

Rifeness of Casualization of Labour in The Retail Sector: A Stratagem for Business Sustainability from Selected Supermarkets in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of casualization of labour in the retail sector in Zimbabwe is unprecedented. This coincides with the Zimbabwean economy's fragile state and businesses in general struggling to survive, and the retail sector in particular seeking to minimise their operational costs through curtailing labour costs. Against this backdrop, the study aimed at establishing the nature and the extent to which casualization of labour in the retail businesses helps organisations to be viable and therefore deduct its effectiveness as a stratagem to ensure business sustainability. The study utilized a qualitative approach and case study design. In-depth interviews were conducted with managerial staff. Open-ended questionnaires were utilised to gather data from casual employees. The study established that casualization of labour is very high in the retail sector and retailers are considering it as a stratagem to minimise business expenses. The study also established that in as much as labour casualization is effective as a business viability stratagem; it is marred by high turnover intentions as employees perceive job insecurity. As such, the study recommends provision of decent work to circumvent high labour turnover intentions of these workers which is attributed to job insecurity. In light of the research findings, a further study on championing the relationship between the job insecurity and employee engagement is recommended.

Key Terms: Casualization of Labour, Retail Sector, Business Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwean retail sector is one of the critical sectors which contribute immensely to the economic development but facing sustainability challenges due to harsh economic conditions the country is currently passing through. According to the data released by ZIMSTAT, the Retail and Wholesale sector accounted for 19.24% of the country's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020 which was a slight improvement from the prior year, (Matarise, 2024). It is therefore imperative to promote the sustainable operation of retail businesses so as to promote economic development in the country.

Supermarkets as a special type of retail business are increasingly engaging in casualization of their labour through employing a majority of its staff complement and even part of management on non-permanent arrangements and changing once permanent positions into casual in a way to supposedly curtail labour costs. The main reason for casualization as established by Ogundele, (2010) in Osagle & Eftabore, (2019) is to cut down organizational cost at all possible means to achieve the major objective of setting up the business which

is to maximize profit or even enjoy abnormal profit if possible. The other associated factor for casualization was revealed by Onyeonoru, (2008) that, organizations and employers of labour seek to avoid the high cost associated with industrial labour laws that protects permanent employees/full staffs that are on regular employment. The motivation by employers to curtail labour costs through casualization of labour has been revealed in these studies.

Casualization of labour is however often pigeonholed in many studies as an argumentative practice by employers which exploit employees as commended by Osagle & Efebare, (2019:4) that, “a major source of social evil facing the industrial world and labour is the issue of casualization of labour”. However, the positives of casualization of labour on leveraging business sustainability are not well explored in the available literature. Thus, the current study focuses on exploring the motivation among retailers behind the continued escalation of casualization of labour in the retail sector, which is supposedly a useful stratagem by retail businesses to leverage sustainability.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The growing prevalence of casualization of labour is being witnessed in all sectors of the economies and the retail sector is not an exception. The retail sector is part of the services sector of the economy which is concerned with the distribution of goods from a supplier to a final consumer, (Malgas, Sibotsiwe, Anderson, Mutize and Mason, 2020:2). It includes all stores, from kiosks and small groceries to supermarket chains and shopping malls that sell products and services to final consumer for personal and household use, (Humel, 2018). The retail sector probably is the most critical sector of every economy since it has to provide its services directly to the final consumer. It employs a considerable number of people, contributing to lessening of unemployment level. The ever-increasing casualization of labour in the retail sector is however of great concern.

In order to understand what casualization of labour entails, there is need to first understand how scholars define it. Badmus, Oladiran and Badmus (2020:17), view casual labour as work occupations in which the demand for employment is highly variable such as port work, farm migratory work and other jobs of unskilled intermittent nature. Casual employment is also distinguished as a significant part of that group of employment arrangements that are collectively known as temporary, nonstandard, contingent, atypical, precarious and alternative work arrangements in international labour law (Oludele, 2012). Chiutsi (2013) also views casualization of labour as the reduction in full time employment and their replacement with part time and temporary workers who are called in to work as and when needed on casual basis. Primarily, casualization of labour is characterised by non-permanent employment arrangements.

The growth of casualization is of concern because it is often associated with decent work deficit, where employees are usually exposed to bad working conditions which compromise their wellbeing. Casual jobs pay poorly, lack health insurance and pension benefits, they are of uncertain duration, and they lack the protection that trade unions and labour laws afford; they are problematic for workers, (Kalleberg, 2000). Rasak & Babatunde (2017:2) describes casual work or precarious work as poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and cannot support a household. Similar findings were revealed by Badmus, Oladiran and Badmus (2020) who observed that casual labour manifests itself in one form or the other including poor salaries and wages, salary arrears system, lack of training, low prospects of promotion, poor motivation, lack of sense of belonging and dehumanization of the worker. Ogbe, Olubunmi, and Okorode, (2022) stressed that casual employees are restricted from belonging to a union at work, they work on lower wages/salaries, work odd hours even on public holidays and are expected to perform the job related task at an effective and efficient rate.

Although casualization of labour is associated with tribulations to employees, retailers particularly supermarkets continue to engage in casualization of labour perhaps because of the benefits they enjoy from

this particular type of employment arrangement. Malgas et al (2019:2) observed that casualization of labour is now embedded in these types of employment arrangements to an extent that large retailers can staff stores with casual labourers only, including supervisors, over all extended trading periods. Badmus, Oladiran and Badmus (2020:17) revealed that casualization of labour is being utilised in Nigeria by employers to enjoy flexibility and to minimise labour costs. This might be the case with Zimbabwean retailers especially established supermarkets who are resorting to casualization of labour by employing a significant proportion of workers on casual basis. This study evaluates casualization of labour in the retail sector pinpointing its strategic contribution to business sustainability.

Statement of the problem

There is a strident increase in casualization of labour in Zimbabwean retail sector where once permanent positions are being casualised and a majority of new employees are being employed on casual basis. Mukwakwami and Uzhenyu (2017), revealed that many individual employers champion casual work, and many vigorously introduce casuals into their workplaces, sometimes building almost the entire workforce. Whilst many scholars (e.g Bodile 2006, Mudekunye & Uzhenyu 2017, Rasak & Babatune 2017) view casualization of labour as tantamount to employee exploitation, the strategic reasons for casualization of labour in the retail sector have not been adequately explored. This motivated this study to look into casualization of labour as a progressive strategy to ensure business sustainability in the retail sector, focusing on major supermarkets in Masvingo.

Research Objective

The study sought to establish the state of casualization of labour in the retail sector, how casualization of labour promotes business sustainability in the retail sector, find out challenges associated with the casualization of labour in the retail sector and to suggest what needs to be done by retailers to ensure effective utilisation of casual labour in the retail sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Variables

Retail Sector

The retail sector includes all stores, from kiosks and small groceries to supermarket chains and shopping malls that sell products and services to final consumer for personal and household use, (Hameli 2018). Malgas, Sibotsiwe, Anderson, Mutize and Mason, (2020:2) view it as part of the services sector of the economy which is concerned with the distribution of goods from a supplier to a final consumer. This sector is probably the most important sector of the economy because it has to do directly with consumer, (Hameli, 2018). Amit & Kameshvari (2012: 466) similarly define retailing as a group of activities where goods and services are marketed to final consumers for personal or household consuming. Retailers make household and personal goods available on a massive extent and offering them to consumers on a relatively small extent. This sector is contributing greatly to economic development, about 19.24% of the country's total GDP as per ZIMSTAT survey data of 2020, which was a slight improvement from the prior year, (Matarise, 2024).

Scholars distinguish retailing using different categories which includes size, ownership and service level. According to Hameli, (2018), retail stores include; independent stores, chain stores, leased department stores, franchising, department stores, discount stores, convenient stores, specialty stores and supermarkets. Supermarkets are also distinguished as shops which sell specially food products, cleaning and personal care in special sectors with the self-service system (Altunışık et al., 2012 in Hameli, 2018). Hameli, (2018) reiterates that, supermarkets are part of the retail sector which is most shopped.

Business Sustainability

There is no single definition for sustainable business practices, (Chungyalpa 2019) as different scholars define it differently. Some scholars (Beal et al., 2017; KPMG, 2011; Daood & Menghwar, 2017 & Bocken et al., 2014) agree that, sustainable business is one that is economically viable, socially responsible, and environmentally friendly. Retailers have been identified as important actors in driving sustainable change, due to their vital role in connecting production and consumption, (Blom, Rosengren & Perzon 2023:1). Short-term and long-term goals are often described in terms of profitability and sustainability (e.g. Le Roux and Pretorius 2016; Wu and Pagell 2011). This implies sustainability has to do with achievement of short and long term goals of an organisation. Many organisations are in pursuit of sustainability through growth, profit making and continued existence.

Casualization of Labour

Casualisation of labour is viewed differently in different countries and different contexts. In Europe and the US, casualisation is commonly known as a process in which a large proportion of the workforce is employed in 'casual' jobs or under "Non-Standard Work Arrangements" (NSWA) (ILO, 2008, in Kuipers, 2014).

In Zimbabwe, The Labour Amendment Act (28:01) casual work is viewed as work for which an employee is engaged by an employer for not more than a total of six weeks in any four consecutive months. This definition entails casualization is indicated by the frequency in which an employee is called for work. Okafor (2012) generalised the concept casualization of labour by viewing it as irregular employment or a part-time labour, including the labour of workers whose normal employment consists of a series of short time jobs.

Casualisation of employment takes various forms which encompass either temporary, seasonal, casual, contract or part time employees with little or no legal backing as mandated by employment contract (Oludele, 2012). The agreement between scholars is that casualization of labour consists of not permanent employment arrangements.

Literature Review

Casualisation of labour is currently becoming more observed than ever before. Mukwakwami and Uzhenyu (2017) argue that many individual employers in retail businesses champion casual work, and many vigorously introduce casuals into their workplaces, sometimes building almost the entire workforce using casual workers. This assessment implies that casualization of labour has reached unprecedented levels in the country. In Nigeria, casual workers are in major industries; where firms have workers to the tune of two thousand, about one thousand five hundred of the two thousand may be casual workers (Rasak & Babatunde, 2017). Mathematically, this shows that casual labour constitutes about 75% of the total workforce in Nigeria. Literature gap still exists since the statements are generalised without pointing at casualization of labour in the retail sector. Malgas and Mutize (2020) examined the state of casualization in the retail sector in South Africa where they found out that casualization is very high and retailers hire more casual labour during festive season and occasions like black Fridays. This concurs with Malgas et al (2019) who discovered that employment in the retail sector follows business cycles. Retailers, particularly for large supermarkets normally experience high business activity towards year end and other special days which prompts them to hire more labour.

Various conditions, mainly economic crisis and high unemployment have been attributed to the growing prevalence of casualization of labour in Zimbabwe. The current economic state of the country is contributing to closure of many companies and massive retrenchments which result in the labour market being flooded with job seekers, (Mkandatsama and Nyanhete, 2017). NSSA (2015), reported that the economic crunch caused 330 companies to close in Harare contributing to copious supply of labour in the market. The aftermath of closure of companies and downscaling in their operations in response to economic upheaval is a rise in unemployment.

Zimbabwe has the highest unemployment rate in the SADCC region with so many graduates roaming around the streets (Kwinika, 2014). In its first quarter survey, ZIMSTAT (2022) revealed unemployment rate being well above 85%. With the rise in unemployment, casualization of labour is bound to increase justifying why casualization is highest in third world countries where unemployment levels are reportedly very high.

Bodile (2006) argues that poverty has bred a dangerous work environment where many desperate job seekers in the labour force are willing to take any job for survival purposes rather than the employee's dignity. The economic crisis especially in the African continent can be blamed for causing poverty which creates desperation for finding employment. Poverty has contributed to growing casualization of labour since desperation causes people to accept any job offer available without considering their personal dignity and the conditions of employment. Bodibe (2006) also found out that through the threats of outsourcing by their employers, employees are forced to accept a shift from being permanent to become part-time workers. This entails that employees on permanent positions are even being compelled to accept non-permanent employment arrangements.

Retailers are taking advantage of the fertile ground created by high unemployment in the country to engage in casualization of labour to their advantage, seemingly to cut costs and maximise profits. Although the challenges caused by casualization of labour are known, employers still engage in casualization of labour because of benefits they gain from that practice. The quest for cost reduction is perhaps one of the major reasons for ever growing casualization of labour in the retail sector. Badmus et al (2020:27) argues that, long-term and short-term recruitment costs may be kept at a minimum by using casual workers. In this modern competitive business environment, minimisation of costs is key to profitability and continued existence of the business as it gives employers flexibility in their staffing and an opportunity to get cheap labour. The Guest Model of Human Resources Management as propounded by David Guest (1987) reveals that flexibility is one of the pillars to organisational effectiveness. Rasak and Babatunde (2017) states that, "companies have turned to this external numerical flexibility to respond to fluctuating demand for products and services". Retailers notably utilise numerical flexibility for them to thrive in this competitive business environment. Due to the fluctuating nature of business in the retail sector, large supermarkets could be employing casual labour to cover up for short-term labour needs and whenever that labour is no-longer needed they would dispose it with ease. Literature reveals that employment of casual labour is driven by the need to minimise hiring costs and for employers to enjoy flexibility in the hiring and firing process.

The challenges with casual employment should not be overlooked; however employers need to strive to solve the challenges so that they maintain a happy workforce. Bodile (2006:1) attest that "Casual workers are falling through the cracks of protection by labour laws and social protection". The Zimbabwean labour laws provides an unequal protection between casual employees and full time employees from exploitation by their employers. Casualization of labour is therefore leaving employees in an uncomfortable position in which they are socially insecure and vulnerable to employer exploitation. Ojokuku & Ogundare (2019:6) acknowledged that in Nigeria, "the majority of the workers are under-paid while about 80 percent of them work under terrible working conditions for seven to eight years with no consideration for permanent employment in the company, and if there is any complaint or demonstration, employers find it very easy to dismiss such worker and get a replacement immediately".

Employees are therefore victims of circumstances as they are forced to accept casual work arrangements which are characterised by indecent and hostile working conditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach which allows in-depth inquiry into participants' perspectives on the rationale for casualization in the retail sector, (Peterson, 2019). Multiple case study design was adopted

by focusing on two major supermarkets in Masvingo town and one supermarket in Mutare urban. The population from the three supermarkets combined sums up to 195. Purposive sampling was employed to come up with a sample of 27 which was considered large enough for a qualitative study.

The sample consists of nine managerial staff from three different supermarkets where each supermarket was represented by three participants and eighteen (18) employees under casual employment were selected from the three supermarkets and each supermarket was represented by six participants.

Semi structured interviews and open ended questionnaires were used to collect data from management and casual employees respectively. Open ended questionnaires consist of open format questions that are without a predetermined set of responses (Abawi 2017). Use of open ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to obtain detailed responses from participants. Also, use of semi structured interviews ed an in-depth inquiry from the participants and gives the researcher flexibility in the interview process as they had the opportunity to probe more questions.

All the scheduled interviews were successful. Follow up was done to the administered questionnaires and out of the 18 questionnaires distributed, 14 were returned. Data gathered were corded and presented in themes for better interpretation and analysis. Data were mainly presented in form of quotes from the participants.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Four (4) themes emerged from the data which were gathered. Data were presented and analysed in themes and subthemes below.

Theme 1: The nature and extent of casualization of labour in the retail sector

The results show that casual labour constitutes a significant proportion of the total number of employees in large retail shops. From interviews conducted with managerial staff, it was revealed that a significant proportion well above 80% is in casual employment. Some of the quotes below confirms to this;

“We have 36 staff employees at our branch and only 6 are employed as permanent” (Branch Manager 1).

The study also revealed that retailers normally employ casual staff to carryout short time duties and temporary staff on short term contracts of 3 months to one year. The following comments were given by respondents;

“We normally employ more shelf packers and till operators during the festive season from around 16th of December. We do not give them written contracts and we pay them on hourly bases”, (Branch Manager 3).

“We employ casual employees whom we call when their services are needed for instance truck off loaders and they are paid for the work they do”, (HR Manager 2).

The study further reveal that contracts are renewed based on the performance of individual employees. It takes about four years for a non-permanent employee to be awarded permanent position. Below are some excerpts from respondents;

“At first, we normally give employees such positions as those of till operators, cleaners and shelf setters 6 months and one year contracts and the renewal of the contracts is based on the performance of the employee. We give one month notice to those employees who perform unsatisfactorily, advising them that we will not renew their contracts. We only renew contracts for good performers”, (HR Manager 1).

“After working as a contract employee for around four to five years, we often make a worker permanent while determining whether they are qualified to be considered for a permanent post.” (General Manager 1).

Results from questionnaires also show that the majority of employees under casual employment occupy low level jobs such as, cleaners, shelf setters, tellers and credit desk attendants. Employees in retail outlets start to be employed on shorter term contracts and are given longer term contracts later. They normally start on low positions and become promoted based on experience and performance at work. Below are statements from some employees;

“I am in my second year working for this company, I began as a shelf setter on a three-month contract and I am currently employed on the credits desk on a one-year contract. Interestingly, my pay had increased as well.” (Employee 1).

“I am employed with the company for about a year. As assigned by the supervisor, I occasionally work at the package counter, as a cleaner and as a self-setter.” (Employee 9)

Theme 2: The significance of casualization of labour in ensuring business survival and profit maximisation.

The results reveals that employment of casual labour helps the organisation to avoid costs associated with keeping redundant staff, helps organisations to easily get rid of incompetent staff, casual labour is generally paid less in total compensation than permanent staff.

Some views casual employment as significant in reducing costs associated with paying redundant staff. Excerpts below confirms the results;

"Casual staff enables us to lower total labour costs. For example, we have temporary employees whom we call upon to complete specific tasks, such as unloading trucks, and we only pay them for the work they complete during that precise period. When there is no work for them, we do not need to keep paying them, (Branch manager 1).

"During the holiday season, we hire more casual workers, but we do not provide them with written contracts. Since we pay them hourly, we can avoid paying them during the off-peak season, (HR Manager 2).

Some view casualization of labour as helpful in reducing costs of labour since casual staff are paid less in their total wages and salaries as compared to permanent staff. Statements below confirms this view;

“Employing casual staff, is cost saving because they earn well less than permanent staff”, (General Manager 1).

Others view casual employment as useful in giving management flexibility of getting rid of unproductive and incompetent staff. Comments below confirm this notion;

“Casual employees are easy to dismiss. If an employee is performing poorly we would not renew their contracts, we give them one month notice of our intention not to renew the contract” (Branch Manager 2).

“The employee's performance will determine if the contract is to be renewed. Incompetent employees' contracts would not be renewed” (HR Manager 1).

Employees also expressed that being employed on casual employment arrangements is mainly to the benefit of the employers who would pay them less as compared to fulltime employees and employers can easily replace them with other employees. Statements below confirms to this notion;

“I think employing casual employees allows the company to save money since as casual employees we are hired when there is work for us to do. When they do not need us they simply tell us that they will not renew our contracts” (Employee 3).

“We are paid less than permanent employees which means other incomes like bonuses are only given to permanent staff. So the company benefits by saving money by employing more casual employees, (Employee 7).

Theme 3: Challenges with casualization of labour in the retail sector

Management indicated that casualization of labour has some challenges of high staff turnover and low morale among employees. Excerpts below from interviewed managerial staff confirm;

“The main challenge with employing casual staff is that we experience high staff turnover. We realised that people will be looking for other jobs whilst working for us and would immediately leave once he/she finds another job”, (HR manager 2)

“The main reason they leave is because of uncertainty over renewal of the contract since we do not give assurance to renewal of contracts. During staff meetings we remain silent about renewal of the contract, but we encourage them to work harder”, (General Manager 2).

A majority of employees perceived that being employed as casual employees made them feel insecure as they are not sure whether their contracts will be renewed or not, they are not given other benefits like overtime and bonuses and have an intention to leave the company for better offers elsewhere. They consider these as core concerns. Below are some excerpts from the open ended questions completed by employees.

“My contract is close to an end, I have roughly a month left. I am afraid, I am not sure if the contract is going to be renewed since no assurance has been given so far from management. I will just wait for the final day to hear from the HR office.” (Employee 4).

From the 14 questionnaires administered, 10 participants indicated that, they have an intention to leave the organisation if better offers are available elsewhere. The number indicates a significant turnover intention among casual employees in the retail sector. They expressed displeasure with their work. Statements below confirms this notion.

“I work in the supermarket canteen, if a better offer is provided by another company, I will definitely leave the organisation”. (Employee 3).

Theme 4: Strategies for effective utilisation of casual labour in the retail sector

From interviews with managerial staff of respective retailers, some suggested offering fair wages and salaries would help to make casual labour more productive. Statements below confirms;

“I suggest that we offer our employees, including casual staff fair salaries so that the challenges of high turnover which we are currently experiencing can be addressed” (Branch Manager 1).

“Right now we are paying our employees in local Real Time Gross Settlement (rtgs) which we feel is unpleasant to employees who also need to be paid in US Dollars” (HR Manager 1).

Some suggest internal promotions as an effective strategy. Excerpts below support this view;

“Internal promotion is necessary to motivate staff to stay in the organisation. For instance, shelf setters can be promoted to become till operators, till operators can be promoted to work on quotation desks and then promoted to become buyers” (HR Manager 2).

“Since I assumed the duty of managing this branch I am making sure that those with better experience are promoted first so as to give hope and assurance to new employees who are joining’ (Branch Manager 2).

Others were of the view that the HR policies should foster quicker promotion of employees on casual employment to permanent positions as this gives hope on job security to new employees. Given below are excerpts from the respondents;

“Our HR policy should not make us take too long to give someone permanent post. It is difficult for someone to wait for four to five years to become permanent. Due to the feeling of job insecurity a person may look for another job which he/she feels is more secure” (General Manager 1).

Others viewed giving employees flexible working hours and adequate time to rest as a crucial strategy.

“Employees should be given adequate time to rest and flexibility in their work through shifts and off days where possible” (Branch Manager 1).

“In our organisation, employees for instance till operators work on shifts so that they can rest” (HR Manager 1)

Casual employees revealed that, they want decent work including better salaries in foreign currency, paid overtime, assurance for renewal of their employment contracts and a guarantee for permanent employment in the organisation in their near future. Statements given below support this notion;

“We need competitive salaries and management should give us some hope of renewal of our contracts. It is very hard to stay unaware if your contract is going to be renewed or not” (Employee 4).

“First preference for promotion should be given to employees with better experience in the organisation and it should not take longer than 2 years without being given permanent post” (Employee 9).

“We need enough time to rest including regular off days” (Employee 7).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the majority of employees occupying low level jobs like shelf-setters, till operators and cleaners in the major supermarkets are employed on casual arrangements. Malgas et al, (2020:2) states that, “Casualisation is now so embedded that large retailers can staff stores using only casual labour, including the supervisors, over all extended trading periods”. This concurs with the findings of this study that more than 80% of employees are working on casual arrangements with the length of contracts ranging from casual staff called to do a particular day’s task, 3 months, 6 months and one year contracts.

The study also shows that employment of casual staff is also mainly influenced by changing business cycles. Malgas, et.al. (2020:2) noted, “Casual labour has a direct relationship with the business trading cycle of retail outlets”. The variations in business cycles in the retail sector results in retailers temporarily in need of more staff at particular periods of the year causing them to seek for casual labour to cover up for this need. This study revealed that retailers normally need more staff during festive seasons hence recruit casual staff during that short period and relieve them during off peak season. This therefore helps retailers to save costs of keeping redundant staff during off peak business season.

The study confirms that casualization allows the retailers to keep optimal number of staff at any given time. This helps them to reduce wage bills as casual staff generally gets less compensation than permanent staff. Malgas, Sibotsiwe, Anderson, Mutize and Mason (2020) points out that, casual staff are not given extra compensation for extra work and increased workload which results in increased workload without the

proportionate increased compensation. This entails that with casual labour, retailers can get more work done for less. For additional work, full time employees would demand overtime payment. Sometimes, casual staff are not given end of year bonuses, which permanent staff receive. Casual employment thus allows employers to reduce their aggregate wage bills whilst they get more work done. Badmus, Oladiran and Badmus (2020:11)

avers that, long-term and short-term recruitment costs may be kept at a minimum by using casual workers. Casualization of employment is seen as an appropriate strategy for cost reduction (Bayo, 2019). With the fact that business environment in Zimbabwe particularly in the retail sector is hostile, ability of firms to minimise operating costs is the key to business survival and profit maximisation. In as much as casualization of labour significantly reduces business operating costs, it becomes a notable strategy for business survival and profit maximisation.

The study also revealed that casualization of labour gives employers in the retail sector the flexibility in hiring and firing. As exposed, employers only renew contracts of satisfactory and outstanding employees hence giving employees short term contracts gives retailers flexibility in getting rid of poor performers in the organisation. Gunderson, (2001) attests that, the lack of costs linked to the laying-off of casual workers attracts extensive employment of casual labour in the USA. Casual labour can easily be laid-off when the employer feels they no longer need the employee's services. In contrary, permanent staff are difficult to lay off because they are highly protected by the labour laws. The company may be required to pay retrenchment package to the employee they want to lay off. Thus, as revealed casualization is considered a strategy to enhance flexibility in hiring and firing. Raskas and babatunde, (2017) indicated that, casualization of labour gives employers flexibility in hiring without making permanent staff redundant. This in overall helps employers to evade costs of keeping redundant staff.

The study revealed that, the major challenge of casualization of labour is high turnover intention. The majority of employees employed on casual arrangements have turnover intention and are not happy with staying. It is evident that what only prompts casual employees to continue with their organisations is because they do not have elsewhere to go. Bodibe (2006) argues that, through the threats of outsourcing by their employers, employees are forced to accept a shift from being permanent to being part-time workers. Employees under casual labour are victims of circumstances who are forced to work even under debauched employment conditions because they are desperate for the job which results in an unhappy workforce who always intend to leave anytime a better offer arrives. As revealed in the study, casual employees will be looking for another job whilst at work since they are unsure on the renewal of their contracts if they lapses. The consequences of high turnover intention to the organisation performance among retailers were mentioned in the study. Tse, Huan & Lam (2013) cited by Monyaki, Chipunza & Mashavira (2022) states that an employee's intention to quit is a serious threat to an organisation, not only in terms of productivity, but also concerning financial outcomes and organisational stability.

The study affirms that providing decent work through giving employees fair salaries, hope for contract renewal and promoting them to permanent posts within reasonable time frame would help to ensure effective performance of casual labour. Malgas, et al., (2020:30) in their study of the South African retail and wholesale sector came up with similar recommendations that, "the wholesale and retail sector should implement mechanisms to retain casual staff such as improved prospects of career advancement, creating learning and development opportunities and providing competitive benefits to casuals and providing fair compensation". Given that there is high turnover intention among casual employees especially during the beginning of the year where other companies will be massively recruiting, retailers should put strategies to retain their talented casual employees. Retailers should therefore work on addressing the concerns of their employees so that casual employees would be delighted to stay in the organisation. Osagle & Efetabore 2019, have recommended that employers should allow casual workers access to certain, if not all benefits which are accessed by permanent staff e.g transport allowances, health benefits, bonuses, and also be allowed to unionize. Principally ensuring

job security, career progression and competitive rewards are key strategies as affirmed by the study and confirmed by the available literature.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that a significant proportion of well above 70% of employees in the retail sector particularly those occupying lower level jobs like shelf-setters, cleaners and till operators are employed on casual employment arrangements. The length of contracts varies in length from weeks to months. The renewal of the contracts and promotions to permanent position is based on merit and performance of an individual employee following assessment by management.

The study also concludes that if effectively utilised, casualization of labour helps retail businesses to survive and maximise their costs. Employing casual labour has been considered a strategy for reducing costs of labour since casual employees generally get less wages and benefits than permanent staff. This arrangement gives the employer flexibility in hiring and relieving employees of their duties to meet the changing business cycles.

From the study, it was also concluded that challenges with casualization of labour includes high staff turnover especially in the beginning of the year when many companies will be recruiting. Most employees under casual employment arrangement have tendency of leaving for other organisations which implies high turnover intention in the retail sector. Employee dissatisfaction is another challenge in which many casual employees practice moonlighting which compromises their performance on the job.

Finally, the study concludes that in as much as casualization of labour helps retailers to maximise profits, they should also consider providing decent work to casual employees in form of competitive remuneration, longer term contracts, assurance for renewal of contracts and making casual employees permanent within reasonable time frame are conditions which should be fostered by retailers. This helps to address the challenge of employee dissatisfaction and labour turnover haunting the retail sector in Zimbabwe.

Recommendations

From the results obtained, the study came up with the following recommendations to stakeholders:

Basing on the findings from the study it is recommended that to reap the best out of their casual employees, retailers should consider providing decent work to casual employees. This is done through mechanisms such as giving employees fair salaries, assurance for contract renewal and promoting casual employees to permanent posts within reasonable time frame.

As a way to address the challenge of high labour turnover among casual employees especially during the beginning of the year where other companies will be massively recruiting, retailers are recommended to put in place mechanisms to retain their talented casual employees. Principally ensuring job security, career progression and competitive rewards are recommended strategies from this study.

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