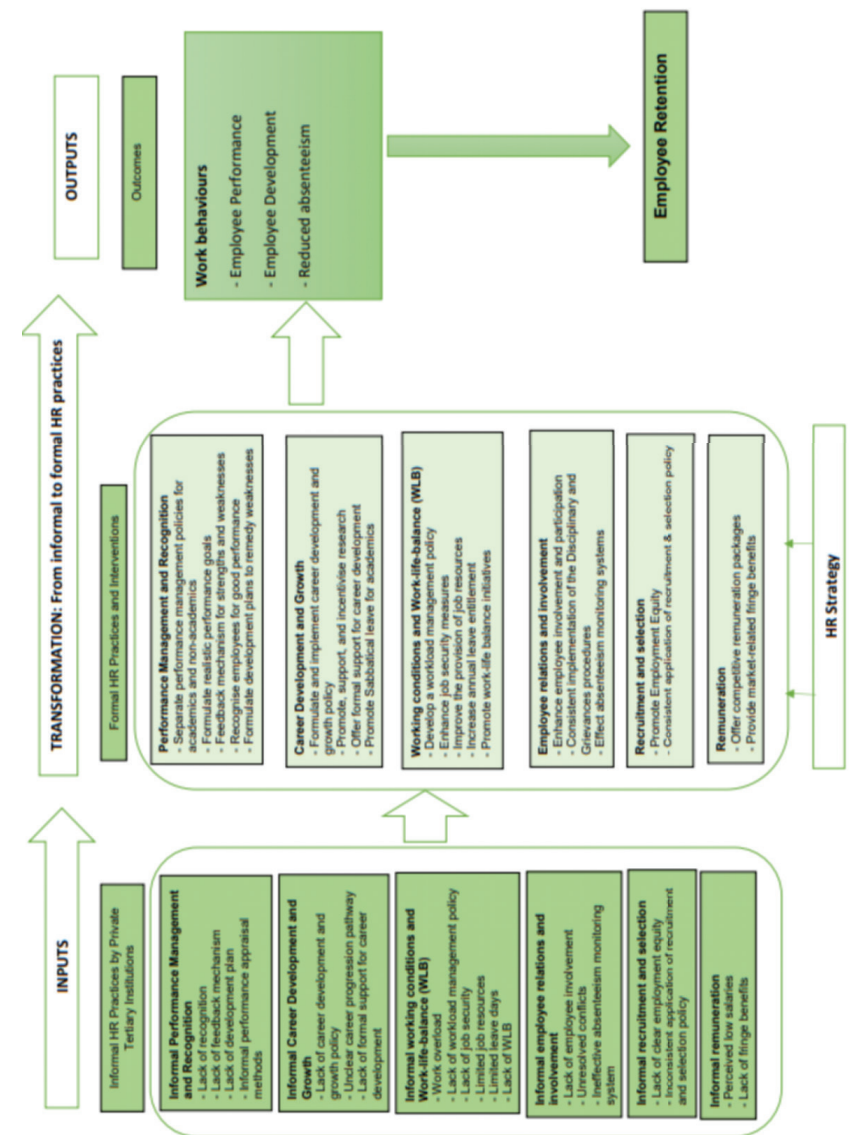
The selected PTEIs should have HR practices that support academic performance in the workplace. However, the study found that the HR practice for employee performance and recognition was causing performance deterioration, as highlighted by all the interviewees. The HR practice was informally implemented because the performance appraisal system for selected PTEIs lacked recognition as employees were not rewarded for good performance, as reflected by 78.9% of the participants and the interviewees who noted an inconsistency recognition that shows a lack of standardisation. When employees are rewarded for good performance, they are motivated to continue working hard and improving their performance (Delbari et al., 2021). Moreover, the performance appraisal system seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses of employees (Ramchandani & Aggarwal, 2018). Academic staff need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. However, in selected PTEIs, the strengths and weaknesses of academic staff are not communicated to employees, thereby significantly reducing employee involvement. Given this, the appraisal system in selected PTEIs becomes ineffective, serving only as a monitoring mechanism, but not promoting and motivating employees for high performance. There is no development plan for employees to help them overcome their weaknesses, thereby leading to performance deterioration. The study results tend to agree with those of the study conducted by Amushila and Bussin (2021).

There is a performance management policy, and the academic staff are appraised annually. However, selected PTEIs do not have a clear appraisal system, as this affects the impact of the HR practice on employee performance and recognition, resulting in employee performance deterioration. Performance deterioration increases the likelihood of the employees leaving the selected PTEIs (Le, 2020). This was supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.001, suggesting that when an employee's performance deteriorates, there is a high chance of the staff leaving the PTEIs, thus resulting in employee turnover. On the other hand, the informal HR practice of performance management and recognition also has a negative impact on absenteeism as it was supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.001, implying that when employees perceive informal performance management and

recognition practices, they are more likely to absent themselves from duty. Employee development was supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.001, indicating that when employees perceive effective informal performance management practices and receive recognition for their work, it positively impacts their employee development within the organisation. In this regard, informal HR performance management yields a negative outcome, making it important to transform it into a formal HR practice.

Second, PTEIs should have a policy for employee progression and support of academic staff in their career. However, this study found that selected PTEIs have no career development policy, as reflected by 71.4% of the participants. This shows a lack of clear path of progression for academic staff, thus leading to employee turnover (Maurya & Chatterjee, 2018). Without a structured career development policy, inconsistencies in implementing this HR practice are inevitable. In addition, the selected PTEIs have limited financial resources, which prevents them from providing financial support for formal training programs or funding the publication of papers in reputable journals. They only offer financial support for formal career development conducted in their institutions, but with limited programmes. As a result, 42.1% of the respondents are unable to receive financial support for formal training. This situation may lead to talent stagnation and limited promotion opportunities for academics in PTEIs, resulting in increased attrition within these organizations (Azeez, 2017). It is of paramount importance to correct this situation, as the study also found that informal career development and growth have a negative impact on absenteeism and employee development. Absenteeism was reported at 1% with a p-value of 0.001, showing that informal career development and growth increase the likelihood of the employees being absent from duty. Employee development was supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.004, suggesting that when employees have opportunities for career development and growth, it positively influences their overall development within the institution.

Third, working conditions and work-life balance are determined by the practices of institutions. Employees prefer a conducive working environment, whilst a poor working environment can lead to absenteeism, low productivity and employee turnover (Singh et al., 2016; Garba & Jacob, 2021). Poor working conditions are caused by the informal implementation of the working conditions and work-life balance, resulting in outcomes highlighted by the literature cited in this study. This agrees with the study's findings that informal working conditions and work-life balance significantly influence employee turnover, absenteeism and employee development.



Employee turnover was supported at 5% with a p-value of 0.012, suggesting that as informal working conditions and work-life balance increase, the likelihood of employee turnover also increases. Absenteeism was supported at 5% with a p-value of 0.012, implying that when employees perceive unfavourable working conditions and a lack of work-life balance, they are more likely to absent themselves from work. Employee development was

supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.001, implying that favourable working conditions and a healthy work-life balance contribute to employees' development within the organisation. Therefore, informal working conditions and work-life contribute to the declining employee development in selected PTEIs.

The factors that contributed to the informal implementation of the HR practice of working conditions and work-life balance in selected PTEIs included work overload, lack of job security and limited job resources. First, work overload in selected PTEIs has caused 85.4% of the participants in selected PTEIs to work during weekends, resulting in a lack of work-life balance in selected PTEIs. The lack of work-life balance among employees triggers stress, fatigue, and burnout, which are made worse by limited leave days available during the year (Kamati, 2020). Academics were entitled to five leave days during the year, and 19 were available at the end of the year. This left academics with limited time to rest, attend to the family and focus on career development needs. This makes it important for selected PTEIs to review their leave policy for academic staff within the university. Second, employees experiencing job insecurity are likely to have stress, frustration and anxiety (Qin et al., 2021). This is because of the fear of losing a job, which affects financial stability and future career prospects and negatively impacts employees' mental well-being. Due to the need for stability, employees will always be searching for stable jobs, and this has caused employee turnover, performance deterioration, absenteeism and reduced employee development.

Fourth, employee relations and involvement promote employee performance in an institution (Samwel, 2018; Tewari & Kumar, 2019). This can be accomplished by the implementation of a comprehensive employment relations policy (Meyer, 2011).

Nevertheless, the study found that the selected PTEIs have a formal disciplinary and grievance management procedure and a job description that helps academics know what is expected of them. However, there is a lack of participation on issues that concern them in selected PTEIs; for example, 63.8% of the respondents were not aware of the institution's vision and mission, which makes employees unaware of these institutions' main goals. Employees have unsolved conflicts due to the informal implementation of the grievance procedure. The selected PTEIs are experiencing absenteeism because of an ineffective absenteeism monitoring system. The current absenteeism monitoring system in two of the selected PTEIs has led to micro-management of academic staff in these institutions, which can affect job satisfaction, resulting in employee turnover. The informal HR practices

(lack of employee involvement on issues that concern them, unsolved conflict and ineffective absenteeism management system) identified by this study affect employee relations and involvement in the work (Samwel, 2018; Tewari & Kumar, 2019). Thus, it is imperative to discontinue the practice of informal employee relations and involvement in selected PTEIs due to its potential negative impact on absenteeism, as supported by the statistical findings of this study. Absenteeism was supported at 1% with a p-value of 0.005, suggesting that higher levels of informal employee relations and involvement are associated with increased absenteeism.

Fifth, recruitment and selection should be made using a sound recruitment and selection policy, job specifications, and job descriptions to attract the best candidates for the vacant posts in the institution (Mihu et al, 2023). Therefore, selected PTEIs should follow the recruitment and selection process, as this will enable the institution to hire the right candidate. With regard to this, the study found that the selected PTEIs follow the standard recruitment and selection policy. Conversely, two out of three PTEIs' job advertisements do not include the employment equity statement. This is against the Namibian affirmative action as it requires institutions to demonstrate their commitment to non-discrimination practice. The exclusion of this statement led to a perception of discrimination in selected PTEIs' policies potentially affecting employee morale, thereby triggering employee turnover.

Furthermore, the selected PTEIs lacked consistency in recruitment and selection when they did "head hunting", leading to employee misplacement. The study suggests that this may be a reason for academic staff leaving these institutions when they feel there is a job misfit, as they will not be able to meet the performance requirements of the job. The informal recruitment and selection process has resulted in PTEIs hiring a limited number of employees without using the standard interview process. While institutions may be eager to promptly fill vacant positions to avoid disadvantaging students, compromising the selection process results in job misfits, leading to employee resignation (Lee et al., 2018) and underperformance, particularly when inexperienced candidates are selected.

Sixth, to retain employees, the organisation should pay salaries based on the market rates or even more than what is offered in the market and practice a total reward system (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2018). The HR practices for total reward compensation have been used by organisations that are facing problems of employee turnover to address the problem (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2018). This research study found that 73% of the respondents in selected PTEIs perceived their salaries as low. This may be due to the

fact that they earn lower salaries compared to others doing the same job. Furthermore, the salary does not include fringe benefits, which are typically associated with academic staff positions, such as medical aid, pension contributions and gratuity for expatriates. As a result, academic staff leave these institutions for greener pastures, thereby increasing the rate of employee turnover in selected PTEIs.

Considering the outcomes of the informal implementation of HR practices, selected PTEIs need to transform the implementation of HR practices.

Transformation

The transformation phase of this model will change informal HR practices to formal ones, see Figure 1. The informal HR practice for performance management and recognition was described as informal because it lacked recognition, a feedback mechanism, a development plan linked to employee weakness, and a formal performance appraisal method. Therefore, to transform informal performance management into a formal HR practice, the PTEIs need to formally recognise employees for good performance. PTEIs can implement peer-to-peer recognition, personal thank-you notes, team celebrations, and public announcements to recognise their academics (Chapman & White, 2019; Kezar & Elrod, 2020). The recognition should be consistent and formal as this will motivate employees to achieve performance (Saraih et al., 2017; Bansal et al., 2018). There is a need for selected PTEIs to adopt a performance appraisal system that will reduce subjectivity, prejudice and halo effect in the performance evaluation process (Ramchandani & Aggarwal, 2018). The system will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of an employee, making the process effective. The feedback must be communicated to the employees so they can see how they are performing (Saraih et al., 2017; Bansal et al., 2018). The weaknesses this process will identify should be used to formulate a development plan to improve academic performance. This will raise employee performance, promote employee development and deter absenteeism. The study found that enhanced performance increases employees' likelihood of staying in selected PTEIs.

The informal HR practice for career development and growth was classified as informal due to its deficiency in providing a formal career development and growth policy, which resulted in an unclear career development progression pathway for employees. The selected PTEIs also lacked formal support for career development. The informal HR practice for career development and growth resulted in employee turnover, absenteeism and a decline in employee development. Given this fact, for the selected PTEIs to remain competitive, these institutions need to start implementing formal

HR practices for career development and growth. The transformation must commence with formulating and implementing the career development and growth policy. The formal career development and growth policy must support the academic staff's career journey. It should establish a clear progression path, outlining advancement opportunities within the institution. It must provide formal support for career development through mentorship, access to online courses and webinars. Additionally, partnerships with external institutions can be explored to offer discounted degrees or professional development opportunities, ensuring continuous learning and skills development in a cost-effective and financially sustainable manner.

Furthermore, the formal policy should promote, support and incentivise research activities among academic staff. This can be made possible by implementing performance-based bonuses, instead of direct grants. PTEIs could offer performance-based bonuses or stipends for faculty who publish in reputable journals or secure collaborative research projects. They could also facilitate research partnerships with public institutions or industry to access research funding and collaborative opportunities. This can help PTEIs to leverage external resources and minimise their financial burden. Also introducing small, competitive and even modest internal research grants funded by PTEI profits can provide essential support for research activities.

Additionally, cultivating a research culture in selected PTEIs can enhance academic excellence and the institution's reputation. Moreover, the policy should consider the importance of work-life balance. PTEIs need to encourage faculty to apply for externally funded sabbatical opportunities such as fellowships or grants from research councils, which do not require PTEI financial support (Bass et al., 2020). It is important to note that sabbaticals enable academic staff to participate in academic exchange programmes. By so doing, they can gain new skills and knowledge that can benefit the selected PTEIs. Formal career development and growth will not only retain academic staff but also reduce absenteeism and increase employee development, thereby avoiding performance deterioration. The HR practice for working conditions and work-life balance has been described as informal due to work overload experienced by academic staff, lack of workload management policy, lack of job security, limited job resources, limited leave days and lack of work-life balance in selected PTEIs. Selected PTEIs must implement formal HR practices for improving working conditions and work-life balance. To improve the working conditions and work-life balance, the selected PTEIs should explore cost-effective strategies to optimise workload allocation, enhance job security,

increase annual leave entitlement, improve the provision of job resources, and promote work-life balance. This could involve reallocating existing resources, leveraging technology to improve efficiency, and seeking external partnerships or funding opportunities to support these initiatives while ensuring long-term sustainability. The study hence proposes a workload management system (WMS) that caters to all the activities that are done by academics, that is, administration, teaching, research, teaching and learning, research supervision, community engagement and academic citizenship (Miller, 2019; Okeke-Uzodike & Gamede, 2021). The percentage for each component should be realistic and enable the selected PTEIs to remedy the workload that is carried by academic staff.

Moreover, the WMS will ensure fair and balanced task distribution among academic staff, prevent fatigue and burnout, and remove a perception of unfair distribution of workload, which is currently perceived by 71.3% of the respondents. Improving job security will instil stability and commitment among academic staff in selected PTEIs. By offering long fixed contracts, academic staff may have opportunities for professional growth, which will motivate the employees to stay long in these institutions (Maurya & Chatterjee, 2018). The management of leave days plays an important role in promoting work-life balance. The study suggests that selected PTEIs should use 50% of their term breaks for academic staff to meet their personal family and professional needs, as this will increase the number of leave days that can be used by academic staff during the year. In addition, providing adequate resources enables employees to meet the required performance standard.

The HR practice for employee relations and involvement was classified as informal mainly due to lack of employee participation, employees with unsolved conflicts and the ineffective absenteeism monitoring system. Employee relations and involvement help maintain a positive relationship between the employer and the employees and make teamwork possible. Therefore, the study proposes consistently implementing disciplinary and grievance procedures, fair performance evaluation processes, enhancing employee participation and establishing an effective absenteeism monitoring system within selected PTEIs to improve employee relations and involvement. Consistent implementation of disciplinary and grievance procedure enables selected PTEIs to foster a transparent and fair environment where all employees are treated equally. The perception of all employees feeling equally treated enables employees to communicate their grievances and cooperate in solving them because the employees trust the system. Employee participation can be enhanced by creating good communication channels within the institutions. Management

should ensure that information concerning academic staff, such as vision, mission, values, and institutional policies, is effectively communicated to them. There is a need to encourage two-way communication as this will enable management to be aware of the academic staff's opinions and ideas and create a sense of ownership among the academic staff. Furthermore, implementing an absence monitoring system can help maintain attendance without creating a sense of micromanagement among academic staff. This transformation to formal HR practice of employee relations and involvement helps foster a healthy employee relationship between the employer and the employees, thereby helping to combat the challenges that selected PTEIs face.

The HR practice for recruitment and selection was classified as informal mainly due to a lack of clear employment equity and inconsistent application of the recruitment and selection policy. Given this fact, the study suggests that selected PTEIs should promote employment equity in their institutions. This can be achieved by including the employment equity statement in their job advertisement. As highlighted by O'Brien et al. (2016), the employment equity statement on job advertisements shows no discrimination in the institutions' policies. In addition, the recruitment and selection methods should not be compromised even when the PTEIs have used "headhunting" as a recruitment method; for posts that need immediate placement, online interviews can be conducted. The dangers of not conducting an interview cause job misfit that leads to poor performance, absenteeism and employee turnover.

The HR practice for remuneration in selected PTEIs can be described as informal, not merely because of the perceived low salaries but due to the lack of fringe benefits as indicated by 77.2% of the respondents. Additionally, 85.8% of respondents indicated a lack of employee engagement in remuneration discussions, which further highlights the informality of the system. At PTEI-2, for instance, academic staff are not compensated during vacation periods, further underscoring the irregular and inconsistent nature of remuneration practices. This lack of formalisation, coupled with non-competitive remuneration, has contributed to high turnover as academic staff leave PTEIs in search of better opportunities.

The study recommends that selected PTEIs adopt a more structured approach to remuneration by offering competitive market-based salary packages. Additionally, PTEIs should provide market-related fringe benefits such as medical aid, pension, and housing allowances, given the high cost of living in Windhoek. These benefits could be shared between the employer and employee to alleviate the financial burden on institutions. By

formalising remuneration practices and offering competitive salaries and benefits, PTEIs can reduce turnover, minimise absenteeism caused by staff seeking secondary employment, and ultimately enhance staff retention and performance.

The HR strategy of the selected PTEIs guides the transformation from the informal to the formal HR practice. The HR strategy is a strategic plan developed and implemented by an institution to manage its employees effectively. It guides the HR professionals in the development and implementation of policies that will be used by institutions in the management of employees, aligning them with the organisational goals and contributing to their long-term success. The developed policies outline the guidelines and principles governing HR practices. However, this study found that PTEIs' HR strategy only focuses on recruiting highly qualified candidates and maintaining a conducive working environment that can retain staff. The strategy has limited HR practices that can retain employees, resulting in selected PTEIs having negative work behaviours because of informal implementation. The selected PTEIs need to develop an HR strategy that will encompass HR practices that will retain academic staff. They will then create policies that will promote the implementation of formal HR practices, and this will lead to a positive outcome.

Outputs

The outputs in the last phase of the formal HRM practices model for PTEIs result from the transformation phase, where HR practices have been transformed from informal to formal HR practices. The formal HR practice will enable the PTEIs to develop work behaviours such as improved employee development, reduced absenteeism, and improved employee performance. The transformation phase of the formal HRM practices model for PTEIs has resulted in an output of work behaviours that address the problems currently faced by selected PTEIs. PTEIs should consider adopting this model as a potential approach to enhance their HR practice.

The arrow linking work behaviours (improved performance, reduced absenteeism and increased employee development) to employee retention proposes that if selected PTEIs promote formal HR practices that create positive work behaviours, they are likely to retain academic staff in their institution.

Conclusion

Retaining academic staff is a key challenge for private tertiary institutions, particularly in the competitive 21st-century educational landscape. The

implementation of formal HR practices can significantly enhance the retention of academic staff. Therefore, the study has proposed a formal HRM practices model to retain academic staff. This will enable the selected PTEIs to change from their current informal HR practices to more formal HR practices. Such a change will create positive work behaviours, that is, improved performance, reduced absenteeism, and increased employee development, thereby retaining academic staff in these institutions. This initiative will benefit both the institution and its stakeholders.

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