

# The HRM Function in Church and Faith Based Organisations in Zimbabwe: Interrogating the current Status and Practices

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**Abstract:** The HRM function has been proven to play a critical role in most regulated social institutions as it provides stability, strategic direction for growth, relevant guidance on industrial relations and effective conflict resolution yet there exist deep and diverse entrenched sectoral opinions on the applicability, efficacy and usefulness of the of human resource function. The paper focuses on the need to understand the current status and practices of the Human Resource Management function in Faith Based organisations in Zimbabwe by highlighting the organisations' stance and inclinations towards the application, efficacy and usefulness of the Human Resource Management function against the "biblical and spiritual" nature as observed and suggested by some scholars. In addition, the paper endeavours to establish the challenges faced by Faith based organisations as they adapt and adopt the Human Resource Function in their structures and operations. The paper adopts a qualitative paradigm, drawing on the general systems theoretical view point to offer deeper insight into the current status and prevailing practices in the implementation of the Human Resource Management Function in Faith Based or Church based organisations in Zimbabwe. The article provides a detailed description of the way in which the HRM function is utilised in Zimbabwean Faith based or Church organisations. The article also demonstrates how the general systems theory can contribute towards a deeper understanding of the current status and prevailing practices in so far as HRM practices are concerned. The findings of the paper show that the HR function is not given much attention neither is it being practised professionally within Faith based organisations in Zimbabwe. The paper among other recommendations largely recommends that the bible schools should include in the curriculum for the clergy who are the leaders in the church, human resource management modules among other administration courses so as to enlighten the church on the need for professional human resource management.

**Key Words:** Human resource management function, Faith Based Organisations, Church, Church run organisations, Household of God

## I. INTRODUCTION

The church has largely been viewed as a spiritual organisation which needs to be managed differently, possibly that there is no need for a Human Resource Management Function within its settings. The contribution of management science in the effective management of organisations in general has greatly influenced the focus of

this paper from another dimension, where the focus is on a specific branch of management science, namely Human Resource Management. The main objective of this paper is to develop an understanding of how Faith Based organisations and Churches perceive and whether they have or have not embraced the concept of Human Resource Management in their day to day operations.

The article draws from systems thinking approach by Ludwig von Bertalanffy to understand the current status and practices by Faith Based or Church organisations in as far as the role of HRM Function is concerned in the Zimbabwean church and or Faith Based organisations. This research conducted in five Faith Based organisations and Churches in Zimbabwe was undertaken with a view to better understand the current practices and status in as far as the HRM function is concerned in view of influencing the adoption of a professional approach to Human Resource Management practices and the adoption of the HRM function in spiritual organisations in Zimbabwe.

The article opens with a brief overview of the current state and practices in as far as HRM is concerned in Faith Based and Church organisations in Zimbabwe, followed by a general systems theoretical view point. Building on this line of thought, we also strive to show how the Faith Based and Church organisations have embraced or rejected the concept of HRM. The brief overview of the challenges faced by the church and Faith Based organisations in running their organisations professionally is also discussed. This is followed by a brief study methodology and presentation of our study findings. The article concludes with some discussions on the current status of the HRM function in Zimbabwean Faith Based and Church organisations and recommendations for adoption of the HRM function, practices and future research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Overview of the current HRM state and practices in church and Faith Based organisations*

Human resource management (HRM) has been widely considered an important way to enhance organisational

performance. Many firms have adopted a range of HRM policies and practices to more clearly demonstrate the contribution of their workforces to the bottom line. The objective and practices of HRM are not without its critics, however, and while there have been a number of ethically-oriented analyses of different aspects of HRM, there remains scope for additional research as to the role played by HR in church organisations, (Fremaux & Michelson, 2017).

As put forward by Armstrong & Taylor (2017), HRM will be used as an umbrella term which includes all aspects of human resource practices such as recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, human resource policies, human resource philosophies, practices aimed at attracting, retaining, motivating and developing employees among others. It is therefore imperative to understand HRM in the context of the Faith Based Organisations, particularly in view of the internal and external factors that obtain in these organisations.

Oosthuizen and Lategan (2016) noted that within the exceptional structure of the church as an organisation, symbolically referred to as the body of Christ, the church still needed to be managed equally the same as any other secular organisation. O'Brien (2019) concurs that the church is both an organisation and spiritual entity, as such church leadership should understand both sides of this definition. Suffice to add that church leadership for example the clergy at the top echelons of the church should therefore appreciate the need for professional expertise in the HRM function of the church.

Ramboarison-Lalao (2018) conducted a study on HRM management practices within two religious organizations by comparing HRM practices at the Headquarters and at local parish level. Results pointed to similarities of HR responsibilities of strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert and employee champion compared to HR Managers of laical organizations, at the Headquarters of the two religious organizations. In addition he observed that, the greater the number of employees, the more there is a need to have a formal Human Resource Director position. At local level, the parish pastors from the two Christian Confessions acted as servant leaders and have, sometimes like in laical organizations, acted as an HR Manager of proximity although it is not their major mission. These findings clearly indicate or point to the need to have a fully-fledged HR function within the church so as to remove the burden on the clergy.

Sample (2017) examined the crucial role of Human Resource Management in the people-focused Church ministry. One obvious fact is that service organizations, such as the Church, have little to sell but their good service, which makes them uniquely dependent on their employees and volunteers' attitudes and motivations and on good H.R. management practices. Similarly in this book, Gibson (2018) sought to ascertain through proper research and due diligence the degree of presence or absence of HRM practices in the Church and the likely effect this may have on Church management. His findings established that the Church Ministry is founded on communion (fellowship), love for and of God and each other,

service to and for God and each other, proclamation and evangelisation of the Word of God, reconciliation, equity and justice and is open and inclusive. In light of this finding, it is our view that the church therefore needs a fully-fledged HRM function which will enable the HR personnel to take care of the welfare of the church employees because of its social nature.

Secular/Commercial Organisations, on the other hand, are predicated on customer service, quality, organisation centeredness, profit and greed and are generally closed and exclusive. Church Ministry is considered to be a success the more it reaches out in service to others, the more it engages those within the church, the more it converts and/or renews the lives of those within and outside the Church. Commercial Organisations are considered to be successful, if their 'bottom line' is in the profit and not in loss. Clearly there is a marked difference between the Church and Commercial Organisations, based primarily on its motivation; for the Church, its motivation is God's salvation of humankind; for a Commercial Organisation, its motivation is primarily money, prestige and/or power or some combination of these. Moreover, the motivation driving these two entities will certainly impact differently on their vision, mission, core values, policies and procedures, including HRM. The most fundamental driver of the two organisations remain the human capital, and the existence of the HRM function in both set-ups is crucial to operationalise HRM functions such as training and development, recruitment and selection, reward management, discipline, industrial relations among others. It is however of fundamental importance for the HR personnel to align their HR strategies in context to the organisations they are in (Secular/Commercial and the Church).

Sifuma-Evelia (2017) established that there are four challenges for HRM in Church Ministry today, particularly in recruitment and selection, remuneration and benefits management, performance management and developing a spirituality of work. All these challenges are emanating from the nature of HRM practices that prevail in the church, where in some churches, the HRM function has not been fully embraced for example. In recruitment and selection it is important for the HR function to be vigilant in four areas namely the cultural and position fit of applicants for the position, a deliberate, planned and unhurried process, openness and transparency in the process; and finally, recognition that job security is a legitimate expectation of employees.

Research by O'Brien (2019) established that when interviews are conducted by the clergy and the church elders they fall into the trap of believing that the best person in the interview is the one who should be appointed. Instead they should be searching for the 'right' person, that is, the one who is both a cultural fit and a position fit for the Church Ministry. Cultural fit refers to whether a person's values and standards are in 'synch', with the church's values and standards. Position fit refers to whether a person's knowledge

and skills are a 'match' with the job's requirements. To focus solely on the position fit of the candidate, may get the Church the 'best' candidate but not the right candidate. And it is important to get the cultural and position fit right for this simple reason: The 'right' candidate may not have the highest levels of skills that the 'best' candidate has, but because their values and standards are the same or similar to those of the church, they will have a better overall fit with the church and as a result may stay longer in the job. Armstrong & Taylor (2017) argues that the HRM function plays a pivotal role in the smooth running of all organisations, and one will not be wrong to include the church, and gone are the days when the HR function was just delegated to anyone perceived capable.

Practising sound HRM practices starts with the introduction of a fully-fledged HRM function through setting up an HR office in the church. Ramboarison-Lalao (2018) posited that, with regards to the strategic HRM concerns around remuneration and benefits management, it is important to remember that while many of the clergy and religious may have taken a vow of poverty, the laity have not. The laity not only have need of the basics (food, water and shelter), if they are married they usually have family members who are dependent upon them to meet these needs in addition to huge repayments on mortgages on their homes as well as high education costs for their children.

Over and above the commitment to remunerate the church employees, there is need for the church to utilise the services of a professionally run human resource management office. Reward management is not a process that can just be thumb sucked, however it is imperative that the process is executed professionally. This therefore calls for the church to embrace the HRM function so as to professionally execute the process as the remuneration and benefits system should be documented and reviewed on a regular basis. Sifuma-Evelia (2017) lamented the Catholic Church's stipend system which he felt was not sustainable for the church employees particularly the clergy. This type of reward management approach clearly points to a traditional approach to reward management which characterises most church and church organisations and is more of thumb sucked or dependent on the belief that factors such as hierarchy only matters in the house of God.

Staff motivation and retention are also fundamental aspects of HRM functions in any organisation. If Church Ministry wants to attract and retain well-educated and committed workforce, a fair and equitable salary is mandatory; no longer can Church Ministry afford to pay its staff with a 'pittance and prayer'. Sifuma-Evelia (2017) observed that currently there are anomalies in remuneration which exist between different parts of the Church. These anomalies must be carefully investigated and addressed. For example there is need to balance the requirements of tertiary qualifications at a particular level and issues of responsibilities attached to a position and this should be reflected in the remuneration and benefits scale.

Performance Management, is an area that, sadly, is not well understood or practiced by the Church as was observed by Andrews and Roller (2019). At a strategic level, it includes: induction, performance and development reviews, learning and development, mentoring and succession planning for sustainable leadership (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017) right through to the exit of the employee from their position within the organisation. What Performance Management really means is stewardship of the Church's human resources. With respect to induction, this is simply how the Church welcomes the newly appointed staff member to the culture of the Church organisation, to the people within and outside the Church organisation, to the position, to the place and location of the job. Induction should be carefully planned prior to the appointment of a person, the physical setup of the office needs to be prepared for example the desk, telephone and computer among other requirements to ensure on-boarding for the newly appointed person, introductions need to be made within the functional units and outside the functional units of the church organisation, facilities need to be noted and directions provided to functional areas of the organisation.

*The necessity of the Human Resource Management Function in a Faith Based Organisation.*

Udeheyop and Utuk (2019) defined Human Resource Management in the church context as the effective management of the church's human capital so as to achieve the goals of the church. They further add that this should lead to the satisfaction of the individuals who have volunteered their service to God in any capacity. They further articulated the roles and functions of the Human Resources department and admitted that these may differ with the organisation. The major roles that were put forward included workforce planning and recruitment, rewards, human resources development, policy formulation, employee relations.

In their paper Udeheyop and Utuk (2019) further argued that the definition of Human Resources Management could be used effectively as a foundation for Human Resource Management in Church Ministry. However, it needs to be altered to reflect the Communion, transformation/rebirth and mission orientation that distinguishes Church ministry from commercial organizations. This argument leads us to interrogate the nature of the church organisation and how it should manage its people issues.

According to O'Brien (2019) in his article where he explained the concept of orthodox doctrine, he made it clear that Jesus Christ is truly man and shares with the human race all that is human. In that regard, the church is a human organisation which can fully utilize the secular management science concepts where the Human Resource profession largely relies on. This argument resonates with that of Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) who dispelled the assumption that the household of God is too spiritual to be an organisation like any other organisation and actually referred to this misconception as more than "a theological discrepancy and in

fact a deeply rooted misinterpretation of the full humanity of the local church”.

Li Lin (2017) in his paper on the church and management he suggested that a church or church organisation is an apparatus which is used to serve individual needs of its members. He suggested that the church as supported by the theory of institutionalisation is hugely affected by external pressures, which is largely manifested by their competitive relationship with other like organisations. The scholar suggested that churches as a result do compete in a religiously pluralistic environment as suggested by one Pastor David Heney. As a result he suggested that churches should be organised similarly to a business in order to succeed. The pastor is said to have even suggested that the term evangelism may be interchangeable with marketing and therefore suggested that parishes should adopt a marketing approach in order to create exchanges that satisfy both the church and the congregants.

Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) in their paper about the importance of management science in the Church, argued that the field of management science plays a pivotal role in the day to day functioning of the church organisation. Most of their argument was heavily reliant on the biblical occurrences, where the people who lived during the new and Old Testament times exercised some management skills to accomplish certain tasks and assignments. The important aspect in their paper centres on the deployment and management of people to accomplish tasks within the church. It is also evident from their paper that while the church as an organisation is unique and largely spiritually based it exists within the environment which ultimately shapes it.

The church is founded on the Biblical principles and these principles have an effect and influence on how it is structured, how it operates, and its mission among other aspects. Sifuma-Evelia (2017) suggest that Human Resource Management plays a pivotal role in the church in areas such as recruitment, manpower planning, grievance handling and retirement management among other functions. They further argue that the necessity of the Human Resource Management Function in the church is vital for the success of church functions such as evangelism, preaching, teaching among others, since the church needs well managed staff who are capable. This view is supported by Oluwasegun (2016) who argued that the church has a vision and mission which can only be achieved if there is coordinated effort and this can only be achieved if there are support lines. He further suggested that this needs to be supported by proper selection and training of people in the organisation.

Chatira and Mwenje (2018) in their paper on management skills necessary for effective church management they established that pastors desired to be capacitated on strategic planning and implementation, organisational development, conflict management, management information systems and human resource management. Notably all these areas are components of the HRM function, which explains the importance of the establishment of the HRM function in the

church. In as much as pastors will need to be capacitated in HRM, the HRM field is a fully fledged discipline which definitely needs a qualified practitioner if it is to be managed well in the church. These management aspects will remain important so far as to equipping the pastor so that he appreciates the concept of HRM in the church organisation.

According to the Canadian Baptist of Ontario and Cubec (2018) the Human Resource Office is critical in many ways which include the promotion of good industrial relations within the church (between the employees and the employer), formulation of job descriptions, recruitment and selection, performance management, reward management, training and development among others.

Sartain (2020) states that the employment policies of Seattle are influenced by the need for the church to observe human dignity in the workplace and the desire to maintain good industrial relations in the church. The church recognises that it is vital to put forward the rights and obligations of the lay, vowed religious, and deacons employed by the parish. The human resource departments of the church have been instrumental in guiding employees through Catholic Social and Moral Teaching and Church law (Canon law).

*Challenges faced by Church organisations leading to the introduction of the Human Resource Function in their settings*

In their paper Chatira and Mwenje (2018) concluded that the church was faced more with management related challenges than spiritually related challenges. This is supported Gibson (2018) who concluded in his paper that pastors were faced with or overwhelmed with non-spiritual aspects in church management.

Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) argue that there is general reluctance by the church to use management sciences in church administration as suggested by the theological curriculum which lacks management science training in South Africa. This assertion is supported by the argument by Sifuma-Evelia (2017) who argued strongly that the church is devoid of education in management sciences which has led to challenges in the implementation of basic management tasks including Human Resource Management.

Gibson (2018) Concur that most pastors in church or church organisations are well trained in their ministerial training, however they are deficient when it comes to management aspects and as such exposes them to management challenges. Such deficiencies lead to ineffective management of the church's human resources resulting in issues like poor performance.

In a paper conducted by Maina and Afande (2015) in East Africa St Andrews, Nairobi - Kenya, it was established that the nature and culture of the Presbyterian Church had a strong influence in the Human Resource Management practices. The church has a voluntarism culture where the administrative staff and leadership of the church volunteer their efforts and in return they did not expect to be supervised in terms of the



performance management of the church. Accra and Arugu (2015) argued that the major challenge facing most church organisations world over remains the development of an effective strategy for achieving growth through Human Resource Management.

#### *Availability of formalised Human Resource Management Function in Church Organisations*

The argument by Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) that churches have a structure replica of the secular world organisations qualifies churches or Faith Based organisations to become organisations in their own right. They went on to argue that the management function in a church setting or Faith Based organisation adopts the functions of management namely planning, leading, organising, staffing and controlling of all resources including the human capital towards achieving organisational goals.

The other major observation in their paper Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) was that there was lack of literature focusing on church management in the South African Context and furthermore the theology course will also include management courses such as Human Resource Management. The church and Faith Based organisations are not different from other organisations as such can learn from management sciences such as Human Resource Management. Oluwasegun (2016) reiterated that church organisations have a tendency of leaving the management of the church to charisma, personality and instinct of those in leadership. Judging from the above argument it is clear that churches and church organisations will prefer to appoint its staff including those in Human Resource Management positions based on other factors other than qualifications and the bias may be towards possession of church membership.

Drucker (2017) wrote a book on managing the non-profit organisation which goes to show that a church as a Faith Based organisation is acknowledged and needs to be managed equally the same like any other organisation and have a functional Human Resource Management office manned by a qualified Human resource practitioner. The assertion by Andrews and Roller (2019) that the church is both an organisation and heavenly entity suggests that there is need to run the church similarly with secular organisations and apply management science in the form of Human Resource Management.

In a paper conducted by Maina and Afande (2015) about HRM practices of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and how they influenced the church's performance clearly suggested the church does have a Human Resource Function. However of note was that the paper established that the cultural aspects such as voluntarism had a bearing on the nature of HRM practices. In the Presbyterian Church, leaders are on voluntary work and as such see no reason of being supervised.

As part of their findings Chatira and Mwenje (2018) established that some churches had already embraced information technology. They were using a management information system named Melivo Church Dynamics, an i-cloud based management application system. This has the capability to perform church administration which included human resource management among other functions. The system has a capability of performing major HR functions such as Organisational Design and Development.

The Baptist Church of Canada is one church in the world which has sound HRM function within their church. According to the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Cubec (2018) the church has a policy of managing the human resources of the church. The church recognises itself as an employer and stresses that throughout the church human resource management policy. The church is very particular with its obligations towards employees and the government.

According to the United Church of Canada (2019) the church has an established Human Resource Function which is guided by clearly laid down HR policies formulated by the Executive General Council of the United Church. The major aim of the policies is to ensure that the church strikes a balance between the needs of the tripartite parties into the employment relationship, who are the employees, employer and the government. The church is subordinate to the national labour laws promulgated by the state. The human resource policy applies to all staff, which includes the ministry and lay staff irrespective of the source of their salaries. The human resource unit of the church is charged with interpretation, implementation, monitoring and ensuring compliance with the HR policy of the church.

According to Sample (2017) the Catholic Church in Oregon in Portland has a fully-fledged Human Resource office which is responsible for all human resource activities. Like any other organisation department executives are responsible for employees in their departments. However, in certain circumstances, the responsibility for leading, overseeing, and evaluating may be delegated. Staff generally work under the guidance and close supervision of a department manager unless command has been delegated to another employee. Performance appraisals are led either by the department manager, or in the event supervision has been delegated, by the member in the superintendent role.

According to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise (2016), the church has a human resource department whose mission is to serve those in leadership positions both at diocese and parish levels. The human resource office has a manual which is used to support the philosophy of service of the church and to ensure that valuable information concerning the church's employment practices is readily accessible. The Human Resource office is also responsible for checklists, practical advice, information and other resources to support the parish and or school leaders in managing the church's important resource, the people. The church emphasises the importance of principles of Christian Human Resource Management,

which is particular concerning decision making about personnel issues at parish level.

According to Curran (2017) the University of Dayton is a private Roman Catholic teaching institution. It is among the world's largest Catholic institutions of higher learning. The university has the office of Human Resource Management which is dedicated to being a customer-oriented, human resources partner applying best practices, policies, and programs that contribute to the University's mission. The HR department provides expertise in the functional areas of human resources which include employment services and risk, benefits and compensation, employee relations, learning and development, human resources operations, human resources information systems, and more.

*Attitude of employees of Church Organisations towards the introduction of the Human Resource Management Function by their organisations*

Oosthuizen and Lategan (2015) analysed the church as a household, which he went on to support using scriptures from the bible such as Galatians 6 v 10, Ephesians 2 v 19 and 1 Peter 4 v 17. These scriptures refer to the church or members of the church as a household of God which views the church or church organisations as a family set-up. Feelings, emotions, and needs are central to this relationship. This paper will endeavour to establish the net effect of such an attitude towards the organisation by its members and consequently its employees in so far as the introduction or existence of the Human Resource Function is concerned.

Ethics have a great role in influencing the approach to the Human Resource management philosophy of the church or faith based organisation and behaviour of human resource managers, actions and conflict resolution strategies they employ.

*Conflict Resolution*

The church generally has its conflict resolution strategies when conflict occurs between its members, for example the use of scripture such as Matthew 18 is popular. The church is also guided by scripture in dealing with lawsuits among believers. 1 Corinthians 6 clearly spells out how believers should behave towards one another with regards to lawsuits. In light of all these it is pertinent to interrogate the role of Labour Law in the context of the church organisation or church itself.

*Remuneration*

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 14 is explicit that as the Lord has commanded, the preachers should earn a living from preaching the gospel. This commandment is therefore a clear testimony that the church should have a functional Human Resource Management Function which should be capable of administering the reward management policies which conform to the principles of Human Resource management in so far as equity, recognition of organisational

hierarchy, compensation for performance, meeting targets is concerned, among others.

*Person specification for management in a Church setting*

The church in the appointment of high officials such as Overseers and Deacons is guided by 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3 v 1-7. The scripture clearly spells out the qualifying criteria of these officials in a similar manner as the person specification would do in a job advertisement when the Human Resource Practitioner is recruiting for a suitable candidate in any other organisation other than a church. The scripture is even specific about age requirement of the recruit synonymous with work experience, and this is popular with circular organisations, which is key in the ability to perform in the position applied for.

The scripture is fundamental in spelling out many other valuable and desirable characteristics of a suitable candidate. These include reputation, influence, sober habits, someone without love for money and ability to discipline. Despite the similarity that exists between the requirements of scripture and person specification in the secular organisations, the scriptural requirement takes precedence over a general person specification which could be drafted by the Human Resource Practitioner of the church. The Human Resource Function is fundamental in employee discipline management in any organisation, however the Human Resource Practitioner may be viewed as being tough or unreasonable if he/she handles discipline according to the statutes of the state.

O'Brien (2019) identified two forms of negativity from the church or Faith Based organisations when it comes to management science. Often times, the clergy have argued that the church is run based on spirituality and that there is no such thing as manager in the church, rather they would prefer to use leader instead.

Li Lin (2017) in his paper of the church and management he noted that there is a widely-noted remark by prominent author Charles Zech that "the church is not a business. He states that employees and leaders, however, have a stewardship responsibility to use the church's resources as effectively as possible in carrying out God's work on earth. He adds that carrying out that stewardship responsibility requires the use of sound business management practices and tools. Normal business practice entails human resource management, as such, in that regard there is a huge expectation that church and church organisations need to practice human resource management in a professional manner. This will normally entail that there is a fully fledged HR department manned by a qualified HR practitioner.

*Understanding Human Resource Management in Context*

Armstrong & Taylor (2017) argued that there was a growing need to understand HRM in the context of the environment in which it is practised. It is imperative to examine a few theories as a way of contextualising the HRM Function within the Church and Faith Based Organisations.

*Role Behaviour Perspective*

Armstrong & Taylor (2017) viewed roles as interdependent components of an organisation system and most importantly these roles are actions of individuals as social beings in the organisation. Consequently, HRM is viewed as an enabling function in an organisation in facilitating the meeting of expectations from between both the employees and the employer. These roles are between supervisors, peers, subordinates and the external world which encompass the customers. The church or church organisation resembles the platform for the interaction of these parties and the HR function playing a major role in facilitating a smooth interaction of these differing roles through such processes as recruitment and selection, discipline, performance management and many other HR processes and functions.

*Institutional Theory*

Armstrong & Taylor (2017) argued that the institutional theory assumes organisations as social entities that seek endorsement for their performance in socially interpreted environments. Institutionalisation actually focuses on pressures that affect social organisations either internally or externally. The external factors may include such factors as political, social, economic, legal and technological, while the internal factors may encompass such issues as industrial relations atmosphere, motivation and retention issues among others.

Drucker (2017) posited that institutionalised activities are normally impervious to change and organisations that exist in institutionalised environments are pressured to be comparable. A deep analysis of this assertion suggests a high possibility of resistance to change and adoption of the HRM function in church organisations which are generally characterised with institutionalisation and comparability. Churches or Faith Based Organisations are spiritual organisations and would always want to be viewed similarly and are impervious to perceived foreign and secular thinking. On the other hand where Drucker assumes that the organisations are pressured to be similar with other like organisations, it suggests that organisations tend to imitate other organisations, most likely which are similar in nature.

*Agency Theory*

Panda and Leepsa (2017) postulated that the agency theory mainly focusses its attention on the relationship which exists between the principal and the agent. The scholars noted that the agent and the principal have conflicting interests and as a way of safeguarding both the principal and agent's interests a contract is necessary. Katz & Kahn (2018) also concur that the alignment of both party's interests can be achieved through the use of contracts, particularly in executive and managerial compensation which is largely used to align management's interests with those of the owners of the business. Similarly, with church organisations, there is need to align the employee's needs and aspirations with those of the church or

church organisation. This need obviously demand that the church embrace the HRM Function for it to successfully implement the HR practices which can align the employee interests to those of the organisation.

*Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical view point of the study resonates with the thoughts of Ludwig von Bertalanffy of general systems theory. Kast and Rozenzweig (2017) suggest that the systems theory underscores that systems are organised. In other words there is interdependency of components in a system as such any social organisation is a replica of a system. Social organisations have structure of events which may not be separated from the processes of the system. Social organisations are made by and consist of men. Armstrong & Taylor (2017) posited that HRM is a subsystem entrenched in a larger organisation system. It is therefore important to view HRM as part of the system of any social organisation as supported by the view that social organisations are composed of men and consist of man. A church or Faith Based organisation is both a spiritual and social organisation since God works through man in the church. Similarly, a church has employees who have individual needs that should be met through earning a salary and the church in return expects services from its employees. This relationship demands that both parties are responsible and naturally is guided by labour laws prevailing in the country of operation.

In Zimbabwe, most Faith Based and churches do not do not have skilled professionals, especially Administrators and Human Resource Practitioners, instead they rely on church appointees and volunteers to steer the organisations. Due to the non-existence of the qualified Human Resource Practitioners the HRM practices are not executed in a professional manner, and the Faith Based or Church workplaces have deplorable industrial relations atmospheres, with high staff turnover and where employees do not leave it is because they are afraid of being viewed as not committed to the work of the Lord.

**III. METHODS**

In order to explore the current practices and status of the HRM function in Churches and Faith Based organisations we need to examine the existence of the HRM function in these organisations and the current practices. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the HRM function and the current status and practices in the Churches and Faith Based Organisations in Zimbabwe. Employing interpretive, exploratory descriptive approaches, (Singh, 2018) the study seeks to establish how participants make meaning of their experiences. A case study approach was considered the most appropriate method to understand the role of HRM function and the current status and practices. A qualitative research approach embedded in an interpretive paradigm was considered suitable for the exploratory study. The interpretive paradigm enabled the researchers to see, hear and to grasp the particular meaning-making inherent in people's lives within

the selected institutions. A qualitative research approach according to (Alase, 2017) gives researchers the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberation on the lived experiences of research participants. Shava and Nkengbeza (2019) tell us that qualitative research is a participant oriented, interpretive phenomenological analysis approach which allows the interviewees to express themselves and their lived experiences the way they see fit without any distortion. A qualitative phenomenological inquiry uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in context specific settings (Shava and Nkengbeza, 2019).

The participants in this study, 25 employees and 25 church leaders from various churches and Faith Based organisations were chosen, and these were purposefully chosen based on three criteria. They were full-time church employees, they were familiar with the church systems and policies and willing to participate in the study and represented different positions in the church and Faith based organisations.

Table 1. Target Population

CHURCH/ CHURCH ORGANISATION	CHURCH LEADERSHIP	CHURCH EMPLOYEES	TOTAL
A	5	5	10
B	5	5	10
C	5	5	10
D	5	5	10
E	5	5	10
GRAND TOTAL			50

#### Data Collection

To gather a breadth of contextual information about each case the empirical data for this study came from semi-structured open ended interviews. The common questions were used to solicit church and Faith Based employees and leaders' views on the role of HRM and the current status and practices in their respective organisations. The interview questions were broad and open ended to capture the breadth of the role, current status and practices of the HRM function in Zimbabwean Churches and Faith Based organisations. Participants were asked questions regarding their views and experiences on the role of HRM function including the prevailing status quo and practices in their organisations. We collected numerous types of data so as to locate the cases within their contextual nuances. Findings from the study are presented under the overarching themes of the concept of HRM.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The church in Zimbabwe has been in existence for time immemorial and has continued to be run like a spiritual entity to date, largely referred to as the Household of God, where the day to day business is run in a spiritual manner. The overarching principle has been that a church or a Faith Based organisation is a spiritual organisation as opposed to being a secular organisation and has taken a voluntary and democratic

approach to its administration. Generally the administration of the church has been largely left to volunteers and committees who are not full time employees of the church. These normally provide a service during their spare time and are normally difficult to hold accountable for any commission or omission. In Zimbabwe the church has also grown with time to own its own institutions such as schools, farms, Not for Profit Organisations among other institutions, and these operate in a similar fashion, without for example the HRM function except for a few churches that have roots overseas. The HRM activities are run based on instincts and personal intuition where the committee members use experience gathered from their own places of work.

One of the study participants gave a historical overview of church administration in Zimbabwe as one where there is voluntarism and disregard to professionalism which has consequently led to increase in the number of Labour rights violations among the church workforce. However, the trend has been different in churches that have overseas roots such as the Roman Catholic (Sartain, 2020) One of the participants commented to say 'that the church is not a secular organisation, as such does not need a fully-fledged HRM function, instead there is need for an HR desk where administrative functions are coordinated'. Most participants on the employees' side however, stated that introduction of the HRM Function was long overdue and a necessary move since it opened opportunities for professionalism in Church administration. An administrator from one of the Church/Faith Based organisation remarked that the introduction of the HRM Function in their organisation has opened opportunities for good industrial relations and improved productivity. However, in this study we argue that if Zimbabwe's Churches and Faith Based organisations adopt the HRM Function in their organisations the church is poised for growth, improved industrial relations, employee productivity among others. If the HRM Function is to positively contribute to the professional administration of the human capital of the organisation it should remain high on the agenda and institutional strategic plans. Analysis of the responses from participants particularly the employees of the church revealed that the church and Faith Based organisations need to embrace the HRM Function for many reasons. For many of the study participants, the adoption of the HRM Function is vital for many reasons, namely that:

- The church or Faith Based organisations are like any other organisation therefore deserve to have the HR function for their professional and smooth running in the present day.
- The church or Faith Based organisations are employers like any other organisations and need to uphold professional standards.
- The employee labour rights have been at some point been violated in the church workplace, which demands the HR office to handle.



- Church employees like any other employees need to be managed equally the same, for example in areas such as performance appraisal.

In this study, some participants who are from church organisations that have an HRM Function commented that the church has been at some point been faced with challenges which has led to the introduction of the HR function. The following challenges were cited as some reasons for the introduction of the HRM Function in the church and Faith Based organisations where they work;

- The church has over the years experienced complicated HR issues which need HR professionals to deal with them.
- The lack of expertise among the clergy in handling the HR issues has led to the introduction of the HR function.
- There has been pressure from the enlightened membership of the church to run the church professionally thereby advocating for the introduction of the HRM Function.

Findings from the study also revealed that some people within the church have mixed feelings about the introduction of the HRM Function. For example, the following was raised;

- The HRM Function is not necessary at all in the church or Faith Based organisation,
- The HRM Function is too administrative, as such presents a threat to the freedom of employees in the workplace.
- The introduction of the HRM Function leads to the protection of the labour rights of employees.
- The introduction of the HRM Function destroys the spirituality of the church as it is a secular function which has potential to lead to over-exercise of labour rights such as industrial action.

In summary participants for the study identified the following key issues as characterising the current state and HRM practices in the church and Faith Based organisations in Zimbabwe.

- There is a feeling that the introduction of the HRM Function in church or Faith Based organisations has the potentially of destroying the spirituality of the church as this is a function characteristic of secular organisations.
- The church is not similar to secular organisations, as such does not need to perform the HRM Functions instead should use biblical principles to handle HR matters.
- For those church organisations that do have a fully-fledged HRM Function, its introduction was influenced by the lack of expertise by the clergy to professionally handle the HRM Function.

- The employee rights have been violated at some point and necessitated the need to handle such matters by qualified HR practitioners.

The study therefore established that the HRM Function in Zimbabwean church and Faith Based organisations has not been fully embraced, with a few church and Faith Based organisations which have foreign roots having a fully-fledged HRM Function within their structures. Further, the employees generally feel that the absence of the fully fledged HRM function has led to the violation of their labour rights in the workplace. On the other hand, those participants drawn among the church leadership did not see anything amiss with the absence of a fully-fledged HRM function in their organisations.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the paper show that the HR function is still not acceptable within some sectors of the society, for example the church, and because churches generally own and run many institutions such as schools, farms, bible schools and retail outlet these institutions run without HR personnel. The major reason for this trend is that the church in Zimbabwe is largely not committed and not ready to accept the profession since they believe that the profession is a secular profession. Further there is a belief that the HR profession being a secular profession does not have a place in the household of God. The paper, to the contrary established that the church still fails to uphold the spirituality it claims to possess in the handling of the labour matters in its institutions, leaving church employees vulnerable to labour malpractices. The paper among other recommendations largely recommends that the bible schools should include in the curriculum for the clergy, introduction to human resource management among other administration courses so as to enlighten the church on the need for professional human resource management.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the researchers recommend the following;

- The church, despite being a household of God needs to be managed professionally. This calls for embracing the human resource management function.
- Church employees should be able to fully enjoy all HR functions so as to protect their labour rights. This can be guaranteed if the government explicitly recognises the church as an employer.
- The church leadership is encouraged to take up management development courses and administration courses so as to appreciate the proper management of their organisations.
- The curriculum for the clergy (theology courses) should include administration and introduction to Human Resource management so as to create an

awareness about the importance of the proper HR management in the church.

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