Factors Influencing the Retention of Academic Staff in a Ghanaian Technical University

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Abstract The constant loss of quality academic staff has become a matter of great concern to management of Ghanaian universities. The main objective of the study was to identify factors that influence the retention of academic staff in Sunyani Technical University, Ghana. The research question that guided the study was: what factors retain academic staff in the university? A qualitative research design involving an interview with academic staff of the university was followed. Nine academic staff were purposefully selected to provide understanding into factors they perceived to be important in their retention. A content analysis of the data resulted in clusters of themes that addressed the research objective. The factors that appeared to influence the retention of the university's academic staff were identified as: leadership and institutional culture, growth opportunities, institutional mission and vision, meaningful work and collegiality. The study recommends that the university translates these factors into formal retention strategies based on the intrinsic needs of staff and also leverages on the strengths provided by its institutional culture. The practical value of this study has been the highlighting of the factors that can be leveraged to retain the institution's academic staff. The study contributes empirical findings on staff retention in a Ghanaian university, a research area in which there is a scarcity of empirical studies.

Keywords Growth opportunities, Collegiality, Retaining academic staff, Technical Universities

1. Introduction

Ghanaian universities, especially the technical universities, play a crucial role in the ongoing transformation of Ghanaian society, and as such, they present an interesting context for studying matters of staff retention. Research has been conducted into the attraction of academics and the factors influencing their retention (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). However, a literature search for research studies on academic staff's retention in Ghanaian universities produced very little results. Increasingly, employees worldwide rely on their work to define their own meaning of life (Beukes & Botha, 2013; Burger, Crous & Roodt, 2012; Seligman, 2011). According to Upadhyah and Gupta (2012), the levels of employees' job satisfaction are affected by their morale, levels of engagement in their work and their performance. Sufficient job resources such as growth opportunities, organisational support and career advancement have also proved to positively affect the levels of staff's engagement in their work (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006).

Organisations expect of their employees to perform

optimally and to be committed to the organisation and its cause as observed by Bakker and Schaufeli (2008). However, employees' productivity, performance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, amongst others, are influenced by various factors related to their well-being and retention (Field & Buitendach, 2011). Hence, institutions should turn their focus to ensure retaining their staff. Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014) are of the view that staff morale and perceived job security, for instance, are influenced by factors such as a high staff turnover, which in turn leads to a loss of expertise and organisational stability. A similar view is shared by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) who argue that when employees do not experience job satisfaction, there is a drop in their levels of engagement at work, their stress levels increase and their chances of burning out become much higher. It is crucial therefore to enhance motivation in order to retain employees in every possible manner. A study by Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2010) revealed that the need to belong, feel valued and appreciated is still real and valid in today's society and that it affects staff retention in the workplace.

Although issues of employee retention are very complex, they need to be addressed in order to benefit the universities. Consequently, the university under study had prioritised staff development and training to attract and retain quality academic staff, thereby aiming to build a resilient talent pipeline. However, a prevalent concern has been that no

formal retention programmes exist to keep these academic staff. There is therefore the scope for further research to comprehend the intricacies of retention strategies and how they may influence retention of academic staff in Ghanaian universities. Accordingly, institutional leaders could benefit from understanding those retention factors that might serve to retain such caliber of staff. Consequently, the research problem sought to address by this study was to understand factors that might aid in retaining academic staff within the university. The research question, thus, was: what factors positively impact on the retention of academic staff in Sunyani technical university?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics of Quality Academic Staff

The ability to attract, engage, develop and retain talented academic staff has become increasingly important for Ghanaian technical universities in their quest for gaining competitive advantage. A talented individual is one who drives exceptional business performance through competence, commitment and contribution (Hayashi & Dolan, 2013). With its vision of becoming a global top-notch technical university for the provision of career-focused, practically-oriented and entrepreneurially-inclined training, Sunyani Technical University's Strategic Plan (2015-2010) offers a similar description, explaining that a high-potential academic staff is someone who:

> demonstrates consistent levels of high performance; has academic/professional qualification in relevant area with considerable experience in teaching, research and general administration; is capable of handling and coordinating multiple roles and maintaining high level of professional and ethical standards.

Similarly, the Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922) requires an academic staff of a technical university to possess requisite qualification and related industry experience to teach in his/her area of competence and provides strong academic, intellectual and scholarly leadership for research excellence and knowledge dissemination. To this list, Allen, Bryant and Vardaman (2010) add that the individual must possess robust business knowledge and contribute soundly to the business. Hausknecht et al. (2009) contend that competent employees are more likely to become the future leaders of an organisation, and possess several core characteristics including, but not limited to, creativity, autonomy, resilience and learning potential (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen & Moeyaert, 2009).

2.2. Importance of Retaining Quality Academic Staff

Retaining employees has become a global effort since employees contribute to organisational success (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2012). For an organisation to remain competitive,

Castellano (2013) argues that it must engage the most talented employees within the market. This is particularly pertinent to the institutions of higher education (Mohlala, Goldman & Goosen, 2012). As suggested by Joo and Mclean (2006), engaged and committed employees should be regarded as strategic assets in organisations as they possess 'the set of difficult-to-trade and-imitate, scarce, appropriable and specialized resources and capabilities that give a firm's competitive advantage'. Nevertheless, qualified employees are sometimes overlooked as strategic assets to the organisation. Consequently, they may be disengaged from and dissatisfied with their current employers and begin to search for new opportunities where they feel more highly valued (Hughes & Rog, 2008).

Vasishtha (2009) observed that replacing talented employees and training new ones to function as productively as their predecessors is a growing challenge for higher educational institutions. Krishnan (2009) posits that the turnover of qualified and talented employees is associated with significant direct and indirect costs to an organisation. These costs include those associated with recruitment and selection, loss of productivity, quality shortfalls, poor morale among current employees and loss of organisational knowledge when employees leave. This might also be true for the universities in Ghana.

2.3. Factors Influencing Staff Retention

According to Holtbrugge, Friedman and Puck (2010), employers should endeavour to retain high potential employees and replace the low performers with new staff with diverse skills and strong ability. It is crucial therefore that management of our universities understand factors which help to retain staff specific to their own institutions. This is in line with a caution by Vaiman, Scullion and Collings (2012) that blanket retention policies are often unsuccessful and disadvantageous to an organisation if they appeal to employees at all levels and are not segmented. Similarly, Sinha (2012) argues that retention schemes that are successful in one institution may not necessarily achieve retention at another.

Factors that have been shown to influence the retention of quality academic staff include organisational culture and values, self-actualisation, leadership, communication, work–life balance, and reward and recognition (Trevisan et al., 2014). It has been observed by Kerr and Slocum (2005) that the variation in employee retention across organisations may be connected to organisational culture. The culture of an organization is described by Deal and Kennedy (2000) as 'the way we do things around here'. Armstrong (2014) also defined organizational culture as the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which people in organizations behave and get things done. Liden et al. (2014) posit that employees become energised when the culture appeals to their higher ideals and values. Linked to organisational culture, Allen and Meyer (1990) defined organisational commitment as the 'relative strength of an

individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation'.

Lumley et al. (2011) viewed organisational commitment as a psychological connection that individuals have with their organisation, characterised by the strong identification with their organisation. Sun and Anderson (2012) suggested that leaders should ideally enhance employees' personal links to the company, thereby enabling employees to better understand how their individual successes contribute to the overall organisational success. Kinicki and Fugate (2012) argued that employees' commitment is likely to be enhanced if they are well socialised into the organisation and identify with the corporate culture. Similarly, Alfes, Shantz, Truss and Soane (2013) contend that personal values of individuals influence their beliefs, behaviour and the decisions they make at the workplace. This concurs with an argument by Grojean et al. (2004) that if employees identify with the values of the organisation and believe them to be similar to their own, they are more likely to stay with the organisation.

Just like any other employees, academic staff often try to achieve a level of self-actualisation (Gupta & Tayal, 2013). Academic staff need to feel that they are learning, advancing and remaining competitive in line with their peers and see this as leading to opportunities for promotion and career advancement (Kyndt et al., 2009). Sageer, Rafat and Agarwal (2012) contend that if staff do not feel competitive as their peers, the possibility of them discovering new external job opportunities becomes high. According to Paul and Berry (2013), leadership is fundamental to retention of quality staff and should be reflective of the organisational culture.

Organizations largely function through managers and supervisors who exercise leadership in order to get their teams into action and ensure that they achieve the expected results (Armstrong, 2014). Kaiser and Hogan (2010) posit that standing by business ethics and displaying personal integrity are prerequisites for good transformational leadership. However, if leaders are perceived to lack integrity, Kaiser and Hogan (2010) further argue that it is likely to harm the trust and the relationships required to build and sustain effective working relationships with qualified and committed employees. Grojean et al. (2004) observed that leaders provide employees with informal direction on how to perform their roles to achieve the strategic objectives through the culture of the organisation. A similar view is expressed by Chatman and Cha (2003) who state that employees are encouraged by leaders to take ownership of their actions and consequently excel. Effective communication is connected to leadership (Effelsberg, Solga & Gurt, 2012) and is considered among the best tools for leaders to increase retention (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011). Tillott, Walsh and Moxham (2013) observe that high commitment can be fostered through reminding employees of their value and importance to an organisation. Impliedly, an inclusive organisational culture that promotes open and honest communication, and one that places a strong emphasis on knowledge equality, is likely to contribute to staff retention (Pyszka & Pilat, 2011).

Greenhaus and Allen (2012) mention that if employees feel that they are unable to attain a work–life balance, they may be more predisposed to leave for an environment that can support this expectation. In order to create that balance, Nadeem (2009) recommends that organisational leaders should focus on providing policies that promote a healthy work–life balance to assist in retaining quality employees. The culture of the institution determines the organisational mindset around opportunities offered internally (Chatman & Cha, 2003).

Just like any other high potential employees, committed academic staff appreciate institutional investment in training and skills development that generally lower staff's need to exit as observed by Allen (2008). In academia, faculty members require constant skills updating through training and development programmes to enhance their professional competence as recommended by Doh et al. (2011). Rondeau and Wager (2001) opined that opportunities for growth and long-term career prospects are crucial for academic staff. It is the view of Caldwell et al. (2012) that rewards and advancement opportunities are central to retaining quality employees. In collective sense, academic staff need to feel equitably remunerated and see the potential to grow within the institutions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Shavelson and Towne (2002) observe that qualitative studies assist in answering descriptive questions about "what is happening?" and "what or how is it happening?" This is also true of this study which sought to establish the situation on the ground by describing the participants' views. The study used a case study design in a single university to undertake an in-depth analysis of factors which influence the retention of academic staff in Ghanaian universities. Yin (2003) explains that a case study design allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes.

3.2. Population and Sample Size

A purposive sample of nine (n=9), out of 252 permanent academic staff of Sunyani technical university, were selected. This sample size is in line with what Durrheim (in Terre Blanche et al., 2006) proposes, namely that in interpretive, qualitative research, samples should consist of smaller groups. In purposive sampling, sampling units are selected for a specific purpose on which the researcher decides (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

In this study, all participants had to demonstrate the characteristics of a seasoned scholar as determined by the

university: have considerable experience in teaching, research and general administration, fitting into its institutional culture, alignment to the university, service to community and possessing adequate industrial skills and resilience. The inclusion criteria were that participants had to be information-rich and had to vary with regard to gender, age, academic rank and years of teaching experience in the university. They were staff with considerable experience in teaching, research and university administration who could create competitive advantage for the university. Due to their demonstrable scholarly track record, these academic staff are marketable and thus are 'key informants' (Maxwell, 2013) or knowledgeable people who are capable of providing a deeper insight into the issues regarding the subject under study.

3.3. Research Instrument

Based on the literature, an interview guide was constructed that included open-ended questions. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were fully understood by the participants. The questions were worded in a way as to encourage participants to provide accurate, unbiased and complete information in relation to the research problem. Where participants appeared unsure of the questions, probes were used.

3.4. Data Collection

Access to participants was gained by obtaining consent from the university. Thereafter, participants were individually approached, via phone calls and personal emails to set up convenient meeting times and venues that ensured confidentiality.

3.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In line with qualitative research methodology, data collected were subjected to content analysis where themes (Baxter, 1991) and categories were used to assemble the first-order concepts and to understand the information at a higher logical level (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

To ensure reliability of the data, all semi-structured questions were posed in the same way to participants by the reseacher, and responses were not influenced in any way (Myers, 2010).

According to Bowen (2005), the soundness of a study is influenced by credibility, internal validity and transferability. Credibility is determined by establishing whether the information provided by participants speaks to the findings of the study (Esterberg, 2002), which was the case in the present study. Selecting the most appropriate method of data collection and the amount of data collected, was important in establishing such credibility.

The units of data acquired through content analysis were not too broad with multiple meanings. Dependability of data was also ensured by the researcher coding sets of data.

3.6. Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness

As data were collected and analyzed, the researcher employed the member checking strategy to ensure that the researcher's interpretations of the data were shared with the participants. This also gave the participants the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretations.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Participants signed informed consent forms after the purpose of the study was explained to them. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Participants were further informed they had a right to voluntarily withdraw from the study should they not feel comfortable.

4. Findings

The study aimed to identify factors that influence the retention of academic staff in a Ghanaian technical university. The following themes emerged:

Leadership

Five participants attributed the reason why they had left previous employers to poor leadership. Participants mentioned that supportive leadership was a primary reason why they stayed with the university:

> For me, leadership is the differentiating factor for staying in this university. That's why I decided to remain working here. The Vice Chancellor and his management team are superb. Since he took over as the VC last year, I've been more committed and excited to be teaching here. (Participant 5, a female with 6 years of lecturing)

Participant 9 cited the open management style in the university as being the reason for his retention:

> Every management member is approachable in this university. My Dean is inclusive and entrenched in the institution. He involves our faculty members in everything and values our opinion. I appreciate that our VC is someone who wants every staff to be happy and lives the culture he is creating in the university. (Participant 9, male, 7 years' lecturing)

This sentiment was resounded by Participant 8:

> I have a wonderful HOD. My head of department goes beyond her call of duty to build relationships and supports her staff members in diverse ways. My HOD is an inspiration to us, the female lecturers. She holds her own in a male dominated university environment while running the department. She's approachable, independent and unassuming. I really respect her. I'm privileged to work so closely with other faculty members. (Participant 8, female lecturer with 6 years of lecturing)

Growth opportunities

All participants expressed their appreciation for being allowed to partake in training programmes. All mentioned that they valued the university for providing a diverse range of growth opportunities geared to every employee in the

university:

> The on-going training and development programmes being run internally have positively impacted me. I've learnt a lot and gained valuable teaching and research skills and experience. It's a fantastic opportunity. The university has also arranged a formal mentoring programme for the younger academics which has impacted me hugely in my career. The fact that the university is willing to spend money and other resources on developing the young academics increases my commitment and engagement with the institution. (Participant 6, male with 5 years of lecturing)

Participant 6 appreciated the recognition and growth opportunities he receives within the university. He described the on-going programmes aimed at building capacity of staff as well thought out, thus ensuring that they add value to every faculty member.

Participant 4 added:

> I really value the opportunity to learn and not being intellectually dead. (Participant 4, male, 6 years' lecturing)

Institutional vision and mission

Majority of participants had a clear understanding of the university's mission and vision. They emphasised that the university is focused on being a top-notch technical university with a great vision:

> The university does what I feel is really important. [It] creates value by empowering both faculty and students to create value for themselves. (Participant 2, male, 7 years of lecturing)

> I truly believe in what we do in this university. Being part of a young and vibrant university that directly impacts thousands of Ghanaians every day is why I came to lecture here. The purpose and concept of what we do is really great. (Participant 1, female, 10 years' lecturing).

Meaningful work

Five participants felt that their jobs added value to themselves and the university, since they are able to realise the contribution of their efforts towards the university's success and growth. Due to the vibrancy of the university and the complexity of their jobs, participants found their work to be challenging and intellectually stimulating, which they highlighted as being important for them.

Participants 1 and 7 emphasised that meaningful work was a major factor that retains them:

> The work is always challenging. This is a driving force for me. I need to be challenged. The way we do things is constantly evolving. There's always something to improve on and that excites me. I lecture here since I can add value and students ask for my views. It's interesting. (Participant 1, female with 10 years lecturing)

> If I'm not challenged, I'll leave the university. I must enjoy what I'm doing and be able to realize the value of my teaching. (Participant 7, male, 8 years' lecturing)

Environment

The physical and academic environment created by the university was a prominent theme in almost all the interviews. Seven participants used words like 'friendly', 'fun' and 'dynamic' when describing the university's environment. Many of the participants mentioned the positive environment, specifically of the student-lecturer area and the management-staff relationship, which they felt truly differentiates the university from any other university. They described the culture as being reflective of the values and mission of the university. The participants felt the environment fostered collaboration and innovation among staff and students:

> I really struggled in my previous institution. Going to work took more effort and my energy was depleted at the end of every day. I get up in the morning thinking, do I really have to go and teach? Whereas now, on every morning, I get up and think, amazing, I'm going to work. (Participant 5, female with 6 years' lecturing)

Participant 6 described the environment as friendly, fast paced and energetic. A similar view was shared by Participant 3:

> The working environment is enabling and very unique. If you walk into any of our departments, administrators and Assistant registrars are friendly and have created hospitable and welcoming spaces. It's really awesome. (Participant 3, female, 3 years of lecturing)

Collegiality

All the participants valued and respected each staff of the university. They enjoyed working in the university due to the positive relations among colleagues. They respected the faculty members and those who they called their "institutional heroes". Where possible, ranks or academic titles were used to show that, regardless of level, participants felt they were surrounded by great and distinguished scholars in the university:

> We're able to do a job that's really hectic because we have such a good ethic and sense of community. (Participant 6, male, 5years' lecturing)

> The faculty teams are the reason I decided to join this university. I had such a great experience and interactions during the recruitment interview that enticed me to work here. I wanted to work with the faculty. Faculty members are so passionate, it's infectious. (Participant 3, female, 3 years' lecturing)

> I'm honoured to be a part of the faculty. (Participant 7, male, 8 years' lecturing)

Participant 9 mentioned the resilient nature of the staff within the university:

The setting can be tough but both staff members and students are passionate, smart and strong. I enjoy working with the people here. We are united by our passion towards the university and we actually relate to each other. (Participant 9, male, 7 years' lecturing)

5. Discussion

Outline of the findings

The current study aimed to identify factors that influence the retention of academic staff in a Ghanaian technical university. The question which was answered was: What factors positively impact the retention of academic staff in the university?

Five major themes emerged in this regard: leadership and organisational culture, growth opportunities, institutional vision and mission, meaningfulness of work and collegiality or positive relations among colleagues. The factors are arranged in order of importance as ranked by participants.

Leadership and organisational culture

Participants valued the exemplary leadership they experience in the university. This was the leading retention factor expressed. Academic leaders who are approachable and inclusive inspire and motivate staff within institutions as observed by Trevisan et al. (2014). Most participants cited leadership as the reason why they left their previous institutions and why they remain working with the university under study.

Participants appeared to respect their current academic leaders and, in particular, the Vice Chancellor was described as a people's person who lives the culture he has created. This finding supports the assertion that leaders reflect culture as noted by Paul and Berry (2013). Participants trusted leadership as a result of the institutional ethics and personal integrity they observed (Kaiser & Hogan, 2010).

Participants stressed the importance of not only having leaders who motivate them, grant them the autonomy to take decisions and enable them to work independently, but also leaders who are accessible and approachable whenever assistance is needed. Such leadership styles allow staff to take ownership of their actions, with the result that they remain engaged, committed and loyal to the university as observed by Chatman and Cha (2003).

The physical and academic environment created by the university was a prominent theme in almost every interview. Participants agreed that the university's organisational culture encourages an environment that promotes innovation and collaboration among staff (Grojean et al., 2004). The physical environment was seen as a differentiating factor and one that fosters collaboration and innovation among faculty and students. These findings imply that quality academic staff prefer working in environments that are productive, all inclusive, sociable, respect employees and value diversity (Ramlall, 2004).

Growth opportunities

The necessity for growth and development of staff was obvious among the participants. All expressed gratitude for the abundant capacity building programmes and the provision of opportunities for staff development, which they considered to be essential in assisting them to grow and develop in their careers as academics. This finding concurs with that of Ryan (2010) who observed that it is important for quality employees to work for an organisation that provides them with opportunities to grow and develop.

Whilst growth opportunities was not the leading retention factor for the participants, it emerged among the top three factors. Most of the participants felt that the university offered a diversity of staff development programmes and growth opportunities that were tailored to their differing needs. They valued the fact that the university supported and encouraged continuous learning and development. This finding supports that of Allen (2008) who contends that providing staff with training and development opportunities generally increases their retention.

Institutional mission and vision

Participants made reference to the need to be part of an institution with an inspirational vision and mission to which they all relate. They mentioned that, as academics working in a developing country, it worth realising the value in whatever they do. Participants wanted to belong to an institution that is committed to improving academic standards and one that focuses on sustainability and competitiveness.

Most of the participants enjoyed the direct impact that the university has on national development and, for them, this was a powerful motivator, increasing their desire to remain with the university. These findings confirmed the observation by Messmer (2004) that if staff identify with the institution's vision and recognise their role in fulfilling that vision, they are likely to remain with the institution.

Meaningful work

One of the common themes that emerged was the meaningful work the university provides. Participants felt that their roles add value and that they are able to realise the value of what they do in the university's success. Their jobs permit them to be fully involved in strategic academic decisions in the institution. Participants needed to add value and fulfil their personal passion for teaching. They are motivated by the meaningful roles they play. Participants explained that the meaningfulness of their work drives their commitment, loyalty and engagement to the university, hence their eagerness to remain with the university.

Collegiality/ positive relations among colleagues

Participants explained how they mutually value and respect each faculty member of the university. They enjoy working in the university because of the faculty members with whom they work and interact. They respect the academic teams in the university and those they referred to as their "institutional heroes". Ramlall (2004) opines that

academic staff need to work in an environment where they feel respected and in turn respect the people they work with.

Relationship appeared to be a factor that retains qualified academic staff in the university. Participants enjoyed working with seasoned scholars who are hardworking and passionate. This finding concords with that of Kinicki and Fugate (2012) who observed that employees enjoy working with like-minded people who share the same behavioural norms. Participants were complimentary about both academic and administrative staff working in the university. There is a clear level of respect and recognition for all categories of staff in the university, a reflection of the organisational culture created to which academic staff relate. This finding concurs with that of Paul and Berry (2013).

6. Conclusions

The study explored the factors that influence the retention of academic staff in a Ghanaian technical university. It is obvious from this study that staff retention remains a relevant topic in today's working environment and that it affects institutions at all levels. The benefits of retaining qualified academic staff are numerous, and institutions can benefit tremendously from having flourishing staff components. Academic staff members should be seen as an integral part of universities and greatly affect the outputs of the institutions in various ways. Consequently, universities should do more to retain their academic staff. It is envisaged that the university studied will realise the relevant role of academic staff as the gears that keep the machine running, hence the need to prioritize their retention.

The findings from the study show that there are positive factors within the university that impact on the retention of its academic staff such as the university's leadership and organisational culture; growth opportunities; institutional mission and vision; meaningful work and collegiality or positive relations among colleagues. These positive developments were identified by academic staff themselves, as discussed earlier.

As there are limited studies available pertaining to retaining of academic staff in Ghanaian universities, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge within the field of academic staff's retention in the context of higher education. The study was thus aimed at benefitting Ghanaian universities in relation to the management of strategic human resources and, more specifically, their academic staff. However, because staff retention is a relative topic in today's society, it could benefit all organisations that employ people. Hence, the study, albeit intended to be to the advantage of Ghanaian universities, may also benefit organisations striving to attract and retain quality employees.

7. Practical Implications

The findings of this study have implications for the advancement of knowledge in the field of managing and retaining academic staff in Ghanaian universities. It is envisaged that the university studied will develop retention strategies tailored to the needs of its academic staff and also leverage the strengths of its institutional culture so created. Since the needs of academic staff may vary, efforts should be made by management of the university to customize retention strategies targeted at qualified academic staff to individually satisfy their needs.

The findings show that academic staff are intrinsically motivated. Consequently, the outcomes of this research could assist institutional leaders and human resource practitioners in developing retention strategies that will not only foster the commitment of academic staff but also assist the institutions in retaining them as well.

Finally, academic Deans and departmental heads need to focus on developing the institutional culture to strongly promote the vision of the university, encourage continuous development of staff, create an enabling academic environment and thus fosters and attracts the right kinds of staff in an effort to transforming the university.

8. Limitations and Recommendations

The following limitations applied to this study:

- the limited sample size;
- participants were limited to only academic staff on a single university; and that
- only interviews could be conducted for the empirical research which implies that the information obtained was based purely on the participants' subjective views.

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that since this study was limited to nine (9) academic staff of a particular university, the credibility and transferability of the findings could be tested by conducting similar studies across a larger sample of academic staff at other universities.

Research may also indicate differences in retention strategies for different demographic groups of staff at different stages in their careers.

Finally, the current study investigated the views of academic staff and so a study involving non-academic staff would give a fuller picture of factors influencing staff retention in the university; it might also provide an opportunity to compare the views of academic and non-academic staff on these retention factors.

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