

University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Examining the factors affecting employee retention at an agricultural public
entity in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Lerato Palesa Moloi, declare that:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late grandparents, whose unwavering commitment to the importance of education has been a guiding light in my life. To the future generations of our family, may this achievement serve as a reminder that you are surrounded by a legacy of resilience, love, and unwavering belief in the power of knowledge.

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ABSTRACT

Employee retention is crucial for the long-term success and the stability of an organisation. The retention of qualified, skilled and experienced employees allows for continuity, preservation of institutional knowledge, and it reduces the costs that are associated with high employee turnover. These costs include recruitment, induction, and various on-boarding trainings which cause a dent in the organisation's annual fiscus. Previous studies have pointed out the important role that leadership and human resources play in achieving employee retention. The aim of the study was to examine the factors affecting employee retention at this organisation, with the view to suggest initiatives that management can implement to promote employee retention. The qualitative research approach was employed, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants who were purposively selected. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The study highlights the importance of employee retention, job security, and limiting the constant change in executive management. It further highlights a lack of professional development opportunities, unsatisfactory compensation packages, and poor communication in the organisation. The study recommends that the organisation considers long-term employment contracts, have stability to employing the management, and adopt strategies for career pathing and effective communication.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADA	Agribusiness Development Agency
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
CST	Career Stage Theory
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
EDTEA	Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCT	Human Capital Theory
JET	Job Embeddedness Theory
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
OC	Organisational Culture
RBVT	Resource Based View Theory
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
STI	Short Term Incentive
TOE	Theory of Organisational Equilibrium
WBL	Work-Life-Balance

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and provides background information on the topic under study. The chapter describes the problem statement, indicating areas of concern that prompted the researcher to conduct this study. The significance of the study, purpose statement, aim, and the research questions and objectives are also articulated in this chapter. Furthermore, the limitations of the study, research methodology roadmap, as well as the structure of the dissertation, are outlined.

1.2 Study background

Employee retention is important in every organisation, as the turnover of skilled employees is a persistent problem that not only affects the successful running of an organisation, but is also costly to the organisation. This is due to processes such as recruitment, selection, replacement, and training of new hires, which need to be done (Chatzoudes & Chatzoglou, 2022).

Public service organisations in the country continue to face the problem of retaining skilled employees, as most of them are resigning voluntarily to join the private sector organisations (Ogony & Majola, 2018). According to Ramapriya and Sudhamathi (2020), employees are the most important asset of any organisation, and the onus relies on the employer to keep their most skilled and high performing staff members. The authors further suggest that the retention of employees is not only beneficial for the organisation, but for the employee as well. Noranee *et al.* (2021) concur, suggesting that high employee retention improves employee morale, as the workforce builds strong relationships amongst each other and as the organisation benefits by avoiding the high costs associated with the recruiting and training of new hires.

Reasons for voluntary resignation differ from one individual to another, but they include poor working conditions, job dissatisfaction, job insecurity, unfair remuneration and benefits packages, heavy workloads, a lack of growth, and poor organisational leadership, among others. When people leave an organisation, those remaining often

have to temporarily fill in for them to allow for business continuity whilst the organisation embarks on a recruitment process and the training of new hires. However, this causes stress for the remaining employees and the organisation, and often results in more resignations (Ngotngamwong, 2020). The low levels of retention will result in the organisation not being able to achieve its objectives, hence it is important for employees to develop and implement retention strategies in order to keep employees engaged to achieve high retention levels (Raziq, Rizvi & Mahjabeen, 2021).

The Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) is a provincial state-owned entity under the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The Entity is governed by a Board of Directors and is mandated to create a robust agribusiness industry that is sustainable, economical, and inclusive in the province. The Entity was established in 2009 as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), and later transferred to the DARD in 2013, which currently funds it through the equitable share for core business operations.

The agricultural sector is a key contributor to the country's economy. It plays a significant role in creating employment, contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP), as well as ensuring food security. KZN is known for its fertile land and favourable climate, which are good for the production and processing of various crop and livestock commodities. Although DARD has been in existence for decades and has providing agricultural support to farmers, the sector was growing rapidly in the province, which saw the need for the inception of the ADA. The role of the ADA is to provide support to entrant agricultural entrepreneurs, particularly those that belong to designated groups which are defined by the Employment Equity Act of 1998 as black people, youth, women, and individuals with disabilities. The Entity provides support in the form of grant funding, resources, farmer skills development programmes, as well as infrastructure development to support the initial set-up and expansion of agricultural operations.

1.3 Problem statement

As mentioned precedingly, the ADA has a huge role to play in the province. However, the Entity is unable to successfully fulfil its mandate due to the exodus of employees over the past several years and the constant change in leadership that the Entity continues to experience to date. The leadership of any organisation have an important role to play in keeping employees engaged and motivated. This, in turn, results in increased employee retention and ultimately boosts performance and the overall growth of the organisation. It is often said that people do not leave companies, but rather leave ineffective leaders., which means that poor leadership can bring about a negative effect on employees. Poor management and bad leadership are considered as major reasons behind employee turnover (Bhagat, 2022).

According to Koketso and Braam (2012), public service organisations, including public entities, face enormous challenges in transformation. They struggle with retaining effective employees and such retention problems are perceived to be worsening. The world of work has become an increasingly competitive environment and has seen employees leave their employers for various reasons. Shakeel and But (2015) state that in an environment that is competitive, the retention of skilled employees is not easy. It involves taking actions that motivate them to stay in the company for a maximum period. Job dissatisfaction caused by various factors has the potential to lead to a high rate of employee turnover, which has significant financial organisational implications. It is believed that most people quit their jobs for better paying opportunities. However, in today's world, this is not always the case. People leave jobs because of demotivation, a lack of growth, and frustration brought about by outdated and rigid systems which are adopted by the organisation.

The ADA is faced with the challenge of not being able to retain its employees for an elongated period. It has been stated on the organisation's annual report dating back from 2018 that high staff turnover continues to pose a challenge to the Entity (Agribusiness Development Agency, 2019). The majority of research that has been conducted focuses on reasons for staff turnover, rather than what the organisation and its leadership can do to promote employee retention (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

1.4 Significance of the study

This study was necessary, as it was largely influenced by the high rate of employee turnover and the low rate of employee retention at the ADA, which, in turn, prevent it from growing, successfully implementing its mandate, and achieving its goals. Abbasi and Hollman (2000) mention that staff turnover has the potential to jeopardise efforts to achieve the objectives of the organisation. The low rate of employee retention does not only result in the non-achievement of organisational goals, but it is costly to the organisation. According to Gorde (2019), there are expenses that are linked to high staff turnover which include recruitment, employee training and loss of productivity.

1.5 Aim

This study sought to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA.

1.6 Research Questions

- What are the factors that lead to the employees wanting to leave the ADA?
- What are the factors that promote employee retention at the ADA?
- What initiatives can the management put in place to promote employee retention at the ADA?

1.7 Research Objectives

- To identify the factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA.
- To determine the factors that promote employee retention at the ADA.
- To explore the initiatives that the management can put in place to promote employee retention at the ADA.

1.8 Limitations of Study

This study was met with some limitations. These were the hesitation of the participants to participate due to the fear of potential scrutiny and job loss. To mitigate this, the researcher informed the participants that their identities would be kept anonymous for the purpose of this research. This was done through a written informed consent form, as well as verbally. There were delays experienced in the participants' confirmation to participate in the interviews, especially from the project's unit due to their busy schedule. This was mitigated by practicing time management techniques.

1.9 Research methodology

The qualitative research approach was used in this research study as data were collected through examining the organisation's reports and interviewing the participants. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the advantages of analysing public and private documents as written evidence is that it saves researchers the time and expense of transcribing, while the advantage of conducting interviews is that the participants can provide historical information and allow the researcher control over the line of questioning. For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the current and the former employees of the organisation.

According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2014: 188), "in-depth interviews allow the researcher to pose questions with the aim of learning more about a specific phenomenon." The authors further mention that there are three different types of in-depth interviews, including conversational, general, and standardised open-ended interviews. For this study, open-ended interviews were used as they allow for information to be analysed easily through the comparison of the views and opinions of the participants. The qualitative research approach was thus appropriate for this study which sought to explore the views of the participants on the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA.

1.10 Dissertation structure

This dissertation is organised as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter outlined the background and significance of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, the aim, research questions and objectives, as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter reviews extant literature by various scholarly authors on the topic. An overview of employee retention is provided, together with the various theories linked

to employee retention and turnover intentions, as well as the factors related to employee retention.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct the research. It details the research design, study population, sampling methods, sample size, and the data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the findings obtained through semi-structured interviews and the analysis that was done based on the aim and research questions and objectives.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, linking them to the extant literature by other scholars on the factors affecting employee retention.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations that can be implemented in the organisation.

1.11 Summary

Employee retention is important for the successful running of any organisation, particularly public entities since they are special purpose vehicles that are mandated to partake in commercial activities on behalf of the government. It is indicated in this study that employees are regarded as the most important stakeholders and assets of an organisation because without them, there is no business continuity. Managers need to understand that in order to retain employees and save costs associated with the recruiting and training of new hires, they need to address the factors that result in job dissatisfaction among employees. They also need to consider putting in place retention policies that will serve as guidelines to keep the employees engaged, fulfilled, and satisfied at work. The next chapter reviews the literature on employee retention.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine the factors that affect employee retention at the ADA, an agricultural public entity based in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and to provide recommendations that will assist in retaining employees. The aim of this chapter is to explore and discuss literature by various scholars on employee retention, with a focus on the factors that affect the organisation and the strategies that can be put in place to assist the management to enhance employee retention.

2.2 Overview of employee retention

Employee retention is defined by Gorde (2019) as an organisation's ability to keep its employees. Bidisha and Mukulesh (2013) state that it is a process where employees are encouraged by the management in various ways to remain in an organisation for an elongated period. Mita *et al.* (2014: 154) describe employee retention as "a technique used by businesses to maintain a workforce in an effort to meet operational business requirements." According to Sinha and Sinha (2012), employee retention is a critical challenge faced by the management and organisations that employ innovation, creativity, and flexibility in their business operations.

Retention cannot be discussed without the mention of turnover. It is evident that most organisations are faced with high employee turnover which, according to Ogony and Majola (2018), is detrimental to the successful running of the organisation as it affects productivity, efficiency, and the ability to be innovative. The authors further mention that research shows that high employee turnover is not only due to remuneration packages, but unsatisfactory working conditions and frustration as well. Researchers such as Ngcobo (2014: 6) define employee turnover as "a decrease in the number of employees in an organisation due to reasons such as resignation, retrenchment, death and retirement." Kamalaveni, Ramesh and Vetrivel (2019) state that turnover may be both voluntary and involuntary, where in voluntary turnover, the employee decides to exit the organisation voluntarily in the form of resignation, whereas in involuntary turnover, the employee exits the organisation unwillingly in the form of a dismissal by

the employer. Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee (2001) state that employees leave organisations voluntarily for various reasons. These include personal reasons related to a family situation, career advancement, or job offers that are more attractive than their current position. The authors further mention that employees may leave the workplace due to organisational factors such as unfair treatment, a lack of internal growth opportunities, as well as conflict between the employees' personal values and the organisation's values. According to Naseema (2015), a contributing factor to the low rate in employee retention is unhappiness in the workplace. When employees are unhappy in the workplace, they start working towards an exit plan. This is done through actively searching for employment elsewhere even during working hours, which directly leads to low productivity and has the potential to affect the overall performance of the organisation.

According to Pregnolato, Bussin and Schlechter (2017), low staff turnover which indicates high employee retention in an organisation serves as an advantage and a long-term goal for most organisations, although the retention of employees is still a challenge that is faced by many organisations. The loss of valuable employees is costly to the organisation, not just in monetary value, but also in the time and effort required to recruit, train, and onboard new employees (Khan, 2020). Organisations need to work towards having retention strategies in order to save money, as quick turnover impacts the bottom line of organisational profits (Akther & Tariq, 2020).

2.3 Theories linked to employee retention and turnover intention

This study was based on various theories that are linked to employee retention. With an understanding and application of these theories, organisations are guaranteed to achieve motivation and satisfaction amongst employees, which will ultimately result in retention. The theories are discussed in subsequent sections.

2.3.1 Theory of organisation equilibrium

According to Kamau, Muathe, and Wainaina (2021), the Theory of Organisation Equilibrium (TOE) is considered as one of the first theories of turnover intention. Froese (2017) states that TOE is necessary for retaining and motivating employees. According to Kamau, Muathe, and Wainaina (2021), TOE emphasises the need for balance between the employee and the organisation's contributions and inducements.

Gamber, Krufft, and Kock (2020) state that the only way for an organisation to achieve retention is by maintaining balance between inducements and contributions from organisational participants.

The TOE hypothesises that if an organisation pays an employee a salary that is equal to or even above the contribution of the employee in the organisation in terms of duties, the employee will not consider exiting the organisation (Kamau, Muathe & Wainaina, 2021). The theory suggests that an employee would remain in an organisation if there is balance between work and pay, as they would be satisfied. Gamber, Krufft, and Kock (2020) support this, stating that balance in an organisation ensures satisfaction and motivation.

2.3.2 Job Embeddedness Theory

Job embeddedness is defined by Crossley *et al.* (2007: 1031) as “a construct composed of contextual and perceptual forces that bind people to the location, people, and issues at work.” It is seen as an important factor to address the issue of employee turnover and attitudes (Yoon *et al.*, 2022). According to Holtom, Mitchell, and Lee (2006), The Job Embeddedness Theory (JET) was discovered many years ago through research by scholars at Georgetown University in the United States of America. Burns, Christie, and O’Sullivan (2019) argue that the JET is rather a new theory that integrates the psychological theories of retention, as well as the ecological framework of retention. Mitchell and Lee (2001) state that the JET analyses the various elements that are related to retention and turnover in an organisation. According to Yoon *et al.* (2022) and Hussainy (2020), there are three elements that define the JET, namely, links, fit, and sacrifice. These are discussed subsequently.

2.3.2.1 Links

Links are the formal and informal relations that employees have with their fellow colleagues, communities, family, and friends. According to Fuchs (2021), links within an organisation include fellow colleagues, clients and customers, while links outside of an organisation include family and the broader community. Scholarly research indicates that the more positive links that an employee has with the community in and around their organisation, the more likelihood of them wanting to remain in an organisation for a longer period as they consider it as convenient. Hussainy (2020), in

his study, discovered that variables such as high incumbency, marital status, and family orientation are what employees take into consideration when contemplating to leave an organisation. Hussainy (2020) adds that leaving an organisation for employment elsewhere comes with much unwanted change and newness that requires effort and adjustment from employees that they may not be willing to go through, hence they take the decision to remain in their organisation to avoid inconvenience.

2.3.2.2 Fit

According to Fuchs (2021), fit speaks to the perception that an individual has regarding the compatibility and comfort between themselves and the organisation which they work for. External fit, also known as non-work fit, refers to the communities in which employees reside (Potgieter, Coetzee & Ferreira, 2018). Poor fit results in dissatisfaction, making employees have intentions to exit the organisation, while a strong fit in an organisation contributes significantly to retention.

2.3.2.3 Sacrifice

According to Hussainy (2020), sacrifice represents the employee's perceived social, psychological benefits, as well as material costs that the employee would have to give up if they were to leave their current employment and work-related surroundings. Employees run at risk of losing material costs and psychological benefits should they decide to leave an organisation for another. According to Adams, Webster, and Buyarski (2010), sacrifice is the loss of tangible and intangible investments should the employees exit their respective organisation. These include job title and status, pay, benefits, training, and a sense of community both within and outside of work.

2.3.3 Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-based View Theory (RBVT), in the context of this study, is referred to as an organisation's competitive advantage that is attributed to the rare, valuable, and inimitable resources that it has. These resources include employees (Acharya & Jena, 2016). According to Papa *et al.* (2020), employees are regarded as resources that are critical to achieving competitive advantage in an organisation. To remain competitive, organisations strive to retain employees who possess rare skills, knowledge, and experience. Studies have shown that if employers demonstrate to their employees

how rare, valuable, and inimitable they are to the organisation as a resource, they develop a sense of meaningfulness and are unlikely to exit the organisation. Having a meaningful job is considered important for staff retention (Stager, 2016).

It is recommended that the RBVT finds expression in an organisation's retention policy or strategy, as this will ensure that employees realise the meaning and value of their role in the job that they are doing. Ngo-Henha (2017) states that people stay in organisations only if their contribution remains valued. The author further states that it is important for the organisations' retention strategies to always seek to maintain the employees' feelings of usefulness in order to avoid high turnover, which results in the organisation having failed to achieve retention.

2.3.4 Human Capital Theory

According to Dietz and Zwick (2020), Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory (HCT) which was developed in the 1960s, demonstrates that investment in human capital in the form of training and education can increase employee productivity and retention effect of training. Egan, Morris and Inbakumar (2004) state that the lack of training offered in organisations is cited by many as one of the causes of low retention. Ngo-Henha (2017) argues that although HCT is good for the development of their employees as it advocates for education and training to enhance the knowledge, skills, and employability of the workforce, it has the ability to induce turnover instead of retention.

In this theory, there is general human capital, as well as specific human capital. Elsafty and Oraby (2022) state that these have a different effect on employee retention in an organisation. The authors further add that general human capital, which is the overall gained education and practical experience, results in low retention of employees. However, specific human capital gained through education, experience, and training increases employee retention as it is the education, training, and experience that have been gained by employees in a specific context, rather than a general one. This was proven in a study conducted by Dietz and Zwick (2020), who found that training increases retention by up to 14%.

Although the HCT suggests that there is a positive link between the training of employees and retention, studies from as early as the 1900s have shown that training the staff has the ability to increase productivity in the workplace and not necessarily the retention of employees. Although investing in training decreases the overall turnover rate, some organisations have expressed dissatisfaction with investing in training for employees because once they are trained, they leave the organisation (Pigou, 1912).

2.3.5 Career Stage Theory

The Careers Stage Theory (CST) suggests that the needs of an individual are likely to change at some point in their career no matter the occupation they are in (Griffin, Hogan and Lambert, 2013). According to Duarte and Lopes (2018), CST allows companies to know how to respond to the development and evolving needs of employees in their lifespan. Griffin, Hogan, and Lambert (2013) argue that although research supports that workplace factors can be linked to low retention, it is not clear whether the influence of these factors varies across the different career stages.

According to Griffin, Hogan, and Lambert (2013), the CST comprises four stages, which include (i) the organisational entry stage, where an individual searches for a particular career and organisation to work for, while also assessing if it will be in line with their personal needs; (ii) the transitional stage, which is typically one to four years of employment, where an individual is seen as acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge that will render them job competent; (iii) the mid-career building stage, which is a duration of at least five to nine years of employment, where an employee starts to become more established in the organisation, has a desire to be promoted, and is looking for more stability, and better pay (Barelka & Downes, 2019); and (iv) the later career stage, which is about 10 years and more in an organisation, and is the final stage that sees employees becoming more settled in the organisation and start to focus on other aspects of their life outside of work such as family, friends and retirement. According to Barelka and Downes (2019), this is also known as the disengagement stage, where work performance is typically low as employees start to psychologically distance themselves from their duties. These stages give an indication that employers experience employee retention at different career stages of their employees.

2.3.6 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to McLeod (2024), the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs is made up of a five-stage model of human needs in hierarchical order of a pyramid from bottom-up, starting with physiological needs which include water, air, sleep and food; safety needs which include consistency and stability; love and sense of belonging which include a sense of connection, intimacy, friendship and family; self-esteem which includes confidence, achievement, and respect; and self-actualisation which includes meaning, potential, acceptance, and high morality. Omodan (2022) states that the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory was developed by Abraham Maslow in the 1940s, with the aim to use it to understand human motivation in the workplace. The theory puts forward that in order to fulfil the needs on the higher tier of the pyramid, those on the lower tier need to be met (Maslow, 1943). According to Omodan (2022), it is important for the employer to pay attention to their employees to ensure that they are provided with the motivation that they need. The various needs are discussed subsequently.

2.3.6.1 Physiological needs

This need is the first from the bottom-up the pyramid. It is considered as the most basic need as humans cannot function properly if needs such as water, food, and shelter are not met (McLeod, 2024). Omodan (2022) suggests that although these needs are the lowest, they are considered the most important and need to be met before the other needs.

2.3.6.2 Safety needs

Safety needs are second to physiological needs, and consist of stability and protection and take into consideration the aspect of job security in the workplace, which is one of the factors related to employee retention (Omodan, 2022). This need comprises order, predictability, and control of one's life. Therefore, the need for emotional and financial security is considered imperative in human beings as they are able to have control of their lives (McLeod, 2024).

2.3.6.3 Belonging Needs

Once these other needs are met, the need for love and belongingness is then activated. This is a stage where a sense of relationship, friendship, and acceptance is

required by employees from their organisation and fellow colleagues to ease the feeling of loneliness and misplacement in the workplace (Omodan, 2022). According to Artaya *et al.* (2021), this need is associated with social needs, where the workforce enjoys kinship and the formation of formal and informal working groups.

2.3.6.4 Esteem Needs

According to Omodan (2022), this need is divided into two. It includes the self-esteem need, which involves achievement and the feeling of independence and dignity; and the public esteem need, which involves the need for validation from external people and status. Artaya *et al.* (2021) argue that an esteem need, when applied in the workplace, involves promotion, rewards, and recognition, as this translates to validation and boosts employee confidence.

2.3.6.5 Self-actualisation needs

This need is found at the top of the tier, and according to research by Omodan (2022), it is where one reaches the stage of actualisation in their life with a desire of self-fulfilment and growth. The author further argues that employers can further activate this need by offering growth opportunities to employees for them to be motivated to stay within the organisation, thereby achieving retention. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs in theory and workplace application is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

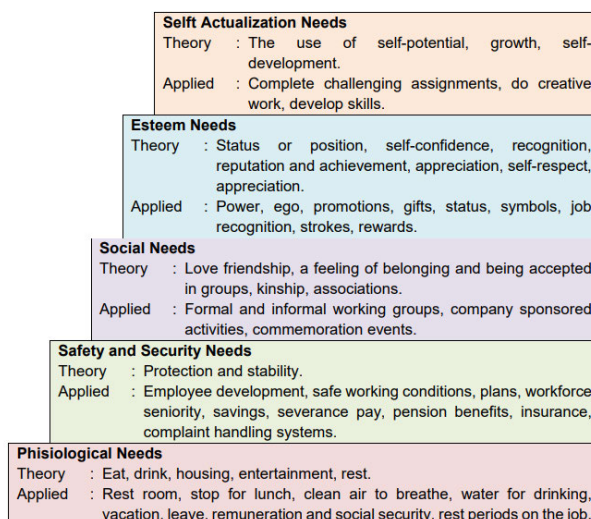


Figure 2.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Source: Artaya *et al.*, 2021)

2.3.7 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-hygiene Theory, was developed to understand the relationship of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction among employees in the workplace (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). According to Bhatt, Chitranshi, and Mehta (2022), the hygiene factors can be classified as physiological needs of employees, which include working conditions, remuneration, benefits, job security, and relationships. The authors argue that the absence of these factors can result in dissatisfaction amongst employees, which may cause them to want to exit the organisation. The motivation factors put emphasis on the psychological needs of employees, such as opportunities for growth, recognition, authority, and quality of work (Bhatt, Chitranshi & Mehta 2022).

According to Peramatzis and Galanakis (2022), Herzberg's Two-Factor theory is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, with the motivation factors being classified as intrinsic and hygiene factors which are extrinsic to the job. The presence of intrinsic motivators such as achievement, recognition, and growth, as mentioned precedingly, have the ability to stimulate motivation in employees. Artaya *et al.* (2021) argue that intrinsic motivators result in increased job loyalty and satisfaction which brings about retention. While extrinsic factors do not necessarily motivate employees, they result in increased efficiency and can cause dissatisfaction when not maintained.

2.4 Factors related to employee retention

According to Chatzoudes and Chatzoglou (2022), employee capacity building as a human resource (HR) practice has a positive effect on the psychology of employees which makes them want to commit to their respective organisation. Frye *et al.* (2019) argue that work environment, remuneration, and the relationship with the management are influential factors for employee retention. A study conducted by Oh and Oh (2017) which examined the effect that leadership has on retention, revealed that authentic leadership has a positive effect on employee retention. Studies by various scholars found that factors relating to retention and the lack thereof are linked to remuneration, work environment and condition, opportunities for career development, leadership, capacity building, work-life-balance, and communication, among others. This research was based on the mentioned factors which are detailed in subsequent subsections.

2.4.1 Conditions of work and retention

The South African Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) has regulated the provisions that working personnel are entitled to and has provided a framework that all employers can align their policies to, for better management of their workforce. The provisions gazetted under the BCEA of February 2020 include leave, remuneration, termination of employment, and working hours, to mention a few (Nxesi, 2020). The review of literature points out that the BCEA is not enough to retain employees. The causes related to low employee retention are attributed to pay scale, benefits, and relationships with co-workers and supervisors. These are factors that are external to the individual. Other factors that are outside the conditions of work are linked to the employees' characteristics, which include age, job satisfaction, period of service, among others (Ntwakumba, 2022).

Inadequate and hazardous work facilities may result in discomfort for some, causing them to seek employment that offers better working environments and conditions. A study conducted by Rozaq (2022) states that the availability of suitable work facilities for employees gives them a sense of security and comfort in the workplace which may have a positive impact on employee retention. Majid, Mba, and Ali (2014) add that employees are likely to remain in organisations where the working environment and facilities are well maintained. Poorly maintained work environments, facilities, and tools of trade results in employee reluctance to work for an elongated period of time.

2.4.2 Remuneration and retention

Calvin (2017) defines remuneration as a monetary reward given to personnel for work performed. It is further indicated that there are various indicators for remuneration which include salary, wages, various benefits, and allowances. In this day, it is important for employees in the public sector to be rewarded with appropriate salary scales. Fulmer, Gerhart, and Kim (2023:678) define remuneration as "payment of compensation in exchange for contributions provided by employees." Employee remuneration will remain a topic of interest for years to come, as it is a relationship that involves rewarding in monetary value of the employee by the employer in exchange for the work done. Remuneration is important to employees and has an influence on employee retention (Onochie & Mfobujong, 2020).

A study conducted by Sorn *et al.* (2023) emphasises the fair and reasonable distribution of income to employees. It further suggests that fair compensation has a positive effect on employee performance and retention. If employees are compensated in a satisfactory manner, they are most likely to be motivated to stay in an organisation. A well thought-out remuneration strategy and system is key to achieving employee retention (Goel, Popova & Popova, 2021). According to research by Moncraz, Zhao, and Kay (2009), remuneration is regarded as an important component that plays a huge part in the reduction of turnover and increase in retention as it is a motivating factor for workers to play their part in being responsible for their contracted duties.

Asi (2021) argues that the pay is not the only factor that will contribute to retention in an organisation; instead, it is the total offering from an organisation that attracts and keeps employees nowadays. The author further mentions that total organisational offering is usually managed under the reward management system. Franco-Santos and Gomez-Mejia (2015) explain that reward systems are at the centre of the HR management (HRM) function. The reward management system comprises both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, such as salary, short term incentives (STI), appraisal, and flexitime (Manzoor, Wei & Asif, 2021). Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are key for employee retention, attraction, and motivation (Franco-Santos & Gomez-Mejia, 2015). Figure 2.2 depicts the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards.

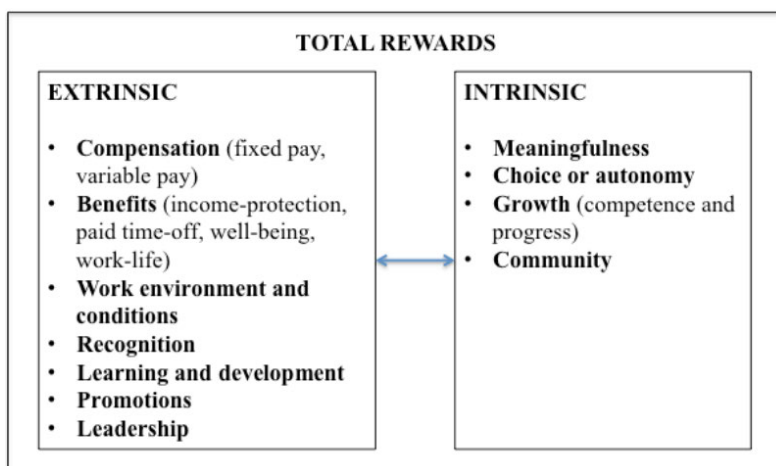


Figure 2.2: Total reward system (Source: Franco-Santos and Gomez-Mejia, 2015)

A study by Tymon Jr., Stumpf, and Doh (2010) states that although intrinsic rewards are not monetary in value, they remain critical for employee retention, job satisfaction, and overall career success. This shows that some employees, if not most, would prefer to stay in an organisation for a much longer time due to the internal satisfaction and fulfilment that they experience. Non-monetary rewards such as employee wellness initiatives, flexible working, excellent organisational culture (OC), and increased innovation have the ability to enhance retention (Manzoor, Wei & Asif, 2021).

2.4.3 The role of leadership and management in employee retention

Bolden (2004) defines leadership as a role played by an individual to influence a group of people to achieve a common goal. Research by many scholars suggest that leadership is the mobilisation of others and influencing them to meet a common objective, while others have stated that leadership is simply the ability to influence (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Leadership is more of a relationship between the leader and the follower that is based largely on influence rather than a position (Genza, 2021). Through the definitions provided by various authors, it can be comprehended that leadership is based on influence and guidance of others in achieving a common goal; they set the standard, inspire, motivate, and give direction.

Researchers like Covella *et al.* (2017) suggest that leaders play a vital role in the retention of employees. Pramjeeth (2021) highlights that organisational leaders play a vital role in influencing, motivating, and inspiring employees. According to Sekhara Rao *et al.* (2018), it is the organisational leadership responsibility to create a culture of retention in the workplace. Through research by these scholars, it can be said that the leadership of an organisation plays an important role and has a significant impact on employee retention.

The increase and decrease of employee retention require the attention of the leaders in the organisation to intervene by playing an active role in ways to improve it. The leadership of an organisation is fundamental in motivating people's decision to exit or stay in an organisation, hence it is important that organisations assess their management if they want to retain employees since people leave managers and not necessarily organisations (Herdberg & Helenius, 2007). One cannot mention organisational leadership without management, as these terms are used

interchangeably. According to Hogan and Kaiser (2005), management is about the promotion of effective team performance and it involves the planning and controlling of organisational resources which include people. Wakabi (2016) states that managers take on different leadership styles and that any leadership style taken on by a manager has a bearing on employee retention. According to Hamid *et al.* (2014), a leadership style may have a positive impact on employee retention. This insinuates that management can employ a leadership style in the management of subordinates because they are viewed as leaders by their subordinates.

A leadership style is defined by Alsarrani *et al.* (2021) as the characteristics, traits, and behaviour that the management adopt and use to motivate employees in an organisation. According to Armstrong (2012), various leadership styles are used by the management to exert their leadership function in the workplace. Several leadership styles have been researched over the years, which include bureaucratic, laissez-faire, democratic, and charismatic. These fall within the traditional leadership style. Transactional and transformational leadership styles are newer and more current (Favour, 2016).

The leadership style that is mostly associated with the factors contributing to retention is the transformational leadership style, which is said to be originally conceptualised by James MacGregor Burns in the 1970s (Favour, 2016). According to Stewart (2006), a transformational leader seeks for potential in followers and is determined to satisfy the followers' needs by engaging and motivating them to become the best version of themselves, thereby boosting their morale. Hongyun *et al.* (2020) reveal that transformational leadership focuses on new ideas, understanding, and motivating subordinates which leads to retention.

Transformational leadership is linked to employee retention (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede, 2015). According to Raziq, Rizvi and Mahjabeen (2021), transformational leadership has a positive influence on job satisfaction. According to various authors, if employees are satisfied with their job, they are more likely to stay at an organisation for a much lengthier period or even up until retirement. According to Rees and French (2016), transformational leadership in an organisation has a positive influence on retention as it often creates and communicates a vision that is inviting and appreciated

by followers, resulting in high levels of motivation. A transformational leader is more of a visionary that has the skill of addressing the psychological needs of the workforce, This makes workers feel valued and worthy of being in the organisation and thus mitigates turnover (Welty Peachey, Burton & Wells, 2014).

According to Amankwaa and Anku-Tsede (2015), the transformational leadership style puts focus on the requirements of subordinates in the workplace and thus reduces the intention of employees wanting to exit the organisation. The literature reviewed suggests that this leadership style is a vital tool for any organisation to have in order to achieve retention as it creates a positive work environment that enhances communication and development opportunities through motivation.

2.4.4 Work-life balance and employee retention

Scholarly and informal research, and experience through discussions with fellow colleagues in the workplace, has consistently proved that many employees struggle with balancing work and their personal lives. Work-life balance (WLB) is defined by Kamalaveni, Ramesh and Vetrivel (2019:5) as “the balance between professional life and personal life.” It is the ability of balancing work and home with minimum conflict, which improves productivity and reduces absenteeism and turnover (Sindhuja & Sekar Subramanian, 2020). The authors further state that employees are more productive if they are able to make time for family and personal activities. According to Shockley, Smith, and Knusden (2017), WBL does not only improve the well-being of the employee, but it also plays a role in attracting and retaining talent in an organisation. To achieve WBL, organisations need to develop policies, systems, and procedures that allow for WBL to take place. This will result in employee motivation, job satisfaction, and retention (Sindhuja & Sekar Subramanian, 2020).

Branch (2011) argues that WLB is not sufficient to retain employees in an organisation; instead, a good remuneration structure and opportunities for career progression may influence employees to stay in an organisation. Although the argument by Branch (2011) may be valid, times have changed, and more literature has proved that WBL is indeed essential for retention. Authors like Jaharuddin and Zainol (2019) state that an imbalance between work and life in an organisation leads to stress and high turnover. According to Deery (2008), retention strategies linked to WBL are the provision of

flexitime, taking into consideration flexible hours and flexible working arrangements between the subordinate and the manager, capacity building opportunities for the staff, employee wellness programmes, and creating a work environment that is staff and family oriented, to mention but a few.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many organisations to enforce WBL through introducing flexible hours of work and working from home (WFH). Shirmohammadi, Au, and Beigi (2022) state that the pandemic introduced a new norm, where organisational leaders endorsed WFH and are still offering remote work and hybrid working options to their employees. The authors further mention that the management has observed a positive relationship between the organisation and employees where retention is concerned. The flexible hours and WFH strategy did not come without its challenges. Many organisations had to conceptualise and introduce new ways of working using various technologies, which saw employees spending more time trying to figure out these new inventions, processes, and systems (Fogarty *et al.*, 2021).

2.4.5 Organisational culture and retention

Rianne and Vitalija (2021) define organisational culture (OC) as an intangible mechanism that has a great influence on the long-term success of any organisation. Brenyah and Tetteh (2016) describe it as a series of assumptions developed by people within an organisation. Although there are various scholarly culture types, the Harrison and Stokes (1992) four types of OC known as power culture, role culture, achievement culture, and support culture remain applicable and reliable in definition of OC and how it is applied in different organisations.

According to Bamidele (2002), power culture is important for order and control in an organisation. The author further states that every organisation should have an element of this type of culture in order to enforce systems, rules, and regulations that employees should abide by. Brenyah and Tetteh (2016) state that power culture usually emanates from the most powerful structure in the organisation and is cascaded down, and sometimes abused by the management which, sometimes, makes those that have less power tend to be accepting of the unequal distribution of it without even realising it. The authors further state that this kind of culture has a negative impact on

employee retention. The results of a study by Mashile, Munyeka, and Ndlovu (2019) supports these sentiments, as their study findings state that there is a positive link between power culture and turnover, further emphasising that a rise in power culture guarantees a rise in turnover, which results in low retention. Through reading up on the thoughts of the various authors, it seems this kind of culture has more *cons* than *pros*. If organisations adopt this kind of culture, it makes sense for them to experience more turnover and less retention, since with this kind of culture, the lack of opportunities for growth and inequality seem to be prevalent.

Role culture is seen as a culture that puts more focus on the position and job specification rather than the people who occupy those positions (Bamidele, 2002). According to Brenyah and Tetteh (2016), this kind of power does not have a significant impact on employee retention. Brenyah and Tetteh (2016) state that support culture and achievement culture are considered important for the retention of skilled employees, as both cultures are focused on employee motivation, goal orientation, team-work, solidarity, and commitment.

2.4.6 Training-development and retention

Training is defined by Gan and Yusuf (2019: 17) as “the process of gaining and developing the abilities, knowledge, and skills of individuals in order for them to perform daily operations successfully.” According to Hassan *et al.* (2013), employees are regarded as the most important stakeholder of an organisation, hence it is important for employers to try by all means to retain them. One of the ways in which they can do this is to invest in career development opportunities such as training, as it has been proven through various research that it has a direct effect on the retention of employees. This is supported by the literature on the HCT theory. Nguyen and Duong (2020) state that in order for training to take place, organisations need to offer access to training to their employees. The authors argue that although training enhances technical skills, knowledge, and abilities, it also results in job satisfaction, motivation, morale, and high self-esteem, which is linked to high employee retention.

Gan and Yusuf (2019) suggest that training and development is a potential contributor to employee retention and most organisations do not want to invest in training and development opportunities due to how expensive and time-consuming they are, and

the fact that outcomes of the training do not guarantee retention. In a study conducted by Akther and Tariq (2020), it was revealed that to replace an employee costs the organisation around 20-200% of the salary benefit, hence it is important to retain trained employees in order to save money.

According to Dessler (2011), training is a process which is made up of the following four stages:

i. Training is considered a needs-oriented effort, hence knowing the level, type, and duration of the training is important during this step (Yimam, 2022). Conducting a training needs assessment involves the identification of the organisation's goals, gap analyses, and employee performance issues, among others. This process also involves looking at what is happening within a job currently and comparing it to what is needed in the future, taking into consideration the organisation's goals (Lussier & Hendon, 2020).

ii. This stage is the training design which involves deciding on learning concepts and various methods and approaches that will be used to carry out the training.

iii. Once the training design has been decided on, then the actual training delivery begins. This stage is considered crucial, as this is where the capacitating of an employee takes place with the hope for empowerment.

iv. The final stage is where the training gets evaluated. This is done to confirm the effectiveness and success of the training, and to examine its cost or benefit (Dessler, 2011). There are typically four levels of evaluation, including reaction, learning, behaviour, and results (Yimam, 2022).

2.4.7 Job security and retention

According to Bhargava, Bester, and Bolton (2020), individuals employed across different industries are anxious about their job security, which is defined by Lucky, Minai, and Rahman (2013) as the assurance of job continuity. Hur (2019) suggests that it is a legally binding contractual agreement between the employer and the employee that stipulates assurance of continued employment until retirement. According to Huysamen (2019), other people are offered employment on a fixed-term contract, which provides less security to employees than permanent employment, which guarantees job security. Fixed-term contracts of employment are of limited

duration and are categorised as temporary employment, which threatens job security (Connelly & Gallagher, 2004). Research conducted over the years indicates that job security has the ability to strengthen employee commitment to an organisation and their job, which not only leads to better employee performance but to high levels of retention as well (Hur & Perry, 2019).

Job security cannot be spoken about without addressing job insecurity, which Mahmood and Rauf (2018) explain as the opposite of job security, where employees experience uncertainty about job continuation when thinking or looking at the near future. The lack of job security is perceived as a serious threat to the retention of employees. This is supported by Climie *et al.* (2020), who state that more than 50% of employees would change their intentions to exit an organisation if they had greater job security.

Even though career growth is necessary for individuals, which results in them wanting to exit their current organisations for better career prospects, it is better if they exit the organisation after a long period of being within the organisation. Job security is seen as necessary for both the employer and the employee. It is beneficial to the organisation in that if they retain their current employees, they are guaranteed to minimise the cost and time associated with recruitment (Dhanpat *et al.*, 2019). Stability and security in the workplace are essential for employees and allows them to focus on productivity instead of being distracted by the anxiety of them possibly losing their jobs (St Germain, Scott & Scott, 2023).

2.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the different perspectives of various scholars of the definition of employee retention. It has been clear throughout the engagement of literature written by different authors that employee retention is seen as an act by the organisation to seek to keep their employees for an elongated period within the organisation (Saputra & Riana, 2021), and that it is constantly under review because of the high rate of employment turnover that the public and private organisations are faced with.

This chapter reviewed various theories that are linked to intentions of retention and turnover, such as job embeddedness, RBV, human capital, and career stage theories. In addition, the chapter discussed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and applied it to the world of work, as well as Herzberg's Two-Factor theory. The theories reviewed provided an understanding of the various factors that may lead to retention and turnover intentions, as well as further insights on how organisations can improve employee retention by addressing the needs, motivation, development, and career progression to improve retention. By paying attention to and applying these theories, organisations can create a work environment where employees feel valued with increased morale.

The chapter concluded by the discussing the various factors related to employee retention. Although there are many factors affecting employee retention, a total of seven factors that were considered relevant for this study were discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the strategy used in the process of collecting and analysing data using the various techniques and methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This warrants the research conducted to be systematic, objective, and of logical manner, in alignment with the aim and objectives of the study. The previous chapter reviewed extant literature by various scholars on employee retention and on how organisations can potentially combat turnover. The aim of this chapter is to describe the methodology approach applied in this study. It outlines the research design, sampling technique, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the ethical considerations applied in this study.

3.2 Research design

A research design refers to the various methods used to conduct a study. These include the qualitative method, which focuses on responses that are expansive in nature; the quantitative method which comprises closed-ended questions and responses; and the mixed method which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative research is a methodology that allows the researcher to investigate the experiences of the research participants in detail by using specialised methodologies which include in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and visual methods. According to Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020), what separates this particular method from the others is that it allows the researcher to observe any difficulties displayed by the participants during the interviews and to take hold of the meanings and interpretations which they assign to behaviour, events, and objects. This is supported by Creswell and Creswell (2018), who state that this type of method is used to gather data from the participants through interactive participation with people in the form of interviews that involve open-ended questions and allow them to provide feedback that can be used to analyse and draw conclusions of a study.

3.2.2 Quantitative method

The quantitative research method is a systematic approach used by researchers, where numerical data is used to collect data, most commonly in the form of questionnaires. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), this method is usually used when a researcher has a hypothesis that needs to be proved, hence it makes use of statistical methods such as surveys, with close-ended questions for the respondents to give short responses and analyse results. What sets this method apart from the qualitative method is that it is used to test the theory of a researcher by describing variables, examining the relationships, and determining the cause-and-effect relationship between these variables (Grove & Gray, 2018).

3.2.3 Mixed methods

According to Dawadi, Shrestha, and Giri (2021), the mixed method approach involves both the qualitative and quantitative methods. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that the mixed method approach is commonly used when the use of either one of the qualitative and quantitative method is insufficient, and an additional method between the two needs to be used to allow for the collection of rich information that would not have been achieved by using one method alone.

Taking into consideration these methods, this study employed the qualitative research method to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA. This method was deemed appropriate for this study as it allowed for a detailed investigation through semi-structured interviews which assisted the researcher to understand and identify the issues at hand by conversing with the participants who have first-hand experience of the problem. This was to gain deeper insights, draw up conclusions, and provide recommendations.

3.3 Research paradigm

According to Khatri (2020: 1435), a “research paradigm refers to the theoretical or philosophical ground for research work.” There are four types of research paradigms, namely, positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and pragmatism (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Positivists are likely to adopt the quantitative research method using scientific instruments and experiments as a way to measure reality from an objective point of view. Interpretivists believe there are multiple truths to reality, hence the

qualitative research method is used by conducting an in-depth examination to determine people's experiences of the external world, through surveys that are open-ended and informal and conversational. Constructivists, like interpretivists, use qualitative methods as they strongly believe in the views of the participants of a study, while pragmatics use the mixed methods approach as they embrace both quantitative and qualitative designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research paradigm framework adopted in this study are both the interpretive and constructivist paradigms, since the study is reliant on in-depth conversations to gain insights from the participants and given that there is no single factor affecting retention; it is attributed to a number of factors and strategies.

3.4 Research area study settings

The study was conducted at the ADA, a state-owned entity under the DARD which is based in Pietermaritzburg in KZN. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were drawn from the objectives of the study, as well as the retention factors which are discussed in the literature review. The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis using a virtual platform known as Microsoft (MS) Teams.

3.5 Population

The population is referred to as the entire group of people, events, or objects that are of interest to the researcher for a study and on which they seek to draw conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When a researcher embarks on a study, they are required to determine the basis of the study and to identify and select a group of people, events, or objects to study. The target population for this study are the current and former employees at the ADA in the past three to five years. The former employees are the ones who left the organisation through resignation.

3.6 Sampling

Sampling is referred to as the process or method of drawing up a selection of research participants from a whole population. It involves decisions regarding the people, settings, behaviours, objects, and events (Lohr, 2019). According to Berndt (2020), the sampling methods are presented in two categories, namely, probability, and non-probability sampling.

3.6.1 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling refers to the deviation from probability sampling, where participants of a study are selected from a population using the discretion of the researcher (Vehovar, Steinmetz & Toepoel, 2016). There are a number of deviation types that fall under this type of sampling, including (i) quota sampling, which involves the non-random selection of participants with the same qualities and characteristics; (ii) convenience sampling, also known as accidental sampling, which comprises of participants that are easily reachable and may have a chance to provide the required information; (iii) purposive sampling, also referred to as judgemental sampling, is reliant on the use of the researcher's discretion by specifically choosing the units to be investigated for the study; (iv) expert sampling, which is almost similar to purposive sampling, is a process where the researcher intentionally selects participants who are considered as experts in the area of the study; and (v) snowball sampling, which occurs when existing participants recruit further participants that they may know to from part of the study, and is mostly used in the instance where a population is difficult to access (Berndt, 2020).

3.6.2 Probability sampling

Probability sampling is a strategy that is usually employed in quantitative research studies, where each individual has a known probability of being selected for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This type of sampling can be categorised into at least five types, including (i) simple random sampling, where the researcher has to identify the target audience and thereafter ensure that every person in the population is given an equal opportunity of being selected to participate in a study; (ii) stratified sampling, a process where the population is segmented into sub-groups or strata based on shared attributes such as age, gender, race, and other factors, and thereafter the researcher selects a random sample from each group to ensure fair representation of each segment; (iii) cluster sampling, which is similar to stratified sampling but differs, as cluster characteristics are concerned dividing a population into clusters with varied characteristics; (iv) systematic sampling, where the researcher makes use of a predetermined order to choose participants for a study by assigning a number, such as 1-5, and then selects every fifth person on the list; and (v) multi-stage sampling, which is a combination of random and cluster sampling (Purna Singh, Vadakedath & Kandi, 2023).

3.6.3 Sample selection

After considering the population and the different sampling methods, this study employed purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique. It entails the researcher selecting specific members from a population that are regarded as more relevant to the study and will provide information that is valid (Ames, Glenton & Lewin, 2019). Table 3.1 presents the sample selection for this study. The Corporate Services and Operations Unit were considered the most important units in the organisation, as the former renders support services to the core business function which is driven by the latter. Both units consist of more subordinates and have seen employees resign.

Table 3.1: Sample selection of participants for the study

Category	Period of service in years	Sample selected
Employees who have voluntarily exited the organisation	3 years and more	10
Management in the Corporate Services Unit	3 years and more	1
Subordinates in the Corporate Services Unit	3 years and more	4
Management in the Operations Unit	3 years and more	1
Subordinates in the Operations Unit	3 years and more	4

3.7 Data collection

In order to fully conduct a study and ensure that the aim and objectives of the study are met, the researcher needs to undergo a process of data collection. This section discusses the data collection methods for this study.

3.7.1 Primary data

Primary data is referred to as information that is gathered from first-hand experience with the informants and is regarded as credible, authentic, and impartial, as it has not

been tampered with nor modified by humans unlike secondary data, hence it is deemed valid for this reason (Kabir, 2016). Primary data can be collected using various methods such as (i) experiments, which are conducted in an artificial or natural setting and often used when collecting data for logical studies such as medicine, psychology, and science; (ii) surveys, which is a commonly used method and consists of a series of questions in quantitative studies to gather information from a large group of participants; (iii) questionnaires, which are a list of questions that can be incorporated in a survey and comprise of open-ended or closed-ended questions for the respondents to give answers to; and (iv) interviews, which are a data collection method used by the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participants' views.

There are different types of interviews. These include structured interviews, where questions are prepared prior to the interview and possible responses are limited; semi-structured interviews, which are formal and guided with little limitations to responses, allowing the researcher to ask further based on the responses provided; and unstructured interviews, which are informal and based on casual conversation between the researcher and the participant (Taherdoost, 2021). According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2021), primary data can be collected using these methods, either telephonically, face-to-face, or using email.

The data collection method employed in this study is the primary data collection method using semi-structured interviews. The selected method enabled the researcher to collect rich and detailed data directly from the participants, providing their views, experiences, and attitudes regarding the research topic. The interviews were conducted in the month of October through MS Teams. This platform was considered effective and efficient because of the built-in recording and transcribing features that researchers can always save and refer to. A total of 20 participants were sampled for this study. However, only twelve agreed to participate in the study and were asked a total of 11 questions. Prior to conducting the interviews, confidentiality assurance was emphasised and the participants were encouraged to express their views openly and freely. Each session had a duration of 30 to 50 minutes.

The twelve participants were regarded as sufficient for the study as the signs of saturation were monitored for any repetitive and redundant information. Data saturation is referred to as data that has been sufficiently collected by the researcher (Mwita, 2022).

3.7.2 Secondary data

Secondary data is referred to as information that is obtained from a source that has previously been published in various forms, which include company documents, research articles, and various journals and articles (Sylvia & Johnson, 2018). The study consulted textbooks, scholarly articles, and the ADA's annual report which is publicly available. These sources of secondary data were utilised in Chapters One and Two of the study, and presented in a narrative format.

3.8 Data analysis

Once the data collection stage has been concluded, it needs to be checked, edited, and organised for a proper analysis to take place (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative data analysis method was used for this study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that the goal of this type of analysis is to identify the different patterns, ideas, themes, and meanings of the data collected. The thematic analysis method was deemed suitable for analysing the data collected. Thematic analysis is a data analysing method used in most qualitative research and it allows for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data collected (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic analysis also involves interpreting, selecting codes, and constructing themes and sub-themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Table 3.2 depict the steps followed to analyse the data collected.

Table 3.2: Thematic data analysis method steps (Source: Maguire & Delahunt, 2017)

<p>Step 1: Become familiar with the data, Step 2: Generate initial codes, Step 3: Search for themes,</p>	<p>Step 4: Review themes, Step 5: Define themes, Step 6: Write-up.</p>
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Data analysis for this study was achieved through the identification of themes and patterns in data by grouping the data, checking for similarities, establishing themes, and building coherence and consistency.

3.9 Quality and trustworthiness

The evaluation of quality in qualitative studies is achieved through the concept of trustworthiness, which comprises various components such as credibility, validity, reliability, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The criteria that is regarded as important and commonly addressed by positivist scholars is validity, which refers to how accurately presented the results are against similar individuals that did not participate in the study (Shenton, 2004). According to Patino and Ferreira (2018), validity can take two forms, which are (i) internal, meaning a cause-and-effect relationship between variables exists which renders it as trustworthy, and (ii) external, meaning that the results of a study are generalisable to the population outside of the study sample. For the purpose of this study, the latter was applied.

According to Springer (2023), the credibility of qualitative research can be ensured through theoretical triangulation, participant validation, and member checks. The author further states that transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings may be applicable to similar settings or situations. The onus is on the researcher to identify characteristics of the environment where the findings originated from and the extent to which they may be relevant to other situations (Rohleder & Lyons, 2015). Confirmability of the study relates to the impartiality and objectivity of the study findings. Various approaches may be used by researchers to improve confirmability, such as reflexive journaling, member checking, and peer debriefing which entails getting input from experts or colleagues to mitigate researcher bias (Ahmed, 2023). Dependability is referred to as the consistency of data in a similar population, hence if the findings of a single study are reproduced in a similar population and setting, they are rendered dependable, which ensures trustworthiness of the research (Kakar *et al.*, 2023).

3.10 Ethical considerations

According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davi,s and Bezuidenhout (2021), ethics in research refer to acting with integrity and adhering to ethical principles and professional standards that are deemed valid for conducting research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that it is the principle of knowing, understanding, and differentiating right from wrong when conducting research in an individual or group setting and ensuring that the privacy and rights of the participants are not infringed. The study focused on the ADA, hence a gatekeepers' letter (see Appendix B) was requested from the organisation to grant the researcher permission to collect the data from the employees. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) ethical clearance (see Appendix C) process was rigorously followed and informed consent forms (see Appendix D) which explained in detail what the study is about, were drafted and given to the participants for them to thoroughly read, ask any questions, and sign if they consented to participation. The anonymity of the participants was also ensured.

3.11 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology used in the study. The qualitative research approach was adopted with the intention of contributing to the body of knowledge and to assist the organisation to overcome its retention difficulties. The method used for data collection and analysis was explained in detail, the concepts of research quality and trustworthiness were highlighted, and ethical considerations observed were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology adopted for this study. This chapter presents the study findings and analyses the data in line with the objectives of the study. Data is presented and analysed thematically. The aim of the study was to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data. The study had targeted a sample of 20 participants but only 12 participated, which is sufficient for the study as data saturation was reached.

4.2 Demographic profiles of the participants

This section presents the demographic profiles of the participants. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the demographic profiles.

Table 4.1: Demographic profiles of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age group	Job position	Period of service	ADA Employment Status
P1	Female	25-34	Marketing and Communications Practitioner (Corporate services Unit)	4 years	Exited
P2	Male	25-34	Project officer (Operations Unit)	5 Years	Still employed
P3	Male	25-34	Project officer (Operations Unit)	5 Years	Still employed
P4	Female	35-44	Personal assistant (Corporate Services Unit)	4.5 Years	Still employed
P5	Female	25-34	HR practitioner (Corporate Services Unit)	3 Years	Still employed
P6	Male	25-34	Project Officer (Operations Unit)	3 Years	Exited
P7	Female	35-44	Office manager (Corporate Services Unit)	3 Years	Exited
P8	Female	25-34	Project officer (Operations Unit)	3 Years	Still employed
P9	Female	35-44	Senior project manager (Operations Unit)	6 Years	Still employed
P10	Female	25-34	Marketing and communications specialist (Corporate Services Unit)	3 Years	Exited
P11	Male	35-44	Operations manager (Operations Unit)	9 Years	Exited
P12	Female	25-34	Project officer (Operations Unit)	5 Years	Still employed

4.3 Presentation and analysis of the findings

This section presents the findings and themes that were identified from the interviews conducted with the 12 participants. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the themes, subthemes, and codes which emerged during the interviews which, in turn, inform the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study.

Table 4.2: Thematic map (themes, subthemes, and codes)

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Theme 1: Factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA	1.1 Job insecurity	Fear of redundancy, instability of short-term contracts, uncertainty about contract renewal, poor communication, a lack of management support
	1.2 Leadership instability	Frequent changes in top leadership, a lack of strategic direction, and external political interference
	1.3 Toxic work environment	Negative atmosphere, an unhealthy workplace culture, and corrupt practices
	1.4 Lack of career growth	Limited opportunities for professional development and promotion, stagnation, dissatisfaction
	1.5 Management issues	Lack of support, inadequate leadership
Theme 2: Factors that promote employee retention at the ADA	2.1 Role of leadership	Positive relationships with the management, leadership support for wellness, strategy, and appointments
	2.2 Opportunities for professional development	Access to development opportunities, budget for training, long-term professional development, support for professional bodies, and internal skills utilisation
	2.3 Work-life balance	Support for mental health, physical health initiatives, policies, consistency, work during personal time, healthy workload and conditions, and

		organisational dysfunction and downtime
	2.4 Compensation and benefits packages	Competitive salaries with structure, structured benefits, benefits beyond salary, quality of compensation, level of compensation, and choice in benefit allocation
	2.5 Communication	Effectiveness, transparency, timeliness, bureaucracy, mandate clarity, approach, and broken telephone effect
	2.6 Employee recognition and appreciation	Performance bonuses; awards system; biasness, fairness, and exclusiveness; and employee morale
Theme 3: Initiatives that management can put in place to promote employee retention at ADA	3.1 Job security and permanency	Offering permanent or long-term contracts, and ending uncertainty over contract renewals
	3.2 Career growth and development	Supporting internal promotion and career progression, and offering professional development opportunities
	3.3 Communication and leadership	Improving communication and leadership empathy, and inclusive decision-making and respect for employees
	3.4 Recognition and appreciation	Recognising and rewarding performance, and offering performance bonuses
	3.5 Work environment and culture	Fostering a positive work environment and promoting WLB and mutual respect
	3.6 Benefits and compensation	Providing competitive benefits, and offering competitive salaries and incentives

4.3.1 Theme 1: Factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA

This theme is in line with Objective 1 of the study which sought to identify the factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA. This theme emerged with the following subthemes: job insecurity, leadership instability, toxic work environment, lack of career growth, and management issues. These are discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Job insecurity

The participants indicated that job insecurity is a critical factor that contributes to the employees' desire to leave the ADA. The fear of redundancy, instability of short-term contracts, and uncertainty about contract renewal, compounded by poor communication and a lack of management support, create an environment where employees feel unsupported and undervalued. As a result, many employees opt to leave the organisation in search of stability and security elsewhere. The participants were quoted as follows:

"Definitely the lack of job security ever since the ADA was incepted X amount of years ago... Employees have been on contracts. There was a time where contracts were on a month-to-month basis." (P4)

"Poor communication, uncertainty. Lack of being heard. Or you may be heard. But you're just not taken seriously." (P6)

"The employment nature of contracts maybe leads to the uncertainty ... contracts being extended by months." (P6)

"Once your contract has ended, there was no communication. Whether you continue to work after the last day of contract, you just do not know what to do." (P7)

"Everyone in that organisation at the ADA is on contract ... You will end up thinking that it's because it's a tool they use to control employees." (P2)

"Without job security, people are not comfortable in a workplace considering ... contracts and no possibilities of them getting permanency." (P3)

Several participants expressed a fear of redundancy and a lack of confidence in the permanence of their roles. This fear stems from the ADA's practice of offering short-term contracts with no clear pathways to permanent employment. P4 highlighted the long-standing issue of job insecurity and thus creating instability and anxiety. The

constant uncertainty surrounding contract renewal contributes to a high level of stress, as employees are never sure of their future within the organisation.

The lack of job security also seems to be exacerbated by poor communication from the management. P7 shared a disconcerting experience where once their contract ended. They stated the lack of communication about whether they would continue working or be let go. This left employees feeling abandoned, unsure of what steps to take next, and insecure about their professional future.

The temporary nature of employment at the ADA leads to constant uncertainty about whether contracts will be renewed. P6 reflected that the employment nature of contracts maybe leads to the uncertainty, as contracts were often extended by only a few months at a time. This practice creates instability in the work environment where employees feel that their positions are precarious, with no long-term security to fall back on. The short-term approach to contract renewals further undermines the employees' trust in the organisation and it makes it difficult for them to commit fully to their roles.

Similarly, P2's perspective highlights a deep concern that the short-term contracts may even be used as a tool to control employees and speculates that it might be a deliberate strategy. This perception of manipulation may potentially lead to mistrust and may further compound insecurity among employees.

A critical issue tied to job insecurity is the perceived lack of clear communication from the organisation's executive management. The participants reported that the leadership at ADA failed to adequately address their concerns regarding job security, hence the employees were left feeling unheard and unsupported. P6 expressed frustration over poor communication and a lack of seriousness from management, stating. The dismissive attitude contributes to job instability, as employees feel that their concerns are not being addressed in a meaningful way.

Furthermore, the participants also reflected on the impact of these employment practices on workplace morale. P7 and P4 both pointed out that employees in such uncertain conditions are less likely to feel comfortable or invested in their work. The imminent threat of job loss and the absence of long-term security results in disillusion and disengagement among employees, and it thus becomes difficult for them to perform to their full potential or take pride in their work.

Given this, the main consequence of job insecurity at ADA is a workforce that is disconnected and demotivated. The organisation's failure to provide stable employment has resulted in high turnover and also created an environment of anxiety and uncertainty among the employees. Without the assurance of continued employment, these employees are reluctant to invest in their careers within the ADA, hence they may seek more stable opportunities elsewhere.

4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Leadership instability

Leadership instability at the ADA emerged as a factor contributing to the employees' desire to leave the organisation. This subtheme is characterised by the following codes: frequent changes in top leadership, a lack of strategic direction, and external political interference, all which have undermined the employees' security and their ability to effectively perform their roles. The following are the participants' quotes:

"Ever since I came, there has been a leadership crisis.... We've had three different CEOs in this period of five years." (P2)

"The most common one that leads to most employees wanting to leave the ADA is job security.... And management issues.... Instability, yeah." (P3)

"We had about 3 or 4 CEOs. The other ones were acting.... Each CEO will come with their own mandate, meaning we had to transform how we work every time." (P7)

"With that changing of leadership, there's a cost in changing of strategic direction, vision, mission.... You sort of lose your sense of belonging." (P1)

"There's no accountability also.... There's the lack of job security here.... Temper morale working here." (P8)

"That created an organisation with no strategic direction.... Each CEO will come with their own mandate." (P7)

"Now, like all other state-owned entities, external interference. Some people from the external, from the Department of Agriculture, the principals.... Even politicians from outside disturb the operations." (P2)

"New stakeholders under GNU leadership It does affect us as individuals... you never know what decision they will make." (P5)

One of the recurring issues identified by the participants was the frequent turnover of CEOs which led to continuous changes in leadership. P2 noted that there had been three different CEOs within a five-year period. Similarly, P7 reflected that the organisation had gone through numerous CEOs, with some of them only acting in the role temporarily. This instability at the highest level of management created a chaotic environment where employees had to constantly adapt to new leadership styles and directives.

The frequent changes in leadership meant that there was no consistency in the organisation's vision or strategy. As P1 observed, each new CEO came with their unique goals which resulted in employees needing to change the way they work. This continual adjustment disrupted workflows and created confusion and disillusionment among the staff, as there was no clear long-term direction for the organisation. The constant upheaval left the employees feeling as though their efforts were futile, as they had to abandon or revise ongoing projects to align with the new CEO's priorities.

Furthermore, the instability in leadership also led to a lack of clear strategic direction for the organisation. Several participants pointed out that the ADA lacked a cohesive long-term plan due to the frequent changes in leadership. P7 mentioned that with every change in CEOs, there was a corresponding cost in changing of the strategic direction of the organisation, which made it difficult for the employees to connect to the organisation's goals. P1 emphasised the emotional impact of this constant shift as there is no consistent leadership guiding the organisation.

The lack of strategic direction also led to a loss of accountability within the ADA. P8 remarked the lack of accountability within the organisation, which they attributed to the instability in leadership. This absence of responsibility and oversight, combined with

the lack of job security, contributed to low morale among employees, who felt uncertain about their future and unmotivated to perform well in their roles.

In addition to internal leadership challenges, the participants also highlighted the issue of external political interference as a factor contributing to leadership instability. P2 pointed out that, like other state-owned entities, the ADA was subject to outside influence from political factors, including individuals from the Department of Agriculture and other external stakeholders. This political influence disrupted the organisation's operations and further undermined its strategic direction.

The unpredictability of political interference created additional uncertainty for employees who were often left unsure of the organisation's direction. P5 mentioned that external stakeholders, particularly under the Government of National Unity (GNU) leadership, had a direct impact on the decisions that affected the employees' work. They stated that they did not know the decisions which were to be made. This lack of transparency and the influence of external political factors made it difficult for the employees to trust the organisation's leadership or to feel secure in their positions.

4.3.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Toxic work environment

A toxic work environment is another factor influencing the employees' desire to leave the ADA. This subtheme reveals the negative atmosphere created by poor communication, an unhealthy workplace culture, and corrupt practices, which have all contributed to a decline in employee morale and job satisfaction. The following are the participants' quotes:

"It's a very toxic environment.... The working environment, it's kind of toxic because of this leadership crisis." (P1)

"Our management has contributed a lot to the environment being like it is now." (P5)

"The culture, it's not healthy.... The management style contributes a lot to the current environment." (P5)

"There is nothing motivating me personally to stay at ADA. I felt that I was not being valued as an employee." (P7)

"Poor communication, uncertainty. Lack of being heard.... You may be heard, but you're just not taken seriously." (P6)

"There is corruption there which is not good for young professionals..." (P2)

"The working environment it's it's it's it's kind of it's kind of toxic." (P2)

"It creates a toxic environment for abantu [people]..." (P9)

"Dismissive treatment from leaders is so discouraging..." (P10)

Several participants highlighted poor communication as a central issue contributing to the toxic work environment at ADA. There is a lack of clear and transparent communication which exacerbated feelings of uncertainty and frustration among the employees. P6 specifically mentioned the problem of communication. This failure in effective communication between leadership and staff led to alienation, as the employees felt that their concerns and contributions were either ignored or dismissed.

Similarly, P7 also felt undervalued as a result of the communication breakdown. The participant stated that there is a lack of motivation to stay at ADA, hence they felt that they were not being valued as an employee. The absence of meaningful feedback and recognition for employees' work added to the toxicity in the work environment, which made the employees feel unappreciated and undermined in their purpose within the organisation.

Moreover, the general workplace culture at ADA was described by the participants as unhealthy, with many employees pointing to the management as a key contributor to the toxic environment. P5 remarked the unhealthy culture and the ineffective management style. The participants further indicated that the leadership had cultivated a negative and oppressive atmosphere that stifled productivity and engagement. This toxic culture was further intensified by the leadership instability which is discussed in Subtheme 1.2.

P1 also referred to the negative impact of leadership on the work environment, describing it as very toxic. The participant attributed this toxicity to the ongoing

leadership crisis within the ADA which left the employees unsupported and disconnected. P9 echoed these sentiments, which reveals that the toxic culture affected the employees at various levels within the organisation.

In this unhealthy culture, the employees experienced a lack of support, dismissive treatment from leaders, and general demotivation. P10 referred to the dismissive treatment from the leaders as particularly discouraging, a feeling that is also shared by other participants who found the lack of engagement from management demoralising.

To compound this, corruption within the organisation further deepened the toxic work environment. P2 explicitly mentioned the presence of corruption, stating that it is not good for young professionals. Corrupt practices within the organisation compromise its ethical standing and makes it difficult for the employees, especially younger professionals, to see a future for themselves at the ADA. The perception of corruption potentially undermined the integrity of the workplace and contributed to a culture where trust and fairness were lacking.

This environment of unethical behaviour discouraged the employees from staying, particularly those who valued professionalism and accountability. Therefore, the findings reveal that corrupt practices, poor communication, and an unhealthy workplace culture created a setting that was demoralising and unappealing for the employees, hence it was difficult for them to envision a long-term career at the ADA.

4.3.1.4 Subtheme 1.4: Lack of career growth

A prominent factor driving employees to leave the ADA is the lack of opportunities for career progression. The participants expressed frustration over the limited opportunities for professional development and promotion within the organisation, which resulted in stagnation and dissatisfaction among the employees. The participants were quoted as follows:

"The room for growth is very limited at the ADA. You can be in the same job for a very, very long time." (P4)

"There's a lack of growth and opportunities.... To get to the next level, it would require for someone to leave their position." (P4)

"I've been here for five years, and there's been no room to grow." (P3)

"Promotions are rare, and I feel stuck." (P7)

"There are no clear paths for advancement here." (P10)

Many participants reported feeling stuck in their roles at the organisation and with little hope of moving up. This stagnation was voiced by multiple participants who felt that their careers had stalled at the ADA. P4 highlighted this issue, stating that there is limited room for growth at the ADA. This lack of movement within the organisation caused the employees to feel trapped in their current positions and with few opportunities to advance.

P3 shared a similar experience, stating that there has been no room for growth for the past five years they have been at the ADA. For employees who have been with the organisation for extended periods, the absence of professional development opportunities becomes a major source of dissatisfaction which may lead them to consider leaving in search of better prospects elsewhere.

The lack of career growth also impacts the motivation and engagement of employees. As P7 noted, promotions are rare, hence they feel stuck at the ADA. When employees feel that there is no pathway for progression, they may become frustrated and disengaged, as they no longer see the organisation as a place where they can achieve their long-term career goals.

Beyond stagnation, the participants also pointed to the lack of promotion opportunities as a major reason for leaving. P4 explained that advancing to the next level would depend on someone vacating their position. This indicates that the structure of the ADA makes it difficult for the employees to progress without someone else vacating their role. This limited upward mobility discouraged the employees from staying with the organisation since they saw few opportunities for advancement in the organisation's current framework.

P10 echoed this sentiment, saying that there are no obvious opportunities for growth here. Without a transparent system for career progression or defined opportunities for promotion, employees are left uncertain about their futures within the ADA. This uncertainty makes it harder for them to stay motivated and invested in their work, given

that they are unable to envision a long-term career trajectory within the organisation, hence they leave.

4.3.1.5 Subtheme 1.5: Management issues

Management issues, such as a lack of support and inadequate leadership, were frequently cited by the participants as key reasons for wanting to leave the ADA. Many employees expressed dissatisfaction with the way the organisation is managed, stating that it leads to a breakdown in trust and communication between the leadership and the staff. The lack of effective management creates a demotivating environment that hinders satisfaction and performance. The following are the participants' quotes:

"Management never listens to us." (P4)

"There's no real leadership, just orders with no support." (P1)

"I don't feel valued by my supervisors." (P12)

"There's a lack of support from management for employees that affects them doing their work in a proper manner." (P3)

"We are not happy with how we are being led.... Our management has contributed to the environment being like it is now." (P5)

"It's also the management style of some of the managers at the ADA." (P4)

Several participants reported that they are not supported by the management in their roles. P4 bluntly stated that, the leadership does not pay attention to their input, which reflects a disconnect between the employees and the leadership. This lack of communication and responsiveness indicates that the employees concerns and needs are ignored in the organisation.

P12 shared a similar sentiment, explaining that they do not feel appreciated by their supervisors. This feeling of being undervalued or unappreciated by those in leadership positions further exacerbates the employees' dissatisfaction with their jobs. Without

the necessary support from the management, employees are left to navigate organisational challenges on their own, hence their morale and productivity may decrease.

The absence of managerial support also impacts the employees' ability to perform their duties effectively. P3 highlighted this issue, stating that employees lack support from the management, which impacts their ability to perform their work effectively. When the organisation's management fails to provide the guidance, resources, or backing needed for employees to succeed, they may be inefficiencies, and ultimately, a desire to seek employment elsewhere.

Alongside the lack of support discussed above, many participants pointed to inadequate leadership as a problem within the ADA. The participants noted that the leadership style at the organisation is ineffective, often consisting of directives without proper guidance or engagement. P1 remarked that there is a lack of genuine leadership; only directives without support. This reflects a hierarchical, top-down management approach that leaves employees feeling disconnected from decision-making processes and unsupported in their roles.

The leadership issues at ADA were seen as a major contributor to the toxic work environment which is described by many participants in Subtheme 1.3. P5 stated that they are unhappy with the leadership, as the management has played a role in creating the current environment. This suggests that the problems that employees experience are not merely individual grievances but are reflective of the systemic issues within the leadership structure. The failure of the management to lead effectively often results in a climate of dissatisfaction and distrust among the staff.

More so, P4 also pointed out that it is also due to the management style of some ADA managers. This indicates that the leadership problems were pervasive and not limited to one or two individuals. The management styles were perceived by the participants as unhelpful and disengaged, further eroding employee morale and motivation.

4.3.1.6 Subtheme 1.6: Insufficient compensation

A recurring issue that surfaced among the participants was the feeling of insufficient compensation. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries,

bonuses, and overall financial rewards, which do not match the level of work and commitment which they are required to give at the ADA. The perceived imbalance between the demands of the job and the compensation provided plays a role in their desire to leave. The participants were quoted as follows:

"The pay doesn't reflect the workload." (P5)

"I can't make ends meet with the salary they offer." (P11)

"There are no bonuses or incentives, just the bare minimum." (P8)

Low salary was the frequently mentioned concern in relation to compensation. Employees felt that their salaries are not commensurate with the amount of work which they do. P5 stated that, the pay does not match the workload, a common sentiment that employees are being underpaid for the amount of responsibility and effort required in their roles. This discrepancy may cause frustration and undervaluation among the staff.

In some cases, the financial situation is so dire that the employees struggle to meet their basic living expenses. P11 admitted that the salary they offer is not enough to cover expenses. This suggests that the compensation provided by ADA is inadequate for maintaining a decent standard of living for its employees. This level of financial stress can be a significant driver for employees to seek employment elsewhere, where they hope to receive better pay and improved benefits.

The participants pointed out that, besides low base salaries, ADA does not offer bonuses or other financial incentives to reward hard work or exceptional performance. According to P8, there are no bonuses or incentives; only the minimum required. which indicates the absence of any additional financial recognition for employees who go above and beyond their usual duties. The lack of bonuses or incentives through the failure to reward employees for their contributions decreases employee motivation to exceed expectations. Without the prospect of financial recognition or advancement, employees find it difficult to be motivated and they are left feeling that their efforts are not being adequately recognised by the organisation.

The issue of insufficient compensation had profound effects on employee morale and job satisfaction. A low salary, heavy workload, and lack of financial rewards are financial strains, which are a major factor in pushing employees to consider leaving the ADA in search of better opportunities. When employees feel that their hard work is not rewarded or recognised, they may disengage. Over time, this contributes to higher turnover rates, as employees seek out jobs that offer fair compensation and opportunities for financial growth.

4.3.1.7 Subtheme 1.7: Work-life imbalance

A significant factor contributing to the employees' desire to leave the ADA is the lack of a healthy WLB. The participants described feeling overwhelmed by long hours and inflexible work schedules, which has left them with little time for personal life and recovery. This imbalance between work demands and personal well-being plays a crucial role in employee dissatisfaction and thus contributes to high turnover intentions. The following are the participants' quotes:

"I'm constantly working overtime, and it's exhausting." (P6)

"They don't care about my personal life, it's just work, work, work." (P9)

"The work-life balance is terrible." (P2)

The participants pointed out that they are frequently required to work long hours, often extending beyond the normal working day. This expectation of overtime creates an unsustainable work environment that physically and mentally drains the employees. As P6 described that they are always working overtime, and it is draining. The demand for extra work without adequate breaks or compensation contributes to burnout, which has the potential to demotivate the employees, hence they may consider seeking employment elsewhere.

The regular requirement to work overtime also impacts the employees' ability to enjoy a fulfilling personal life. When excessive work hours become a routine expectation, employees find it difficult to strike a balance between professional responsibilities and

personal commitments, such as spending time with family or engaging in leisure activities. The constant need to be available for work without respite is a key factor in diminishing the employees' well-being.

Employees felt that ADA's rigid work schedules, combined with long hours, do not allow them to maintain a healthy WLB. The participants expressed frustration that the organisation did not take their personal lives into account. P9 lamented that, they do not consider their personal life; it's just work. This reflects the sentiment that the management prioritises work over the well-being of the employees. This inflexibility strains the relationship between the employees and the organisation, and it tags along resentment and animosity. Without flexibility in working hours, employees struggle to manage their personal commitments alongside professional responsibilities. This is an inflexible approach to scheduling which also results in employees feeling undervalued, given that their personal needs and well-being are not considered to be a priority by the organisation.

4.3.1.8 Subtheme 1.8: Lack of recognition and appreciation

The lack of recognition and appreciation was a recurring factor contributing to the employees' dissatisfaction and their desire to leave the ADA. The participants consistently expressed frustration over their hard work and extra efforts going unnoticed, which reveals underappreciation and often results in emotional detachment from the organisation. This subtheme highlights how the absence of recognition for dedication and commitment can erode employee morale and loyalty. The following are the participants' quotes:

"No one acknowledges the extra effort I put in." (P10)

"I've been working so hard, and yet I feel invisible." (P12)

"There's never any recognition for a job well done." (P4)

The participants feel that despite putting in considerable effort, their contributions were neither acknowledged nor valued by the organisation. P10 voiced this frustration,

lamenting that the extra work they put in is not acknowledged. The participant finds themselves giving more than what is required but receiving nothing in return. This is associated with feelings of invisibility and demotivation. When employees consistently go above and beyond their duties without recognition, they begin to question the worth of their efforts, which inevitably diminishes their drive to perform well.

This sense of being unappreciated was echoed by P12, who remarked that they have been working hard yet they feel unrecognised. Employees who feel invisible in the workplace often experience isolation and a disconnect from their work environment. In such cases, the lack of recognition can become a critical factor influencing their decision to leave the organisation.

The participants also pointed out that the ADA did not provide any rewards or incentives for hard work. As P4 stated a job well done is not recognised. The absence of rewards, whether in the form of praise, bonuses, or career advancement reflects that the employee's efforts are futile. The failure to reward employees' hard work reflects a perception that the organisation does not value their dedication, which makes it challenging for them to stay motivated in the long term.

The lack of a reward system for excellent performance and the absence of even simple gestures of appreciation, contribute to the employees' disengagement. In modern work environments, employees expect to be recognised for their contributions, and when organisations fail to provide this recognition, it leads to dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Factors that promote employee retention at the ADA

This theme is in line with Objective 2 of the study which sought to determine the factors that promote employee retention at the ADA. This theme emerged with the following subthemes: role of leadership, opportunities for professional development, WLB, compensation and benefits packages, communication, and employee recognition and appreciation.

4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Role of leadership

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the work environment, providing direction, and influencing employee satisfaction. The participants revealed that leadership was often inconsistent, with frequent changes in leadership positions and a lack of clear strategic direction. Some employees felt supported by their immediate supervisors, while others expressed frustration with the leadership's inability to retain qualified talent, offer proper guidance, and develop a culture of wellness and growth. This subtheme emerged with the following codes: positive relationships with the management, leadership support for wellness, strategy, and appointments. The following are the participants' quotes:

"There was no strategy in retaining the skills that are there already. There was no strategy to retain the skills, especially from the operation side of things. People who are not qualified for jobs... would be parachuted into certain positions that they do not necessarily have the skills. You would see people who do not have relevant qualifications for certain management positions, leading people who have relevant qualifications." (P1)

"Even though things are not well... the support... makes you do better." (P3)

"Whoever was choosing leadership could have done a lot better with the candidates that they put in. There was one Dr YYY... he stayed just a month or so... then there was Bordeaux... then Mr. XXX. Then there were changes to other positions of leadership within the EXCO. Leadership is supposed to provide a direction for the organisation... create a culture that allows employees to thrive. Leadership failed at doing... provide a direction for the organisation, provide some level of certainty." (P6)

"They never treated their internal market... the internal market makes you external market. Employees... would not want to wear the ADA t-shirts when they go out... they do not have pride in it. Leadership at ADA did not mobilise employee welfare, employee wellness, employee development." (P10)

"We had a good relationship with our management and supervisors. When given a task... we had a good relationship with our management." (P11)

The participants highlighted several key factors that influenced employee retention at ADA, which reflect both positive and negative experiences. One of the most recurrent factors is the presence of positive relationships between the employees and the management. For some participants, the rapport with their supervisors and leadership plays a major role in their job satisfaction. As P11 pointed out, they had a good relationship with the management and supervisors. This reveals that it is important for the employees and their supervisors to develop and maintain healthy communication and mutual respect, hence it can be said that a supportive managerial relationship is a factor in promoting employee retention.

Another factor that contributes positively to retention is leadership support for wellness, although this seemed to be inconsistent. Some participants felt that the leadership made efforts to encourage employee wellbeing, which motivated them to perform better. P3 reflected on this, stating that, despite things not going well, the support encourages them to perform better. Despite the challenges within the organisation, the leadership's engagement with wellness initiatives provides employees with a level of support that mitigates some workplace stressors. This form of emotional or moral support appears to have helped in cultivating loyalty and perseverance among some employees.

While positive relationships with the management and wellness support were noted by some participants, the absence of a coherent strategy for skill retention and career development was seen as a major deterrent. For example, P1 emphasised that there was no strategy for retaining the existing skills, particularly on the operations side. The lack of a structured approach to skill development and the promotion of internal talent creates frustration, particularly when unqualified individuals are appointed to key positions. This practice of "parachuting" people into roles without the necessary qualifications breeds resentment among employees who feel that their skills are overlooked. As P1 elaborated that unqualified individuals would be placed into roles for which they lack the necessary skills.

The inconsistency in leadership is another critical issue that undermines employee retention. P6 reflected on the instability at the executive level, where frequent changes in leadership led to a lack of direction and uncertainty. According to the participant,

there was one leader who stayed only about a month, followed by another, then another, and subsequently changes in other leadership positions within the EXCO. The participant lamented that this inconsistency affects organisational cohesion. For employees, leadership is expected to provide a clear path and promote a culture that allows them to thrive. When leadership fails to offer this direction, it creates an environment of uncertainty, which can drive employees away. P6 distressingly summarised this by stating that the leadership failed to provide a clear direction for the organisation or offer any level of certainty.

Further to what was discussed above, the participants expressed that the ADA leadership does not adequately encourage employee pride or development, which has a negative impact on employee retention. P10 expressed this sentiment, explaining that leadership neglects to treat their “internal market” – the employees themselves, with the same attention as they would external stakeholders. The participant reflected that employees are reluctant to wear the ADA t-shirts when they go out because they lack pride in them, which points to a lack of engagement and motivation among the staff. This reflects the disconnect between the leadership and employee welfare, noting that without genuine efforts to promote employee development and wellbeing, employees are less inclined to stay committed to the organisation.

4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Opportunities for professional development

Access to professional development is another key factor that influences employee retention. At the ADA, while there are opportunities such as bursaries, conferences, and seminars, many participants feel that these are limited to a select few, with no clear criteria for access. Some participants are frustrated by the absence of a strategy for utilising internal skills, and by budget constraints that often prevent them from pursuing valuable training opportunities. This subtheme illustrates the following issues: access to development opportunities, budget for training, long-term professional development, support for professional bodies, and internal skills utilisation. The following are the participants’ quotes:

"There are opportunities like bursaries, attending of seminars, attending of conferences... it is only open to a select few. There wasn't a clear criteria as much as there was a policy." (P1)

"They will tell you that there is a budget for training, but... you will be told stories that there's a limit or budget constraints. Some training you won't be able to attend however you planned on them. We implement maybe like 40% of those trainings. For some units they have those professional bodies... but now they've told employees that we no longer pay 100%, they are paying 50%, so you have to meet us halfway. Majority of organisations pay all of this, but we are limited." (P5)

"We cannot say we are grooming someone... for these roles and responsibilities because of the short-term nature of employment. We do not guide what employees are going out there to do because we are not interested in any long term. There is no clear career path... you cannot come here and hope to grow. We don't collaborate with like organisations. We don't offer staff opportunities to be part of professional bodies. Professional support... we're doing very, very little." (P9)

"We have our own engineers, so we're supposed to have our own engineers... most of the money was spent on consultants. If we had a research unit... everything with ADA was going to be successful. We need to have research... yet ADA is doing a lot of work. Professional development that we were going to do... even today, you can still go far with ADA." (P11)

The participants expressed mixed experiences regarding the opportunities for professional development at the ADA, which embody frustrations and potential avenues for growth. A recurring factor is the restricted access to development opportunities in the organisation. While some initiatives such as bursaries, seminars, and conferences are available, they are often only accessible to a select few employees. P1 noted that opportunities like bursaries, seminars, and conferences are only available to a select few, with a policy in place but no clear criteria. This exclusion reveals that there is a lack of transparency in how opportunities are distributed, which leaves many employees overlooked despite the existence of development policies.

Budget constraints are a significant challenge that limits the employees' ability to access professional development. P5 shared the frustration of hearing about a budget for training but rarely seeing it fully utilised. According to the participant, they will say there is a budget for training, but then explain limitations or budget constraints which thus prevent them from attending some training that they would have planned. They further lamented that only about 40% of the planned training programmes are actually implemented, which indicates that there is a gap between the organisation's stated intentions and the reality that employees face. Furthermore, even when the opportunities for professional bodies exist, the employees are required to cover part of the costs, which further limits their access. P5 added that they have informed employees that they no longer cover 100%, but only 50%, so they must meet them halfway, which contrasts ADA's approach with other organisations that fully subsidise such costs.

Another critical issue is the lack of long-term professional development and career growth within the ADA. P9 voiced deep concerns about the short-term focus of employment contracts, which hinders the organisation's ability to cultivate talent from within. They stated that they cannot claim to be grooming someone for these roles and responsibilities due to the short-term nature of the employment, lamenting the absence of a clear career path. The lack of a structured guidance or collaboration with similar organisations means that employees have little opportunity to grow or expand their professional networks. As P9 pointed out that they do not collaborate with similar organisations or provide the staff with opportunities to join professional bodies. This neglect of long-term employee development leaves many feeling stagnant and uncertain about their future prospects within the organisation.

Despite these challenges, there are glimpses of potential for greater internal skills utilisation, particularly among the ADA's technical staff. P11 expressed frustration that the organisation often relies heavily on external consultants despite having qualified engineers in-house. They explained that they have their own engineers, hence they are meant to rely on them, yet most of the money was spent on consultants. This indicates that if the ADA invests in its own staff and creates a research unit, it could greatly enhance its capacity and success. This reveals a missed opportunity for internal professional development and calls for the need for the organisation to invest in its employees' skills and expertise. Similarly, P11's reflection that the professional

development that they planned to do still holds value today, and they can still progress with the ADA, which suggests that with the right approach, the ADA could build a vigorous internal talent pipeline.

4.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Work-life balance

WLB is crucial to employee satisfaction and retention, yet at the ADA, this balance is often compromised. While some participants acknowledged efforts such as wellness programmes aimed at supporting mental and physical health, others described the imbalance in work demands, with employees expected to work during personal time, including weekends and leave periods. This subtheme highlights the following issues: support for mental health, physical health initiatives, policies, consistency, work during personal time, healthy workload and conditions, and organisational dysfunction and downtime. The participants were quoted as follows:

"There was no bonus there, so there's nothing special." (P2)

"It's the wellness programmes... it gives employees confidence... that kind of support to actually make you do better." (P3)

"There is an okay work-life balance... depends on the season and your manager. Right now, a good work-life balance, because when I've left work I have left work. I don't think there's a culture at ADA that promotes a healthy work-life balance. I'd be getting calls over the weekend and have to stretch myself and work." (P4)

"We have introduced wellness and support which... helps the employees with resources of mental health. We introduced initial initiatives in terms of physical health and we bring professional health practitioners to engage with our employees." (P5)

"You'd get a call at 7:00 PM from the CEO or leadership... even if you are on leave, you'd still be expected to take calls and respond to emails. Poor planning led to an imbalanced work-life... always on emergency mode." (P7)

"For me, I do have the time, but it's not on purpose. It's because the company is not functioning the way that it should. The amount of work I should be having I don't have because the organisation is not functioning the way it should. I have time, but it's not because the company is trying to create flexibility for employees." (P8)

"The work-life balance wasn't there for me... The environment was not agile enough to accommodate those things. I was still expected to do duties at ADA... even when I was sick or on leave. Work long hours, driving to rural areas, returning at 10 PM, and still expected to be in the office by 7:30 AM... it wasn't healthy." (P10)

The participants shared diverse perspectives on WLB at the ADA. While there were some positive aspects of wellness initiatives, the perception is that the organisation struggles to consistently promote a healthy balance between work and personal life. Some participants acknowledged that the introduction of wellness programmes helped to address certain aspects of employee wellbeing. For example, according to P3, it is the wellness programmes that give employees confidence and provide the support needed to help them perform better. In the same vein, P5 also highlighted that the ADA introduced resources for mental health and engaged professional health practitioners to support employees' physical health, indicating that the organisation recognised the importance of wellbeing. They noted that they launched initial initiatives that focused on physical health and brought in professional health practitioners to engage with the employees. These efforts suggest that ADA did attempt to create a framework for wellness, at least in a formal sense.

However, despite these initiatives, there was a sense of inconsistency in how WLB is experienced, which often depends on the individual's manager or the time of year. P4 observed that there is a decent WLB, although it depends on the season and the manager. This variability points to a lack of a unified OC that consistently promotes a healthy balance. While some employees are able to maintain boundaries between work and personal time, others feel the strain of being expected to be on call outside of regular hours. P4 shared that they would receive calls over the weekend and have

to push themselves to work. This signals that the pressure to be available at all times for work diminishes the possibility of a true work-life separation.

Several participants expressed frustration with the intrusion of work into their personal time, particularly due to poor planning and organisational dysfunction. P7 emphasised this point, explaining that they would get a call at 7:00 PM from the CEO or leadership, and even if they are on leave, and they would still be expected to take calls and respond to emails. This constant state of emergency mode leads to an imbalanced work-life situation, where employees feel that they are never fully off-duty, regardless of their formal time off. The unpredictable nature of these demands results in significant stress, as employees are expected to respond to work-related issues during their personal time, even when sick or on leave. P10 echoed these sentiments, recalling the expectation to work long hours, including driving to rural areas late into the night and being expected to be back at the office early the next morning. They lamented that there is no WLB.

Interestingly, some employees who appeared to have more personal time attributed this not to the organisation's efforts to create flexibility but rather to dysfunction within the company. P8 revealed that they have time, but it is not because the company is offering flexibility; it is because the organisation is not operating as it should. This points to a paradox where some employees experience downtime not as a result of thoughtful WLB policies, but due to the inefficiencies within the organisation itself. The ADA's inability to operate smoothly and plan effectively leads to sporadic periods of downtime for employees, which, in turn, give them a break from work, although not through deliberate policy but through organisational inertia.

Compounding the issue, there is a lack of support during critical periods when employees need time away from work. P10's reflection on the expectation to continue duties even when sick or on leave further illustrates how the organisation's demands often overrode personal health needs. They recalled that working long hours, driving to rural areas, returning at 10:00 PM, and still being expected in the office by 7:30 AM was not healthy. which describes a scenario where WLB was not only overlooked but directly undermined by unreasonable demands.

4.3.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Compensation and benefits packages

While ADA's compensation is generally perceived as competitive, especially for higher-level employees, the absence of structured benefits packages detracts from satisfaction. The participants highlighted the lack of comprehensive benefits such as pensions and medical aid, which leaves them feeling unsupported in areas beyond their base salary. The inability to choose how benefits are allocated and the lack of fairness for lower-level employees are particularly problematic. This subtheme demonstrates the following codes: competitive salaries with structure, structured benefits, benefits beyond salary, quality of compensation, level of compensation, and choice in benefit allocation. The following are the participants' quotes:

"The compensation is good, but in terms of benefits package, we really don't have any. You get your entire package and then you have to consider getting your own, creating your own benefits. In terms of benefits packages, we don't have any... We are falling short on this one, and I think it's something that needs to be looked into." (P3)

"If you are at a scale of DPSA 11 and above, I think you are OK. It was competitive, it was market rates. If you were below that [DPSA 11], there were quite a few issues... People were receiving a CTC without the 33 or 37% in lieu of benefits, so that was a big deterrent from level 10 down. The ability to choose what you're doing with that CTC was not there. We were forced to take a particular Provident fund... it didn't make sense to be forced into something." (P6)

"For a contract post, for me it was fair. When I came in and even now in comparison to similar roles elsewhere. People are joining the pension fund now, but it's up to the employee to structure their salary as they would need. There's nothing else, it's up to the employee to structure their salary... There is now a pension fund that has been organised." (P9)

"ADA was paying well... but their salaries were not well structured. I've got my own pensions, I got medical aid... but it was not aligned well. ADA was paying well, but just that their salaries were not well structured. At ADA, we did have cell phone benefit but here... you've got more benefits." (P11)

The participants' reflections on compensation and benefits at the ADA revealed a complex picture, with generally positive views on the quality of compensation but noteworthy dissatisfaction regarding the structure and availability of the benefits. While salaries were perceived as competitive, particularly for certain levels of employees, the absence of structured benefits packages emerged as a critical issue for many. Several participants acknowledged that their compensation, in terms of salary alone, was satisfactory. For example, P3 remarked that the compensation is good, echoing a sentiment shared by others, particularly those in higher pay grades. P11 confirmed this, noting that the ADA was paying well, although they also highlighted the organisation's shortcomings in how these salaries are structured. Despite the generally positive perception of salaries, the lack of comprehensive benefits packages left many employees feeling unsupported in areas beyond their base salary. According to P3, they do not have any benefits packages, which is a shortcoming that needs attention. This reflects a common concern that, while salaries might meet the market standards, the absence of additional benefits such as medical aid or pension contributions detracts from the employee satisfaction.

The issue of benefit structure was a recurrent factor. P11 pointed out that while the ADA provides competitive salaries, the alignment of benefits like pensions and medical aid is lacking. The participant explained that they have their own pension and medical aid, but it was not well aligned. This reveals that there is a disconnect between the salary packages offered and the lack of formalised benefits that typically accompany them in other organisations. This lack of structure means that the employees often have to manage their own benefits independently, which, for many, is not ideal. P3 echoed this frustration, noting that employees were left to create their own benefits with their compensation package, which placed additional financial and administrative burdens on them.

For employees below certain pay grades, the situation is even more challenging. P6 explained that for those below DPSA level 11, the lack of benefits is particularly problematic. For those below DPSA level 11, there were several issues – people received a CTC without the 33% or 37% in lieu of benefits, which was a major deterrent for levels 10 and below. This reflects a clear disparity within the organisation, where

lower-level employees are significantly disadvantaged by not receiving the equivalent of benefits, which further widens the gap in compensation satisfaction between different groups. P6 also expressed frustration over the lack of choice in benefit allocation, stating that the flexibility to decide how to use the CTC was missing; they were forced to take a specific provident fund, which did not make sense. This lack of flexibility in managing their compensation package further diminishes the appeal of ADA's offerings.

Whilst some improvements were mentioned, such as the recent introduction of a pension fund, they were often seen as too little, too late. According to P9's observation, people are now joining the pension fund, but it is up to each employee to structure their salary as needed. Although the availability of a pension fund was a positive step, the onus remained on employees to manage the complexities of their own salary structure, rather than benefiting from a well-designed package provided by the organisation. This approach creates additional challenges, particularly for those who may not have the expertise or time to manage their financial planning effectively.

4.3.2.5 Subtheme 2.5: Communication

Effective communication is vital for an organisation's success and for maintaining employee morale. The participants frequently cited issues with communication, describing it as inconsistent, unclear, and often delayed. Important information, particularly regarding leadership changes or remuneration, was not always communicated effectively, leading to confusion and mistrust. Bureaucratic delays and a lack of transparency further exacerbated the communication challenges, with employees disconnecting from organisational decisions and their own roles within the ADA. This subtheme emerged with the following codes: effectiveness, transparency, timeliness, bureaucracy, mandate clarity, approach, and broken telephone effect. The following are the participants' quotes:

"Important messages, especially pertaining to remuneration or changes in leadership, are not communicated effectively. One manager will have this information, another manager will have that information... it would be a case of broken telephone." (P4)

"It goes without saying it's not effective... We don't even know who is the CEO. Lack of Transparency and Clarity "They will never be clear and transparent... It affects us even mentally. Poor communication... it's very problematic... They don't communicate on time, they want employees to go and ask." (P5)

"There's a lot of red tape... all the hoops that one must go through to get a task completed. Communication of what the entity is itself, in terms of mandates, ayikho clear at that level." (P9)

"Communication was not streamlined... You would hear it like corridor talks. Even with emails, some people would get them, and others would not... the communication was just not streamlined." (P10)

The participants consistently highlighted communication as a major challenge at the ADA, which revealed that there are inefficiencies, a lack of transparency, and widespread confusion within the organisation. The effectiveness of communication within the organisation was perceived as severely lacking, with multiple instances of information not being shared properly or in a timely manner. This led to frustration, misalignment, and a disconnect among the employees, particularly on crucial matters such as remuneration and leadership changes. One of the most pressing concerns raised by the participants was the inconsistency in how information was communicated. P4 described a "broken telephone" effect, where different managers have different pieces of information, which leads to a fragmented and unclear flow of communication within the ADA. The participant further explained that important messages, particularly about remuneration or leadership changes, are not communicated effectively, hence critical details are often lost or distorted as they filter through the organisation. This breakdown causes confusion and also undermines the employees' trust in the communication process, particularly when it comes to important updates that directly impact their work or benefits.

Another common issue was the lack of transparency and clarity in communication, which many participants felt exacerbated the already problematic situation. P5's account of communication practices at the ADA was particularly telling. They lamented that they are never clear or transparent, which affects them mentally. Poor, untimely communication is a real problem, as they expect the employees to ask for information.

This perception of intentional opacity, where employees have to seek out information themselves rather than receiving it proactively, creates anxiety and an environment of uncertainty. P5's comment about the mental toll of poor communication points to the deeper psychological impact of feeling left in the dark about key decisions and organisational changes.

This lack of transparency extends to fundamental questions about leadership and the organisation's direction. P5 pointed out that at times, employees did not even know who the CEO was – a glaring example of how critical information was either not communicated or delayed. The absence of clarity around leadership further erodes confidence in the organisation's communication structures, as employees feel left adrift without knowing who is at the helm or what the organisation's strategic vision entails.

Bureaucracy and red tape also hinder effective communication. P9 expressed frustration with the slow, cumbersome processes that often obstructed communication. According to the participant, there is a lot of red tape and many hoops to jump through to get a task done. This reflects how administrative inefficiencies contribute to delays and make it difficult for information to move through the organisation in a timely or efficient manner. Additionally, P9 pointed out that the very essence of ADA's mandate is not clearly communicated to employees. The communication about what the entity is, in terms of its mandates, is unclear at that level. This lack of clarity about the organisation's purpose leaves employees unsure about their roles within the larger mission of the ADA, which further exacerbates any disconnection and disengagement.

The absence of streamlined communication channels was another key issue raised by the participants. P10 highlighted the fragmented nature of communication, describing how important information was often disseminated informally through informal or off-the-record discussions, rather than through official channels. They explained that communication was not streamlined; they would hear it through informal corridor talks, an illustration of how informal conversations often take the place of proper communication systems. Even when emails are used, the distribution is inconsistent, with some employees receiving important messages while others do not.

This lack of a reliable, organised communication system contributes to the perception that ADA's communication practices are ineffective and unprofessional.

4.3.2.6 Subtheme 2.6: Employee recognition and appreciation

The lack of recognition and appreciation was a recurring factor contributing to the employee retention. The participants consistently expressed frustration over their hard work and extra efforts going unnoticed, which reveals underappreciation and often results in emotional detachment from the organisation. This subtheme highlights performance bonuses; awards system; biasness, fairness, and exclusiveness; and employee morale. The following are the participants' quotes:

"I can give it 3 and that 3 is only for a salary... very, very low. That is one of the reasons why people are leaving the organisation now and again." (P2)

"Employee recognition and appreciation... it's non-existent... we don't get anything, no performance bonuses, no awards... you just do your job." (P3)

"We have recently introduced the performance bonus... I think that would also assist employees to look at ADA with another angle. There was a policy... because previously there were no performance bonuses." (P5)

"There were awards hosted... but they were not transparent or fair... driven by the CEO's office... it was not a transparent and fair process... I think it was a bias of the leadership. The awards... were not driven by the systems... I never heard of a committee that sits and scrutinizes... it was not an inclusive thing." (P10)

"There's no appreciation, not even... a token or a certificate... just a thank you... There's nothing like that. I know some staff members that left ADA... still doing well, but there's no appreciation." (P12)

The participants consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of recognition and appreciation at the ADA, with many highlighting that the organisation's approach to employee recognition was either non-existent or deeply flawed. This lack of

appreciation, through the absence of transparent systems for rewards and recognition, contributes to low morale and high turnover, as employees felt undervalued despite their contributions in the organisation. P2 encapsulated the general sentiment and rated employee recognition and appreciation at a three, solely for the existence of a salary. They emphasised that this poor level of recognition was one of the reasons employees keep leaving the organisation. The implication is clear, that without meaningful recognition, employees feel less attached to the organisation, which leads to disengagement and, ultimately, higher rates of turnover. The failure to properly acknowledge employee efforts make it difficult for them to feel valued or motivated, which has a direct impact on employee retention.

A recurrent factor in the participants' reflections was the absence of performance bonuses or any formal system for recognising employee achievements. P3 was particularly blunt in their assessment, stating that employee recognition and appreciation are non-existent. They do not receive anything – no performance bonuses, no awards; they are just expected to do their job. This stark observation suggests that there is a disconnect between employee effort and organisational acknowledgment, where doing one's job is not met with any form of reward – symbolic or otherwise. For many, this lack of even basic recognition, such as a 'thank you' or a small token of appreciation, intensified feelings of underappreciation. P12 echoed this, lamenting that there is no appreciation, not even a token or certificate; just a 'thank you', if anything. This neglect has a demoralising effect on employees, hence some may leave the organisation for opportunities where their work might be more recognised and valued.

While P5 mentioned the recent introduction of performance bonuses, they seemed more hopeful than reflective of any substantive change in employee experiences. They remarked that they have recently introduced a performance bonus, which they believe will help employees view the ADA in a different light. The introduction of a policy for bonuses is a step in the right direction, but it is clear that prior to this, the lack of financial incentives had been a significant issue. Even with the introduction of bonuses, the participants suggested that this change might be too late to reverse the negative perceptions that many employees already hold about the organisation's lack of appreciation.

The issue of fairness and transparency in recognition processes is a catalyst to the problem. P10's reflection on the awards system suggests that there is a widespread belief that the process is biased and lacks accountability. They noted there were awards held, but they were not transparent or fair; they were driven by the CEO's office and lacked a fair process. The perception that recognition is not merit-based, but instead influenced by personal biases, weakens the legitimacy of the entire system. P10 further critiqued the process, noting that the awards were not driven by systems, and the participant never heard of a committee that reviews them; it was not an inclusive process. The lack of a formal, transparent, and inclusive mechanism for determining recognition may reflect a system that is arbitrary and exclusive, and one that further alienates those who are not included in these selective acknowledgements.

When employee efforts often go unnoticed or are only recognised in ways that seem biased or insincere, this may be attributed to the absence of fairness and consistency in recognition practices, and a lack of clear, transparent systems for recognition, whether through awards, bonuses, or even simple acknowledgements.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Initiatives that management can put in place to promote employee retention at ADA

This theme is in line with Objective 3 of the study which sought to explore the initiatives that management can put in place to promote employee retention at ADA. This theme emerged with the following subthemes: job security and permanency, career growth and development, communication and leadership, recognition and appreciation, work environment and culture, as well as benefits and compensation.

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Job security and permanency

Securing permanent or long-term contracts at ADA would provide the employees with the much-needed job security, which may reduce anxiety over contract renewals and fostering a sense of stability. This subtheme emerged with the following codes: offering permanent or long-term contracts, and ending uncertainty over contract renewals. The following are the participants' quotes:

"They should make people permanent. It should be clear policies, clear guidelines on how to apply those policies." (P1)

"On top of the list is the job security. We want employees want permanency or a long term contract if permanency is far fetched of which we don't think it is." (P5)

"The first thing definitely is working on the permanency issue, even if it's not permanency per se but longer fixed-term contracts." (P4)

"Right now, the next next year September if not mistaken, the contracts are coming to an end... You don't know if your contract will be extended. So you will keep wondering that after this, what is going to happen?" (P2)

"They should create an environment that enables people to realise their worth." (P1)

The participants revealed a collective desire for greater job security and permanency, which is a recurring concern that prominently emerged. Job security, particularly in the form of permanent or long-term contracts, stood out as the most critical initiative. P1 expressed the sentiment that offering permanency would address the uncertainty associated with their roles, and also emphasised the need for clear policies and guidelines on how these policies should be applied. This call for transparency was shared by others, which reflects a belief that well-structured systems could instil confidence and peace of mind among employees, rather than leaving them to speculate about their future with the organisation.

Several participants reflected on the anxiety that comes with short-term contracts, noting that the uncertainty over whether contracts would be renewed left them in a constant state of unease. P2 articulated how the looming expiration of contracts brought instability. They stated that currently, contracts are ending, and they are uncertain whether yours will be extended. This lack of long-term assurance may leave the employees vulnerable, as they question their future within ADA. Similarly, P4 stressed that even if permanency was not immediately achievable, longer fixed-term

contracts would provide the much-needed stability for the employees. The call for permanency or extended contracts was not just about professional security but also about creating an environment where employees are valued and could focus on their work without distractions stemming from job insecurity.

Moreover, P1 suggested that beyond securing contracts, the organisation should create a culture where employees can realise their worth. The participant added that security and permanency would enable the employees to invest more of themselves in their roles. P5 echoed this sentiment, noting that employees strongly desire permanency or long-term contracts, with the belief that such stability would ensure loyalty and commitment to ADA. In this context, creating a work environment built on trust and stability could thus enhance employee retention by ensuring that employees feel secure in their roles and are valued by the organisation.

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Career growth and development

Career growth and development were seen as essential for retention, with the participants desiring internal promotion opportunities and professional development to be valued and motivated to stay long-term. The following are the codes which emerged from the subtheme: supporting internal promotion and career progression and offering professional development opportunities. The participants' quotes are as follows:

"This thing of getting into the organisation, you stay on one level for years, it doesn't help." (P2)

"Employees can stay at ADA because they will feel as professionals, which they are." (P5)

"I think creating room for growth also... supporting growth, right?" (P8)

"Make sure that you develop those employees when you develop the employees. They will feel valued. They will feel appreciated." (P2)

"Bring back the bursaries, bursaries put in khona angabi just for what qualifications like utholukuthi uyafunda eUNISA." (P4)

"ADA bursaries cause right now, not helping staff register with professional bodies." (P4)

The participants highlighted the importance of career growth and development as a key initiative for enhancing employee retention at ADA. P2 expressed frustration over the lack of internal promotion and career progression, stating that staying at the same level for years after joining the organisation does not help. This reflects a desire for a system that actively supports employees in advancing their careers within the organisation. P8 echoed, suggesting that they believe creating space for growth and supporting it is important. The ADA could create a pathway that encourages employees to see a future for themselves within the organisation through internal promotion and career progression, and thus motivating them to stay.

The importance of professional development was another key initiative suggested by the participants. P2 emphasised that investing in developing employees will make them feel valued and appreciated. This statement illustrated how investment in employees' professional growth could increase their sense of belonging and loyalty to the organisation. P5 reinforced this by saying that employees will stay at the ADA because they will feel recognised as the professionals that they are. When employees perceive that their skills and professional status are being recognised and developed, they are more likely to remain committed to the organisation.

Furthermore, P4 highlighted the need for educational opportunities as part of career development, specifically pointing to the reintroduction of bursaries. They suggested that they should bring back the bursaries, not just for qualifications like studying at UNISA, but for broader opportunities. This suggestion indicates that bursaries should not be limited to certain qualifications but should support educational and professional aspirations at a broader level. P4 further explained that the ADA bursaries should help the staff to register with professional bodies as they do right now, and thus illustrated how such programmes could aid employees in achieving professional recognition and growth.

4.3.3.3 Subtheme 3.3: Communication and leadership

Clear communication and leadership were identified as vital in improving trust and engagement at ADA. The participants suggested inclusive decision-making and respect for all employees. This subtheme emerged with the following issues: improving communication and leadership empathy, and inclusive decision-making and respect for employees. The participants were quoted as follows:

"If everything is being communicated and explained and everything is clear to everyone, that can calm down the employees." (P2)

"If you respect someone, you will feel the need to communicate effectively to them and trust them as professionals." (P5)

"The leadership needs to go for training to be able to be effective and efficient leaders and lead with empathy." (P10)

"Leadership should involve employees in decision-making processes." (P7)

"Involve them in those discussions, don't just wake up and make a decision that will affect them." (P5)

"They should initiate inclusive decision-making as I have said before." (P7)

The participants revealed that communication and leadership play a pivotal role in cultivating employee retention at ADA. P2 emphasised the importance of transparent and consistent communication within the organisation, stating that, *"if everything is being communicated and explained and everything is clear to everyone, that can calm down the employees."* This reflection reflects the anxiety that arises from unclear or inadequate communication, which suggests that employees are secure and content when they are well-informed about the decisions, policies, and organisational changes. The need for effective communication is closely tied to respect and trust, as noted by P5, who observed that when you respect someone, you feel the need to communicate effectively with them and trust them as professionals. This indicates how communication is not merely an exchange of information but also a reflection of the level of respect and professional regard between the leadership and the employees.

Leadership empathy emerged as another key concern among the participants. P10 articulated the need for leaders to adopt a more empathetic approach. According to the participant, the leadership needs training to become effective leaders who lead with empathy. This reflection suggests that leadership training could equip managers with the necessary skills to understand and respond to the emotional and professional needs of their employees, which in turn, could help in developing a supportive and harmonious work environment. The notion of empathetic leadership is closely connected to creating a culture where employees are valued and understood, which may reinforce their commitment to the organisation.

Furthermore, the participants raised the issue of the importance of inclusive decision-making. P7 stressed that the leadership should include employees in the decision-making process, and further advocates for a participatory approach where employees have a voice in decisions that affect them. P5 echoed this sentiment by urging the leadership to involve employees in discussions instead of making decisions that affect them without their input. This indicates the frustration that arises when employees feel excluded from major organisational decisions. Involving the staff in the decision-making process will contribute to the employees' feeling of ownership and belonging, making them integral to the organisation's success. P7 reiterated the need for inclusion and stated that they should promote inclusive decision-making, as mentioned earlier. This reveals that this is a recurrent issue for employees.

4.3.3.4 Subtheme 3.4: Recognition and appreciation

Recognition and appreciation are critical to retention. The participants felt that rewarding good performance, through bonuses and promotions, would boost morale and loyalty in the organisation. This subtheme explores the following codes which emerged: recognising and rewarding performance and offering performance bonuses. The following are the participants' quotes:

"If people have worked well to perform their duties above the expected, there should be bonuses." (P2)

"Recognise people who are delivering the results and overworking themselves for the benefit of the organisation." (P5)

"Employee recognition and appreciation is key, recognise our staff for the good work they've done." (P11)

"They should offer performance bonuses and promotions because it's ADA and you hardly get promoted unless your manager leaves." (P7)

"Performance bonuses would also assist with retention of staff." (P4)

"Introduce incentives like bonuses if people have worked well." (P2)

The participants revealed a strong desire for recognition and appreciation as critical initiatives in promoting employee retention at ADA. P2 stressed the importance of recognising employees who have exceeded expectations in their performance. According to the participant, if employees perform their duties beyond expectations, they should receive bonuses. This suggests that employees are motivated and become committed when their hard work is acknowledged, particularly through tangible rewards like bonuses. Similarly, P5 highlighted the need for recognition, noting that they should acknowledge those who deliver results and go above and beyond for the benefit of the organisation. The sentiment points to the frustration that can arise when employees' contributions are overlooked, and the desire for proper recognition of value and belonging within the organisation.

The notion that recognition should extend beyond mere verbal appreciation to include concrete rewards, such as performance bonuses, was echoed by several participants. P7 observed that they should offer performance bonuses and promotions because at the ADA, promotions are rare unless a manager leaves. This highlights the lack of upward mobility within ADA and suggests that without regular recognition through bonuses or promotions, employees may become stagnant, hence they may develop a desire to seek opportunities elsewhere. P4 added that performance bonuses would also help with retaining staff, which reflects the belief that financial incentives can serve as a powerful motivator to encourage employees to stay with the organisation.

P11 echoed the importance of recognition, stating that employee recognition and appreciation are crucial; acknowledge the staff for the great work that they do. Recognition is a motivational tool and a fundamental need for employees to be valued and appreciated in their roles. When employees' efforts are consistently acknowledged, it cultivates a positive work environment with respect and encouragement to continue contributing at a high level.

In this context, the participants revealed that initiatives like introducing performance bonuses and regularly recognising exceptional work would improve employee morale and loyalty. P2 reiterated that they should introduce incentives, like bonuses, for those who would have performed well, which is collective call for tangible rewards. Recognition and appreciation, whether through bonuses, promotions, or public acknowledgment, are seen as essential tools also in securing their long-term commitment to ADA.

4.3.3.5 Subtheme 3.5: Work environment and culture

A positive work environment and a balanced OC were considered key initiatives to promote employee retention at the ADA. The participants advocated for a culture of mutual respect, growth, and improved WLB to retain employees. This subtheme emerged with the following codes: fostering a positive work environment and promoting WLB and mutual respect. The following are the participants' quotes:

"Fostering a positive work environment plays a critical role in the productivity of employees." (P7)

"They should create an environment that encourages you to grow and explore other things." (P1)

"The culture here is negative, and it affects relationships between employees." (P7)

"Managers need to treat their employees as people and realise that they are also employed and don't own ADA." (P4)

"They need to address the power dynamics, which are distorted and lead to a toxic culture." (P4)

"There needs to be a culture of positive work-life balance." (P4)

The participants revealed that the work environment and culture at ADA are important initiatives influencing employee retention. P7 emphasised how the atmosphere within the organisation directly impacts how motivated and effective employees feel in their roles highlighted that. According to the participant, creating a positive work environment is crucial for boosting employee productivity. The importance of creating a nurturing environment where employees can perform well and also grow and explore new opportunities was echoed by P1, who suggested that the management should cultivate an environment that encourages growth and exploration of new opportunities. This indicates that a positive work environment is not just about the present, but it is also about supporting the employees' future aspirations, thereby allowing them to see long-term potential within the organisation.

However, the participants also reflected on the challenges posed by a negative work culture at the ADA, which they felt expressed to hinder employee relationships and job satisfaction. P7 pointed out that the culture at the organisation is negative, which impacts relationships between employees. This suggests that the current environment presents barriers to healthy communication and collaboration among the staff. This negative atmosphere can, in turn, drive employees to seek employment elsewhere, where they are supported and valued.

The issue of how employees are treated by the management also emerged as affecting the work environment. P4 remarked that managers need to treat their employees as individuals and understand that they are also employed and do not own the ADA, a sentiment that indicates that some managers may exert much control and distort the power dynamics that may influence a toxic culture. This imbalance, P4 further explained, that it creates a situation where distorted power dynamics create a toxic culture.

WLB was another prominent issues, with the participants noting that the management should place greater emphasis on promoting a healthy balance between professional

and personal lives. P4 expressed the need for a culture that promotes a positive WLB, and suggested that employees at the ADA may be overworked or underappreciated in their current roles.

4.3.3.6 Subtheme 3.6: Benefits and compensation

Competitive benefits and compensation packages, including medical aid and financial incentives, were strongly recommended to meet the employees' needs and ensure retention in a tough economic climate. This subtheme explores the following issues: providing competitive benefits, and offering competitive salaries and incentives. The participants' quotes are as follows:

"Introduce a comprehensive benefits package, especially medical aid. Life is tough, and employees need this support." (P11)

"Provide benefits that will be attractive to employees." (P5)

"ADA needs to introduce medical aids, even if it's a basic medical aid." (P11)

"The compensation benefit package needs to be in place... It is tough out there." (P11)

"If employees are compensated well, they will stay at ADA." (P11)

"They should provide more attractive benefits to retain staff." (P5)

The participants revealed that offering competitive benefits and compensation is a crucial initiative that the management could implement to promote employee retention at ADA. P11 emphasised the importance of a comprehensive benefits package, specifically highlighting medical aid as an essential support system for employees. They stated that they should introduce a comprehensive benefits package, particularly medical aid, as life is challenging and employees need this support. This indicates how inadequate benefits negatively impacts the feeling employees' feelings of being supported, especially in a challenging economic climate. The call for a medical aid package was echoed by P11, who reiterated that the ADA needs to introduce medical

aid, even if it is just a basic plan. This indicates a strong desire for healthcare-related benefits that could provide security and peace of mind for the employees and their families.

The need for competitive compensation was also a prominent concern. P11 noted that the compensation and benefits package needs to be in place, because it is tough out there. This further emphasises that in the face of economic pressures, employees expect fair and competitive pay from their employer. If their financial needs are not adequately met, they may feel compelled to seek opportunities elsewhere. This view was reinforced by P11's assertion that if employees are well-compensated, they will stay at the ADA, which directly links fair pay with the likelihood of retaining employees.

Moreover, the participants also reflected on the need for benefits that would attract and retain talented staff. P5 suggested that they should offer benefits that will attract employees. This suggests that the existing benefits package at ADA are not sufficient to retain employees or attract new talent. P5 further emphasised the importance of competitive offerings, saying that they should offer more attractive benefits to retain staff. This highlights the perception that ADA's current benefits are lacking compared to what other employers may offer, and this makes it difficult to retain employees long-term.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented a detailed overview of the research results from the data collected. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, and findings were presented in themes, sub-themes and codes supported by quotations from various participants. The next chapter will present the discussion in relation to previous studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the study, interprets and explains them, and links them to extant literature by other scholars. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA.

5.2 Discussion

The findings are discussed, interpreted, and explained in line with the themes which emerged and are outlined in the results chapter. The findings revealed the following:

5.2.1 Factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA

The study revealed that job insecurity is a factor that contributes to the employees' desire to leave the ADA. Job insecurity can stem from several factors, such as a company's economic instability, structural changes, or job automation. Lee, Sim and Tuckey (2023) support this, noting that feelings of insecurity can reduce job satisfaction and increase the employees' intention to leave. Conversely, Rajabi *et al.* (2019) argue that both material and immaterial rewards can boost job satisfaction and strengthen organisational commitment, thereby decreasing turnover intentions.

Leadership instability within ADA was established to contribute to the employees' desire to leave the organisation. According to Mey, Poisat, and Stindt (2021), the employees' decisions to stay or leave are influenced by the leadership behaviours of their managers. Furthermore, Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.* (2020) emphasise that effectively managing human talent thus offers a competitive edge, hence strategies focused on attracting and retaining talent should be a priority for HR.

The study also identified that a toxic work environment influences the employees' desire to leave ADA. When the work environment is perceived as conducive, safe, and non-toxic, employees are less likely to consider leaving. In contrast, a toxic work atmosphere reduces job satisfaction and erodes the employees' loyalty and long-term

commitment to the organisation. Therefore, the management should prioritise improving work environment factors to effectively manage to reduce employee turnover (Cruz *et al.*, 2022).

Another factor driving employees to leave ADA is the lack of career progression opportunities. Omodan (2022) suggests that employers can encourage retention by providing growth opportunities, which motivates employees to remain within the organisation. According to Bhatt, Chitranshi, and Mehta (2022), these motivational factors emphasise the psychological needs of employees such as opportunities for growth, recognition, authority, and quality of work.

Management issues, including a lack of support and inadequate leadership, were revealed as the major reasons for the employees wanting to leave ADA. Research has examined the impact of unethical leadership on employee attitudes, particularly regarding intentions to stay (Ruiz-Palomino *et al.*, 2021). Notably, the top management's involvement in unethical practices in the organisation accounts for over 26% of cases which contribute to some of the costliest instances of fraud. These actions result in financial consequences for organisations, and they also cause emotional and psychological strain for their stakeholders such as the employees (PwC, 2020). Given this, they may opt to leave the organisation as strain affects their productivity, and they may seek opportunities elsewhere.

The study found that another factor driving the employees' desire to leave ADA is the lack of a healthy WLB. Work stress, heavy workloads, and poor WLB are major contributors to employees' intentions to quit (Omar *et al.*, 2020). Maharani and Tamara (2024) note that WLB, when supported by job satisfaction, can improve the balance and reduce their intention to leave. The problem can be compounded by the lack of flexible work policies and failure to manageable workloads to alleviate stress and promote employee satisfaction, and consequently, employee retention. Therefore, a balanced work environment can enable organisations to reduce turnover by enhancing the employee well-being.

Employees' dissatisfaction and desire to leave ADA is also due to the lack of recognition and appreciation. Recognition has an impact on retention, with job satisfaction partially mediating the link between recognition and an employee's decision to stay (Ndiango, Gabriel and Changelima, 2024). Tirta and Erika (2020)

advance that recognition and rewards can be huge drivers of retention across various organisational contexts. Consistent recognition develops a sense of value and belonging which, in turn, strengthens employee loyalty. Moreover, personalised appreciation efforts can create a culture where employees feel seen and motivated, and ultimately enhance organisational commitment and reduce turnover.

5.2.2 Factors that promote employee retention at the ADA

The study revealed that leadership plays a role in shaping the work environment, providing direction, and influencing employee satisfaction. Research shows that ethical leadership is strongly associated with job satisfaction which can consequently lead to more transactional leadership dynamics (Muttalib, Danish and Zehri, 2023). A leader's power base can impact the employees' quality of work life (QWL) and their intention to stay, as it shapes their attitudes toward workplace behaviours. For instance, leaders who use transformational leadership styles, along with expert and referent power, are likely to create a positive work environment that promotes employee engagement and satisfaction. Conversely, leaders who rely on coercive or reward-based power may cultivate a negative environment that breeds resentment and dissatisfaction among the employees (Maphanga, Mokoena and Isabirye, 2024). There is thus a need for organisations to cultivate a supportive and fulfilling work environment that enhances retention.

Access to professional development also influences employee retention. Studies indicate that job satisfaction and commitment often fully mediate the relationship between opportunities for employee development and the intention to stay or leave. Shiri *et al.* (2023) suggest that employees who participate in professional training or development are less likely to leave their current positions. For example, offering leadership development programmes or technical skills training can enhance the employees' sense of growth and value within the organisation. Organisations that support career advancement through mentorship or educational stipends are highly likely to nurture loyalty, as the employees see a clear path for progression. This emphasis on professional growth strengthens retention by equipping the employees with the skills needed for evolving organisational demands.

The study also revealed that WLB is essential for employee satisfaction and retention, yet at the ADA, this balance is often compromised. Silaban and Margaretha (2021) indicated that WLB has an impact on job satisfaction by 8.3%, and a 4.4% effect on employee retention. The authors add that one key managerial implication is that organisations do not prioritise providing a supportive work environment and adequate facilities to enhance employee motivation. WLB helps in improving motivation and job satisfaction, and it plays a huge role in retaining a talented workforce. For instance, implementing flexible work hours or remote work options can give employees some level control over their schedules and boost their morale and loyalty. Similarly, offering paid time off, mental health support, and wellness programmes can help employees to recharge and feel valued, and thus reducing burnout. According to Panda and Sahoo (2021), a work culture that respects personal time is essential for organisations to reduce turnover through enhancing employee well-being. Furthermore, when employees feel that their personal lives are respected, chances are that they will invest emotionally in their work, leading to higher productivity and engagement.

While ADA's compensation is generally perceived as competitive, especially for higher-level employees, the absence of structured benefits packages detracts from employee satisfaction. The lack of clear and consistent benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, or performance bonuses can create a gap in the employees' expectations, even if their base salary is attractive. Research by Zayed *et al.* (2022) indicates that compensation systems have a favourable impact on employee satisfaction, with motivation being partially mediated by these systems. Employees who feel that their compensation is comprehensive and well-rounded, including benefits like paid time off or wellness programmes, tend to feel valued and motivated. For example, providing a benefits package that supports health, family needs, and financial security can lead to increased employee morale and retention. Moreover, aligning compensation with career development opportunities such as educational stipends or professional growth incentives, can enhance satisfaction further. Without a structured benefits framework, employees may perceive their total compensation as incomplete, which has the potential to impact their long-term loyalty to the organisation.

Moreover, effective communication is vital for an organisation's success and for maintaining employee morale. Communication is a crucial element in any organisation

which is necessary for ensuring collaboration within the work environment; which ultimately impacts organisational performance and decision-making (Musheke and Phiri, 2021). A transparent communication system helps to ensure that employees are informed and included in key decisions to promote trust and engagement. Four communication practices that have been shown by Erickson (2015) to increase employee retention include: (i) holding regular meetings with employees to address concerns and provide updates, (ii) offering consistent and constructive performance feedback, (iii) committing to continuous learning and professional development, and (iv) conducting periodic stay interviews to understand employee satisfaction and potential retention risks. Regular meetings help employees to voice out any concerns, while feedback and professional development signal that the organisation is invested in their growth. Additionally, stay interviews provide valuable insights into why employees stay which thus allows organisations to address concerns hands-on and strengthen retention strategies. Through these practices, organisations can create open and supportive work cultures that lead to higher employee satisfaction and reduced turnover.

The lack of recognition and appreciation also results in employee turnover. Recognition is widely regarded as a powerful strategy for boosting employee motivation and engraining a sense of belonging within the organisation (Ampofo *et al.*, 2023). Research is premised on the point of departure that recognition enhances job satisfaction and improves retention rates within a logistics company (Ndiango, Gabriel and Changalima, 2024). When employees are acknowledged for their contributions, it not only increases their engagement; rather, it also strengthens their emotional connection to the organisation. Simple acts of recognition such as public acknowledgement of achievements or personalised 'thank-you' messages can create a culture of appreciation that encourages employees to stay. Furthermore, organisations that prioritise recognition tend to experience lower turnover and higher employee loyalty, as staff members are valued and are integral to the company's success.

5.2.3 Initiatives that management can put in place to promote employee retention at ADA

The study established that securing permanent or long-term contracts at ADA would provide employees with the much-needed job security to help reduce anxiety about contract renewals and forge some level of stability. Fixed-duration agreements play an important role in employment as they offer flexibility for the employers and workers. However, Shepherd (2023) posits that concerns about the security of long-term employment under these agreements have raised questions regarding equity and legal responsibilities. Research by Ofosuhen and Sammo (2020) found that the type of work contract has a moderate relationship with employee commitment, although there are no significant differences in motivation between contract workers and permanent employees. While permanent contracts can increase job security, the impact on motivation may be complex and influenced by other factors such as the work environment and management practices. Therefore, balancing contract types with a supportive work culture can help to enhance commitment and motivation across different employment categories.

Career growth and development were revealed as key factors for retention, coupled with a desire for internal promotion opportunities and professional development in order to feel valued and motivated to stay long-term. Mampuru, Mokoena and Isabirye (2024) argue that employees are less likely to leave their jobs when they believe that their employers are actively supporting their career development initiatives. The authors add that in this regard, employer policies and procedures can be seen as foundational elements in helping employees to grow professionally. Organisational policies and practices that focus on employee development may enhance job satisfaction and encourage loyalty, given that the employees feel that their growth is supported and valued by the employer. Therefore, providing clear career advancement pathways and professional development programmes may improve retention rates by cultivating a committed workforce.

Clear communication and leadership were established to be essential in ensuring trust and engagement at ADA. A positive and cheerful workplace attracts talented individuals which, in turn, promotes a culture of productivity and accountability, while a toxic environment can easily undermine company culture (Hadziahmetovic & Salihovic, 2022). Authentic leadership plays a crucial role in this dynamic, as authentic

leaders are consistently aware of their unique strengths, values, attitudes, and needs, which helps them to build trust and credibility with their teams (Puni & Hilton, 2020). When leaders model authenticity, they create an open and transparent work environment where employees are valued and understood, leading to engagement and loyalty. This alignment between leadership and workplace culture can enhance overall organisational performance.

5.3 Summary

This chapter outlined in detail the study findings, in line with the research objectives supported by existing literature. The study findings revealed various factors contributing to employees wanting to leave the ADA, some of the factors that promote employee retention, as well as the initiatives that the management can put in place to promote employee retention at ADA. The results of the study showed noteworthy connections to previous studies. The need for the ADA to retain their staff is deemed important for successful business continuity. The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a discussion of the study findings linked to extant literature by various scholars. The aim of the study was to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA. The study was conducted to examine the factors affecting employee retention at the ADA and suggest initiatives that the management can put in place to promote employee retention. This chapter outlines the conclusions of the study and presents recommendations for the ADA, as well as for future studies.

6.2 Conclusion

The study provided a background on the definition of employee retention, the importance of employee retention in organisations, and the problems faced by the ADA in the retention of their employees. A background on the importance of the agricultural sector in the country and in the KZN Province which saw the inception of the ADA, as well as its mandate and role in the province were provided. The study also highlighted various themes and factors related to the retention of employees, such as working conditions, remuneration, the role of leadership and management, WLB, OC, training and development, and job security.

The findings revealed that there are quite a number of factors linked to the literature review that are seen as major causes for low employee retention in the ADA. The participants highlighted factors such as leadership instability, the lack of job security, lack of employee recognition and appreciation through a rewards system, lack of career progression through training and development, and the lack of communication which then leads to the environment being regarded as toxic by the employees. Regarding the factors that promote employee retention, a prominent factor alluded to by the participants was compensation, stating that it is generally competitive in the job market, which makes it difficult for some employees to leave the organisation or even negotiate for better compensation elsewhere. However, the literature review suggests that compensation is not sufficient in achieving a successful employee retention rate.

The suggested initiatives to be implemented by the leaders of the organisation, include a comprehensive remuneration package inclusive of benefits, offering permanency or long-term contracted employment rather than fixed-term contracts (FTC), strengthening internal communication to avoid hearsay about organisational changes, and introducing stability, where the leadership is involved to improve retention and the overall well-being of the organisation.

6.3 Recommendations

As mentioned in the study background and literature review, organisations invest a great amount of time and money in the recruitment, training, and development of employees, hence organisations should exhaust all efforts to retain their employees. The recommendations, based on the findings, reveal that the organisation can implement the following initiatives:

6.3.1 Retention policy

It is recommended for the ADA to have a retention policy that will serve as a guideline on how the organisation can achieve the effective retention of employees using various staff retention techniques which are highlighted subsequently.

6.3.1.1 Communication

It is recommended that the ADA fosters a culture of effective internal communication, where the leadership and management interact equally and regularly with subordinates, taking into consideration their ideas and have regular staff meetings as this encourages employee interaction, feedback, and the exchange of ideas. The use of technology such as mailers, intranet, and digital screens, where factual and important information can be communicated and archived, can aid in bridging the gap in communication.

6.3.1.2 Training and development

It is recommended that the ADA implements a strong training and development programme aligned to the employees' development goals and those of the organisation in order to support both the formal and informal acquisition of skills and knowledge. This can be achieved by allowing and supporting employees to enroll for short-term training and to pursue formal postgraduate education. Another retention technique that the ADA can implement is succession planning which will offer opportunities for the growth of employees within the organisation and ensure business continuity should key personnel exit the organisation in unforeseen circumstances, such as death, illness, suspension, or dismissal.

6.3.1.3 Employee recognition and rewards

It is recommended that the ADA promote recognition of excellence, where performance and individual achievements are concerned. Where employees have excelled in their performance, they should be rewarded with STIs such as bonuses. This will assist with staff retention and to boost morale. Where employees have excelled in academia, they can be recognised and rewarded with an academic achievement award from the office of the CEO.

6.3.1.4 Job security

It is recommended that the ADA offers permanent employment or long-term contracts to its employees. Job insecurity was identified as one of the major causes affecting retention in the organisation. When employees are offered permanency or long-term contracts instead of short-term contracts, they will be able to have a sense of stability in the workplace, as well as in their personal lives. This, in turn, will enhance the organisation's productivity and overall stability.

6.3.1.5 Morale building

It was revealed that there is a lack of support from the leadership and management, hence it is recommended for the ADA to promote morale building by supporting their subordinates through taking time to reflect and assist them where needed and

appreciate the work that they would have done. Introducing a bit of down-time at least once every quarter, where team building activities take place, may boost employee retention.

6.3.1.6 Employee wellness and WLB

Through this study and consulting various literature, it was established that there is a relationship between employee wellness and WLB, and retention. Therefore, it is recommended for the ADA to be intentional about offering WLB options through controlled flexi-time, limiting excessive overtime, recognising family responsibilities and obligations, as well as implementing effective wellness programmes.

6.3.2 Leadership stability

The findings revealed that there is a leadership instability crisis at the ADA that has been going on for quite some time which disturbs the successful operation of the business, where the organisation has had about four CEOs within a period of five years. It is recommended that the ADA employs a CEO on a permanent basis or a five-year renewable contract based on performance. This will further promote retention, enhance stability, and limit uncertainty and frustration among the employees.

6.4 Suggestions for future studies

Although employee retention is a widely researched topic, it is recommended that future studies contribute to the body of knowledge by conducting an investigation on the specific timeframes that result in the successful retention of employees. There is a dearth of literature that quantifies successful retention in terms of the years. It is believed that such studies could address a critical question for most organisations, that, at what point can they consider their retention efforts successful? For instance, is a five-year or ten-year tenure a better benchmark for a successful retention goal? Such knowledge could empower public and private organisations to have a deeper understanding of what constitutes employee retention and allow them to have more precise retention strategies in place.

6.5 Summary

This chapter outlined the conclusion of the study by reciting the aim of the study and the key findings that were obtained from the study. The chapter recommended a number of retention techniques that serve as a response to the research questions and problem statement. The chapter further provided recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

Examining the factors affecting employee retention at the Agribusiness Development Agency

Lerato Moloi

Graduate School of Business and Leadership

University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

MBA

Email: 220082512@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Interview questions

1. Describe your overall work experience at the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA).
2. What are the factors that lead to employees wanting to leave the ADA?
3. What are the factors that promote employee retention at the ADA?
4. What are your thoughts on the role of leadership in employee retention at ADA?
5. Are there opportunities for professional development available at the ADA? Please elaborate.
6. What are your thoughts regarding work-life-balance at the ADA?
7. What are your thoughts on the compensation and benefits package available at the ADA?
8. How effective is communication within the ADA?
9. How would you describe the levels of employee recognition and appreciation at the ADA?
10. What initiatives can management put into place to promote employee retention at the ADA?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix B: Gatekeeper's letter



Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu- Natal
Westville Campus
Durban
3630

12 March 2024

RE: GATEKEEPERS LETTER FOR LERATO PALESA MOLOI (220082512) REGISTERED FOR MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Please note that the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA) is aware of Ms Lerato Palesa Moloji's research plans, she is granted permission to conduct her study with the selected participants at ADA once she has obtained Ethical Clearance approval.

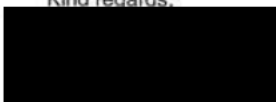
It must be noted that ADA's consent is granted based on the following conditions:

Any information acquired for this particular research should be utilized for the intended purpose and only by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names and the name of the organisation) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty.

Kind regards,



Dr. Nonhlanhla Myeni
A/Chief Executive Officer

13 March 2024
Date

Promoting Agribusiness through Partnership & Knowledge
5 Cascades Crescent
Cascades Office Park, Montrose
KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 3202
T: 033 347 8600, F: +27 33 347 0913

Appendix C: Ethical clearance



23 August 2024

Lerato Palesa Moloi (220082512)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear LP Moloi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007390/2024

Project title: Examining the factors affecting employee retention at an agricultural public entity in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 24 July 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 23 August 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix D: Consent form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Esteemed Colleague

You are being invited to consider participating in a study, *Examining the factors affecting employee retention at an Agricultural Public Entity in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. The aim and purpose of this research is to identify the factors that lead to low employee retention and identify initiatives that management can implement to promote staff retention at the ADA, and provide recommendations to them. The study is expected to enrol twenty (20) participants, reflecting a representation of past employees, managerial and support roles within the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA).

Purposive sampling will be employed where 10 participants will form part of those that have exited the organisation through the process of resignation, four (4) support staff and one (1) manager within the employ of the ADA from the corporate services division, four (4) support staff and one (1) manager within the employ of the ADA from the operations division to date. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 30-50 minutes in the form of an interview. Data will be collected using MS Teams recording.

The study hopes to improve employee retention at the ADA. Employee retention is beneficial to both the organization and employees as it reduces costs related to recruitment, builds employee morale, builds a strong employer brand, contributes to skills development and increased job satisfaction. In an effort to protect the participants, personal identifiers such as names/ email addresses will not be reflected anywhere as part of the study, instead each participant will be assigned a unique code. This coding system ensures that individual participants cannot be identified from the collected data.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in this study and there will be no incentives or reimbursements for participation in this study.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00007390/2024).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 220082512@stu.ukzn.ac.za, [REDACTED] or the Supervisor, Professor Cecile Gerwel at Gerwel@ukzn.ac.za, +27 31 260 8318 or UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban, 4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

HREC UKZN Oct 2008

1

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT

I _____, have been informed about the study entitled, "Examining the factors affecting employee retention at an Agricultural Public Entity in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa" by Lerato Molo.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 220082512@stu.ukzn.ac.za, _____

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date