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UNLOCKING PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE AND IMPACT IN THE STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ZIMBABWE REPUBLIC POLICE

EVANS BONJISI TEMBO¹, THOMAS BRIGHTON BHEBHE² AND GRACE PORTIA KUDA
NGORORA-MADZIMURE³

Abstract

This study explores the influence of strategic human resource training and development on performance excellence within the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), with the aim of unlocking optimal performance in the security services sector. The research was inspired by a noticeable deterioration of police performance across the country, public outcry and many newspaper reports on alleged corrupt tendencies and poor service delivery within the rank and file of the ZRP. The study adopted a mixed methods approach with a pragmatic philosophy. The target population was 210 police officers stationed at the Police General Headquarters (PGHQ) in Harare. Data were collected using questionnaires (n=136) and interview schedules (n=3). Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.0, while qualitative data were analysed using the maticanalysis. Research results reveal that strategic human resource training and development programmes have a positive significant influence on employee performance in the ZRP. The research also established challenges constraining effective implementation of strategic human resource training and development in the Zimbabwean security services sector, notably lack of infrastructure, lack of training facilities, limited access to technology, limited e-learning resource, and high staff turnover, among others. The study, therefore, recommends that the ZRP should increase its investment in strategic human resource training and development programmes, as this would help to enhance the human capital of police officers, leading to improved performance excellence.

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Keywords: employee performance, human capital theory, organisational performance, learning culture, strategic human resource training and development

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of society, changes in policing practices and the expanded nature of police work in the 21st century, necessitate an evaluation of the adequacy of current law enforcement training and development (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1994; Paterson, 2011). It is, therefore, crucial to have well-educated and properly trained law enforcement officers who can effectively carry out their duties, considering the societal and policing changes that have taken place (Kratcoski, 2004; Roberg and Bonn, 2004; Haberfeld, 2013; Déverge, 2016). As early as 1909, August Vollmer introduced an ambitious police school programme in California, aiming to professionalise and legitimise policing. Vollmer's training curriculum was adopted by numerous police departments in the United States and internationally. However, the progress in reforming police training to professionalise it was slow and not all attempts were successful, as many jurisdictions offered only brief, basic and sometimes haphazard training (Haberfeld, 2013), lacking a strategic focus. Kudanga *et al.* (2022) argue that:

“The level of police performance across the globe is determined and measured mostly by the kind of satisfactory services accepted by members of the public being policed. On one hand, if the police perform very well, credit is given to the government and, on the other hand, poor police performance puts the image of the police force into disrepute” (p.23).

More importantly, employee performance has become the pillar of human resource management, as all business entities are now gaining competitiveness through people, since all other resources can be replicated. According to Khalid, Islam and Ahmed (2019), employee performance revolves around every management strategy, as there is no purpose for existence for an organisation that is performing badly, contrary to its set goals and objectives. As such, firms endeavour to find varied prospects that help to increase and maintain employee performance (Alshammari, 2020). In a bid to steer up remarkable work commitment and high performance, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) embraced various strategic human resource management practices, including strategic human resource training and development that then require a critical evaluation to establish its effects on employee performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While strategic human resource training and development programmes are widely acknowledged as crucial for unlocking performance excellence, there was a noticeable deterioration of police performance across the country, public outcry and many newspaper reports on alleged corrupt tendencies and poor service delivery within the ranks and files of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (*The Herald*, 2021a; 2023). This is indicated largely by a sharp increase in crime rate, complaints against the police and lack of skill sets required for the 21st century policing mandate. As such, this has serious adverse effects on police performance that is supposed to be coming from a well-trained workforce which has the drive for high productivity, quality and commitment. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of strategic human resource training and development programmes on employee performance in the ZRP, highlighting the challenges and opportunities that exist in optimising the effectiveness of these initiatives, since there is a dearth of research examining their specific impact within the security services in Zimbabwe.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following three objectives: (1) To examine the influence of strategic human resource training and development on employee performance in the ZRP; (2) To establish challenges constraining effective implementation of strategic human resource training and development in the security services sector; and (3) To establish ways of unlocking optimal performance in the security services sector through strategic human resource training and development. As such, these study objectives sought to highlight the challenges and opportunities that exist in optimising strategic human resource training and development initiatives, since there is a lack of research examining their specific influence within the security services sector in Zimbabwe. In so doing, the study was hypothesised as follows:

- H0: Strategic human resource training and development programmes have no positive significant influence on employee performance in the ZRP.
- H1: Strategic human resource training and development programmes have a positive significant influence on employee performance in the ZRP.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual model that underlines this study considers employee performance in the security services as the dependent variable, while strategic human resource training and development programmes constitute the independent variable. The mediating variables are training and development policy, leadership support and organisational culture, as illustrated in Figure 1.

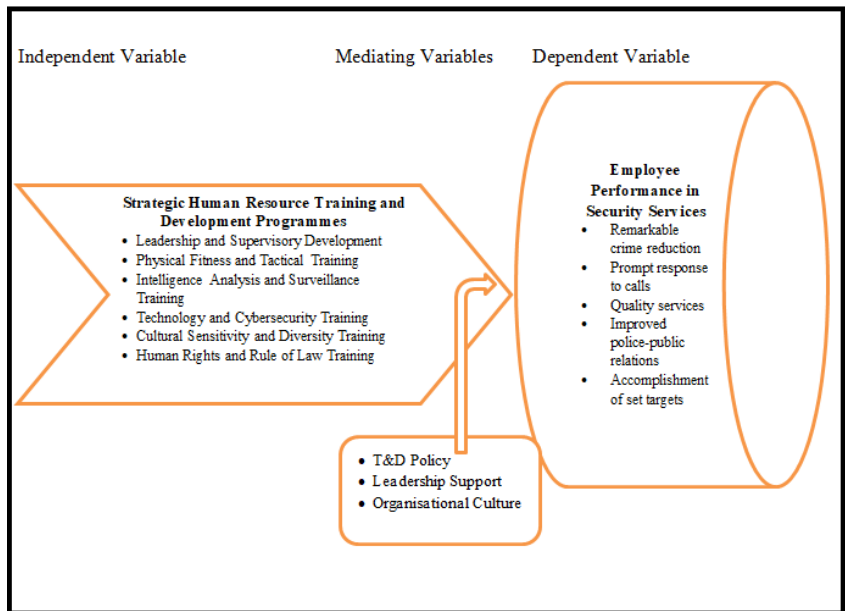


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (*Researcher, 2023*)

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR STRATEGIC TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Globally, numerous factors are pushing for a wider, more comprehensive and more strategic standpoint in respect of a firm's human resource. These demands, according to Armstrong and Brown (2019), have necessitated a longer-term approach to human resource management and treating employees as potential assets rather than just a variable cost. This led to the introduction of strategic training and development; thus, shifting from the traditional training and development. As noted by various scholars, Human Resource Management has shifted, over time, to become a strategic function that brings closer together the interests of individuals and those of the

organisation (Brewster, 2017; Hallée, Taskin and Vincent, 2018). In this way, strategic training and development refers to a systematic and planned approach to enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of employees within an organisation in alignment with its strategic goals and objectives (Stahl *et al.*, 2012; Makhamara, 2017). Therefore, in this study, strategic human resource training and development is defined as the deliberate and planned efforts by an organisation to enhance the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of its workforce in alignment with its strategic objectives. This involves identification of the critical capabilities required to achieve organisational goals, designing and implementing training programmes and continuously evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives.

The strategic aspect of training and development entails integrating training initiatives with the overall strategic direction of the organisation. This involves aligning training programmes with the organisation's mission, vision and values and with its specific goals and objectives (Altarawneh, 2016). Strategic human resource training and development initiatives are typically designed to address critical areas of improvement, enhance employee performance, foster innovation and contribute to the overall growth and success of the organisation. Similarly, Armstrong and Taylor (2020) opine that the development component of strategic training and development refers to a broader and more holistic approach to employee growth and learning. It encompasses not only training activities but also other forms of development, such as mentoring, coaching, job rotations and self-directed learning opportunities (Alkhazali *et al.*, 2020; Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). Thus, development initiatives aim to nurture employees' potential, enhance their career prospects and facilitate their long-term growth and success within the organisation.

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE SECURITY SERVICES INDUSTRY

Security services industry including police organisations, like other public entities, have realised that adopting right strategic human resources (HR) policies and practices must be at the centre of any viable solution to policing performance (Bogićević-Milikić, 2019). The security services in the 21st century value democracy, human rights, respect, fairness and is threatened by increasingly deadly and austere types of criminal activity (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001). In this regard, top-notch and up-to-date policing is critical to the development and protection of a society that values

sovereignty, justice and accountability (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001; Bogićević-Milikić, 2019). Crime has become more sophisticated in recent decades, and it has taken on many new elements, hence strategic human resource training and development of law enforcement agents has become a necessity.

The global nature of trading of illegal drugs, technological increase that triggers cybercrimes and huge black markets' illicit deals and the mushrooming of organised crimes such as human and fire-arms trafficking, money laundering, and ritual killings have robbed world's peace (Dantzker, 1994; Cordner and Shain, 2011). Therefore, modern policing calls for professionalisation of police service, strategic decision-making and a new set of competences to offer better service to citizens (Paoline and Terrill, 2007; Christmas, 2013). This draws attention to the importance of strategic human resource training and development in policing to enhance creation of democratic and peaceful societies through high-quality policing. In this regard, various strategic human resource training and development programmes such as cyber security training, leadership development, emergency response and crisis management training, intelligence analysis and surveillance training and technology and equipment training (McCoy, 2006; Kudanga *et al.*, 2022), could assist much in developing skill sets required for 21st century policing.

In the African context, studies related to police performance carried out in Kenya and Nigeria show that emerging performance assessment regimes and increasing citizens' expectations will result in rigorous performance standards, with every police force branded according to its record of performance and its capacity to improve (Al-Hamadani, 2011; Cordner and Shain, 2011). However, empirical reviews on impact of strategic HRM practices on the performance of employees reveal that in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, it is very rare to find similar studies in the security services sector, chiefly in a police organisation. It is probably difficult to define police performance, or to get approval to investigate a security institution since such investigations are a security threat in one way or another. Nonetheless, understanding how strategic human resource training and development affect employee performance in the security services industry is very critical. It is within this context that this research is conducted to evaluate the impact of strategic human resource training and development on the performance of employees within the ZRP.

UNLOCKING PERFORMANCE IN THE ZIMBABWE REPUBLIC POLICE

In Zimbabwe, the security services sector comprises both public and private companies, regulated by pieces of statutes such as the Private Investigators and Security Guards (Control) Act Chapter 27:10 and the Police Act Chapter 11:10. The ZRP is a state-owned national security organisation, created under section 219 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) Act 2013, with a sole mandate of: detecting, investigating and preventing crime; preserving the internal security of Zimbabwe; protecting and securing the lives and property of the people and maintaining law and order. It has a total workforce of about 50 000 and are all permanently employed (ZRP Strategic Plan Horizon, 2021, 2025). With such a huge workforce, the police service should not underestimate the value of its human capital development in as far as its performance is concerned.

Over the past 20 years, from 2000 to 2020, the ZRP had been striving to become a leading police service provider in the world by the year 2020 (ZRP Vision 2020 Document, 2010). However, major changes trends in the security services industry had seen the ZRP lagging behind in terms of technological advancement, adequate police skills and knowledge and workforce diversity and innovation. As such, it missed its strategic Vision 2020. Birzer and Tannehill (2001) and Déverge (2016) both share same sentiments that society and the challenges faced by policing have undergone significant changes. They contend that police services, including training and development, should not adhere rigidly to an authoritarian ideology, but instead, adapt to the demands of contemporary society. Edwards (1993) highlights the observation made by a police scholar regarding the inadequacy of police training programmes: “Doctors bury their mistakes, while lawyers send theirs to jail. Unfortunately, untrained police officers do a little of both” (p. 23).

Therefore, strategic human resource training and development in the security services sector is essential for equipping personnel with the necessary skills, knowledge and mindset to effectively address security challenges (Christmas, 2013). It enhances decision-making, preparedness, professionalism and adaptability, while fostering collaboration, engagement and motivation among security personnel. Ultimately, these factors contribute to the overall performance and effectiveness of the ZRP in protecting individuals, assets and public safety.

Many scholars believe that contemporary policing should be constitutional, respectful, deeply connected with the community it serves, use force judiciously, transparent and committed to continuous improvement (Dantzker, 1994; Birzer and Tannehill, 2001; Déverge, 2016; Bogićević-Milikić, 2019). As such, all ZRP practices and activities should strategically address these critical phenomena since they are ambiances upon which employee performance in the security services sector is measured.

Importantly, measuring employee performance in the security services is a multi-dimensional task difficult to fulfil (Wang, 2011; Maslov, 2016). As such, there is no single metric that will come close to gauging the effectiveness of all the work that the police do (Maslov, 2016). The multi-dimensional complexity of police work necessitates an inter-approach to measuring police performance, with some experts recommending that police achievements be examined using various indicators, ranging from personal stories of the victims (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1994) to a more formal public gratification survey (Maslov, 2016). These include crime rates, number of arrests, call for service response times, quality service/customer satisfaction and so forth.

It is within this context that modern policing calls for professionalisation of police service through strategic recruitment and selection, sufficient welfare services, unique set of skills, knowledge and abilities to provide better services to citizens (Paoline and Terrill, 2007; Paterson, 2011). This draws attention to the significance of strategic human training and development in policing that signifies a requisite to generate democratic societies and high-quality policing through utilisation of human capital within the ZRP and abroad.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Human Capital Theory (HCT). The effectiveness of police work heavily relies on the skills and competencies of officers. Through the application of HCT, the study reveals how focused training programmes improve the skills of police personnel, resulting in better service delivery and operational efficiency.

HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

Theodore Schultz proclaimed the creation of HCT in the 1960s in a publication called *Investment in Human Beings* (Blaug, 1976). This theory

asserts that people have inborn capabilities, manners and peculiar energy, all of which are components of human capital and so aims to explain the benefits of education and training as a type of human resource investment (Blaug, 1992). The major point was employees should be viewed as a type of development capital (Becker, 2019). Schooling and education, according to this view, are deliberate investments that prepare the labour force and boost productivity of people, teams and organisations while also supporting global growth level and development (Mincer, 2020).

The HCT acknowledges that investing in education, training and experience can lead to significant wage and job benefits for individuals. At its core, the theory proposes a straightforward argument: investing in formal or informal education and training enhances an individual's performance, productivity and earnings (Schultz, 2010). Furthermore, HCT recognises people as assets and that companies that invest in their employees improve their performance, leading to accomplishment of organisational goals (Heckman and Kautz, 2023).

In the context of this study, strategic human resource training and development initiatives aim to enhance the human capital of police officers in the ZRP. By investing in training and development programmes, the organisation acknowledges the significance of human capital and its role in unlocking performance excellence. Matching this theory to the performance of employees in the Zimbabwean security services industry, it was discovered that the human resource in security organisations is an important. As such, the theory establishes that knowledge, abilities and talents of individual security personnel generate value. Hence, the means of attracting, selecting, developing and rewarding human capital had to be the strategic focus.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods approach with a pragmatic philosophy. The approach gave inductive and deductive reasoning (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016) to conclude the relationship between strategic human resource training and development programmes and police performance in the ZRP. In this view, the cross-section descriptive survey research design was used. The target population was 210 police officers stationed at the Police General Headquarters in Harare. The sample size was 136

respondents that were arrived at using the Krejcie and Morgan 1970 Determination Scale, as shown below.

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$$

$$s = \frac{1.96^2 * 210 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(210-1) + 1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

$$s = 136.0064738$$

$$s = 136$$

where:

s = required sample size

X^2 = the table value of Chi-square for one degree of freedom at 95% confidence level (i.e. $1.96^2 = 3.841$).

N = the population size (210 police officers)

P = the population proportion (assumed to be 0.50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05).

Furthermore, the purposive sampling method was used to select three key informants who are police commissioners, coded as P1, P2 and P3. These provided the study with in-depth data through interviews. The quantitative data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire, whilst qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview guide. In this regard, the five-point Likert scale (with a scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) – Disagree (2) – Neutral (3) – Agree (4) – Strongly Agree (5)) was utilised in the questionnaire to reveal the degree of opinions regarding core issues pertaining to the study variables. It also saved time for respondents, thereby increasing their willpower to fill the questionnaire. Also, the semi-structured interviews for key informants were conducted on a face-to-face basis, the rationale being that semi-structured interviews provide necessary in-depth qualitative data that could otherwise not have been produced via questionnaires in this study. Each interview session lasted for not more than 45 minutes and a research diary was used to record responses. Quantitative data were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.0, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS

The first objective sought to examine the influence of strategic human resource training and development on employee performance in the ZRP. Findings are presented in Table 1, followed by some interpretations. The study used the parameters whereby: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree.

Table 1: Strategic Human Resource Training and Development in the ZRP (N=136) (Field Data, 2023)

Statements	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organisation conducts a wide range of training and development programmes.	0.0	3.1	10.0	52.3	34.6	4.18	0.734
There is a training and development policy applicable to all employees.	0.0	0.0	2.3	38.5	59.2	4.57	0.542
Police Commanders consider employee learning as an investment and not an expense.	46.8	28.5	5.4	19.2	0.0	1.97	1.141
The organisation has a sufficient training budget every financial year.	10.0	54.6	3.8	27.7	3.8	2.61	1.10
Management development is aimed at management succession.	1.5	17.7	9.2	60.8	10.8	3.62	0.951
The organisation places emphasis on training and development for the purpose of employee performance.	0.8	13.1	3.8	52.3	30.0	3.98	0.968
Training and development are continuously aligned with strategic goals of the organisation.	3.1	50.8	8.5	30.8	6.9	2.88	1.100
Mean Index						3.40	

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the study respondents strongly agreed that there is a training and development policy applicable to all employees, as indicated by a high mean score of 4.57 and a 59.2%. This suggests that the ZRP has a formal policy in place to guide and govern strategic human resource training and development initiatives for all its employees. The respondents also agreed that the organisation conducts a wide range of training and development programmes, as indicated by a mean score of 4.18 and a 52.3%. This implies that the organisation is actively involved in providing various training opportunities to its employees. Furthermore, a

mean score of 3.98 was attributed to the statement that the organisation places emphasis on training and development to enhance employee performance and a total of 52.3% of the respondents agreed with this. This suggests that the organisation recognises the link between training and development initiatives and improved performance outcomes. More so, most of the respondents agreed that management development programmes are targeting management succession, as indicated by a mean score of 3.62 and a highest percentage of 60.8. This infers the presence of a strategic approach to grooming and preparing of future leaders within the ZRP. On another note, the respondents disagreed with the statement that training and development activities are continuously aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation, as indicated by a mean of 2.88 and a percentage of 50.8. This suggests a weakness in ensuring that training initiatives are always in line with the overall strategic direction of the organisation. In the same line of thinking, the respondents disagreed that the organisation has a sufficient training budget allocated every financial year, as denoted by a low mean score of 2.61 and a percentage of 54.6%. This suggests that the ZRP is not being fully funded specifically to cater for its training and development activities year by year. Finally, the study results indicate that the respondents strongly disagreed that Police Commanders view employee learning as an investment rather than an expense, with a low mean of 1.97 and a percentage of 46.8. This indicates a negative perception among the Police Commanders regarding the value of training and development in enhancing employee performance.

The mean index of 3.40 suggests an overall positive perception of the various statements related to strategic human resource training and development in the organisation. Overall, the findings suggest that the ZRP places moderate emphasis on training and development programmes. These factors indicate a fair environment for training and development, partially contributing to unlocking performance excellence within the ZRP.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

- H0: Strategic human resource training and development programmes have no significant positive influence on employee performance in the ZRP.
- H1: Strategic human resource training and development programmes have a significant positive influence on employee performance in the ZRP.

Table 2: Model Summary of Strategic human resource training and development

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.943	.889	1.45295

Findings in Table 2 indicate that the value of R-square is 0.889. This implies that 88.9% of variation of Employee Performance was explained by Strategic Human Resource Training and Development.

Table 3: ANOVA Table of Strategic Human Resource Training and Development.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression		2006.882	1	2006.882	950.650	.000
1	Residual	251.216	134	2.111		
	Total	2258.098	135			

Dependent variable: Employee Performance

Predictors: (Constant): Strategic Human Resource Training and Development.

Findings in Table 3 indicate that at 0.05 level of significance, the ANOVA test proved that in this model, the independent variable, i.e. Strategic Human Resource Training and Development, is significant in predicting Employee Performance as shown by a significant value of 0.000, which is less 0.05 level of significance ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Table 4: Coefficients Model of Strategic Human Resource Training and Development

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	43.32	.692		6.248	.000
Strategic HRT&D	.893	.029	.943	30.833	0.000

Dependent variable: Employee Performance

Findings in Table 4 indicate that strategic human resource training and development had a significant influence on Employee Performance in security in the ZRP, as represented by a t-statistic = 30.833 and p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and concluded that strategic human resource training and development had a positive significant influence on employee performance

in the Zimbabwe Republic. Thus, for each unit increase in strategic human resource training and development, there was a corresponding increase in employee performance by 0.893.

CHALLENGES CONSTRAINING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SECURITY SERVICES SECTOR

The second objective sought to establish challenges constraining effective implementation of strategic human resource training and development in the security services sector. The three key informants interviewed in this study highlighted several such challenges, as thematically analysed below:

Limited financial resources: All the key informants revealed that insufficient funding was posing a significant challenge to the smooth implementation of strategic human resource training and development initiatives in the ZRP. They argued that an adequate financial budget is required to support training programmes, purchase necessary equipment and materials and provide on-going professional development opportunities for both commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

Lack of infrastructure and training facilities: All participants indicated that inadequate infrastructure and training facilities were hindering the effective implementation of training and development programmes in the ZRP. For example, Interviewee P3 had said:

“A lack of suitable training venues, classrooms, simulation environments and equipment in the ZRP limit the hands-on and practical aspects of training, thereby impacting negatively on its overall effectiveness.”

Resistance to change: One of the three participants revealed that resistance to change from both top leaders and frontline officers was also impeding the smooth implementation of strategic human resource training and development initiatives. Interviewee P2 indicated that:

“Some police officers are reluctant to adopt new training approaches, e.g. public order training, leading to a slower uptake and potential challenges like violation of human rights in achieving desired outcomes.”

Limited time and competing priorities: All the three participants concurred that the demanding nature of police work often leaves limited time for training and development activities. They concurred that with competing priorities such as operational duties, investigations and administrative tasks, finding dedicated time for training was challenging (especially owing to

skeletal manpower at most police stations nationwide) and therefore required careful planning, scheduling and commitment.

Limited access to technology and e-learning resources: All the three key informants revealed that adequate access to technology and e-learning resources are crucial for modern training and development approaches. However, they indicated that limited access to computers, internet connectivity and e-learning platforms in the ZRP training institutions such as the Police Staff College and Professional Updating Centres (PUCs), was impeding the implementation of innovative and technology-driven training methods.

High labour turnover: The informants also indicated that high staff turnover within the police service was disrupting the continuity and effectiveness of training and development initiatives. Interviewee P1 had said:

“Frequent turnover of personnel requires repetitive training efforts and limits the long-term impact of strategic human resource training and development programmes.”

In the same line of thinking P3 alluded that:

“Both high labour turnover and unjustified employee transfer have become a menace to training and development efforts being made in the ZRP, as time and again, trained staff are mis-posted, leave for greener pastures or are made to retire unwillingly on a daily basis.”

WAYS OF UNLOCKING OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE IN THE SECURITY SERVICES SECTOR THROUGH STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The third objective sought to establish ways of unlocking optimal performance in the security services sector through strategic human resource training and development. As such, study participants provided the following ways.

Developing a long-term strategic training plan: All the key informants emphasized creation of a strategic plan that outlines the organisation's training and development goals, objectives and timelines. They indicated that this plan/policy should align with the overall strategic objectives of the ZRP and provide a roadmap for effective implementation and evaluation of training initiatives. A similar important observation in a study conducted by Stahl *et al.* (2012) was that most of the organisations under study practised a “strategic fit” by aligning training practices with business strategies, goals and objectives of the organisation.

Allocation of sufficient financial resources: All interviewees proposed that adequate funding should be allocated to support strategic human resource training and development efforts, thus, sufficient budgeting for training programmes, infrastructure, equipment and the professional development of trainers, instructors and lecturers.

This finding is also in sync with that of Bassi (2011) who measures the level of employees' training and development. She observes that the higher the investment that organisations make in employees' training, the lower the employee turnover. Thus, she regards employee training as a driver to control the rate of attrition in an organisation.

Enhancing training infrastructure and facilities: The informants suggested that the police should invest in the development and improvement of training facilities, including classrooms, simulation environments and technology resources. They indicated that upgrading infrastructure will facilitate hands-on and practical police training experiences, leading to better learning outcomes.

Embracing technology-enabled learning: All key informants opined that the ZRP should integrate technology into training and development initiatives by incorporating e-learning platforms, virtual simulations and online resources, as this approach can facilitate anytime, anywhere learning and provide access to a wide range of training materials and resources.

Fostering a learning culture: Participants established that the ZRP should also create an organisational culture that values and promotes continuous learning and development through supportive leadership. They all concurred that police officers should be encouraged to actively participate in training and development opportunities, promote knowledge sharing and reward learning achievements. In this regard, interviewee P1 indicated that:

“Innovative police departments like CID and PSTT should be encouraged to collaborate in research program that is committed to trying a variety of promising training methods within and outside the country.”

In the same line of thinking, P2 said:

“Indeed, the ZRP needs a supportive organisational environment, including leadership commitment, resource allocation and a culture that values learning and development, as this would greatly contribute to unlocking performance excellence.”

Providing motivation and career development pathways: The informants also suggested that the ZRP should develop clear career development pathways and succession planning programmes for police officers. They argued that this should include opportunities for promotion, specialised training and mentorship programmes, thus, motivating officers to engage in training and development activities. Interviewee P3 intoned:

“Motivating and sponsoring of talented officers to develop themselves for the purpose of enhancing their work performance is key to ultimate organisational performance.”

Collaborating with external business partners: The informants also indicated that the ZRP should foster partnerships with external organisations, such as academic institutions, international law enforcement agencies (e.g. International Security Training Centre, Cairo Egypt) and other subject matter experts, to leverage their expertise and resources. In this regard, interviewee P2 subscribed that:

“Collaborative initiatives can provide access to specialised training programmes and best practices, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of strategic human resource training and development efforts.”

Providing continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms: The key informants also revealed the significance of continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms to optimise the impact of strategic human resource training and development programmes. They indicated that regular assessment of training outcomes, participant feedback and performance evaluation are essential for identifying areas for improvement, making necessary adjustments and ensuring the on-going effectiveness of training initiatives.

These results corroborate the findings of Bradford and Pynes (1999) who opine that police training should not be stuck in an authoritarian ideology, but rather, accept today’s society demands and progress accordingly.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of the study was to determine the influence of strategic human resource training and development on unlocking performance excellence in the security services sector in Zimbabwe. The presented results indicate that strategic human resource training and development programmes have a significant positive influence on employee performance in the ZRP. The

findings are congruent with the findings by Al-Hamadani (2011) who examined how HRM policies and practices (including training and development) in the Royal Oman Police (ROP) are related to organisational performance. The findings were that the ROP demonstrated a strong focus on HRM and strategically utilised its policies and practices to enhance employee performance. Nevertheless, the results also reveal that the ZRP places a moderate emphasis on training and development programmes in a fair environment that partially contribute to unlocking performance excellence within the security services. This is probably owing to various challenges being faced, notably limited financial resources for training and development programmes; lack of infrastructure and training facilities; resistance to change; limited time and competing interests within the police work; limited access to technology and e-learning resources; and high staff turnover and employee transfer, that are all constraining effective implementation of strategic human resource training and development in the police service, in one way or the other. More importantly, the study proffers numerous ways that can be adopted to unlock performance excellence in the security services. In this regard, strategic options like developing a long-term strategic training plan; allocation of sufficient training budget; embracing technology-enabled learning; and providing motivation and career development pathways, were proposed among others. In support of the current study results, Déverge (2016) avers that crime has become more sophisticated in recent decades and it has taken on many new elements, hence strategic human resource training and development of law enforcement agents has become a necessity. More so, these results also resonate with the findings of Mbugua (2015), who echoes that when a company strategically trains and develops its workers, the expense of recruiting, hiring and internalising outsiders is lowered, resulting in improved performance in the in the organisation. In the same line of thinking, an American study on the impact of human capital investments as employer-provided training and development, it was established that training and development investment returns increased productivity by 16-19% and enhanced the performance of employees (Makhmara, 2017; Black and Lynch, 2019). Above all, these findings are also in sync with the Human Capital Theory that seeks to explain the advantages of education and training as a form of investment in human resources. The theory affirmed that skills, abilities and knowledge of individual security personnel generated value. Hence, strategic focus is one way of developing and training human resource in the Zimbabwean security services sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, it is discovered that strategic human resource training and development programmes have a significant positive influence on employee performance in the ZRP. However, the Zimbabwean security services seem to be facing some challenges in the implementation of strategic human resource training and development and these include: limited financial resources, lack of infrastructure and training facilities, resistance to change, limited time and competing priorities, limited access to technology and e-learning resources and high staff turnover.

Basing on the research results and discussion, the following recommendations are hereby proffered: the ZRP should increase its investment in strategic human resource training and development programmes, as this will help enhance the human capital of police officers, leading to improved performance excellence; and the Zimbabwean security services should embrace technology-enabled learning methods, such as e-learning platforms and virtual simulations, to supplement traditional training approaches, as integrating technology will expand access to training resources, facilitate self-paced learning and accommodate the diverse learning styles of police officers. Furthermore, the security services should consider motivation and sponsorship of talented officers to develop themselves for the purpose of enhancing their work performance and ultimately organisational performance. Moreover, there is need to create a learning culture within the security services, a supportive environment that encourages continuous learning and development.

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