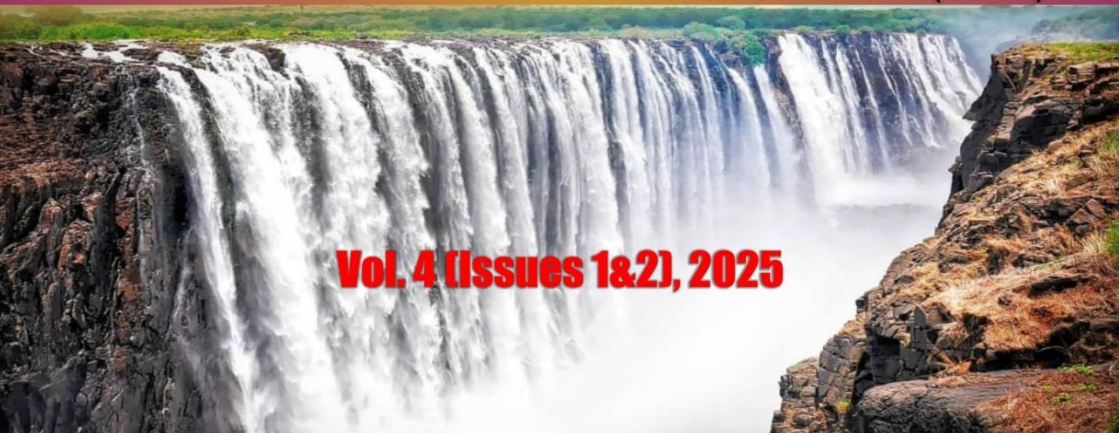




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EVALUATION OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF MANUFACTURING SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN MASVINGO URBAN, ZIMBABWE

JOYLINE MACHINGA¹, COLLEN KAJONGWE² AND KUDA P. NGORORA-MADZIMURE³

Abstract

The major objective of the study is to evaluate the implications of career development strategies on the sustainable growth of manufacturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe. The qualitative study focuses on 12 purposively selected SMEs which have been in operations in the same business for not less than 10 years because of their business experiences. Structured interviews are used to collect data which were analyzed and presented using themes. Study findings show that SMEs which strengthen career planning for employees, not only provide them with growing and most potential progress opportunities, but also reduce turnover intentions and increase quality. Furthermore, research findings show that career development creates promotion opportunities within SMEs, provides training opportunities, and skills development to improve employees' employability on the external and internal labour market. Additionally, research findings reflect that career development helps foster continuous improvement and innovation culture within SMEs. Based on the study results, conclusions drawn are that the existence of career management provides the necessary support for developing knowledge, skills, and behaviours essential for both SMEs and individual success. A longitudinal study needs to be done on the challenges of all SMEs in adopting career development strategies in Zimbabwe.

Key Words: Productivity, continuous improvement, innovation, development, economic growth

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INTRODUCTION

The development of human resources has featured prominently in the global discourse on development, as a key strategic matter, not only within larger organisations, but within Small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well (Chowdhary and Mohammed, 2021). Career development as a human resource management activity aims to improve and increase the effectiveness of the work carried out by workers so that they are increasingly able to make the best contribution in realising the organisation's business goals. Therefore, keen attention to human resources development (HRD) in manufacturing SMEs is crucial in the present dynamic and competitive business environment, where over a million changes take place within a short space of time (Makanyeza, Mabenge and Ngorora-Madzimure, 2022). In this regard, it has become an obligation that manufacturing SMEs should recruit, retain, as well as develop top talent and sustainably grow their businesses and the economy at large (Kajongwe, 2020).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Small and medium enterprises have become genuine engines driving economic growth the world over, contributing above 60% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to most economies (Karedza, 2018; Chundu, 2020; Mashingaidze, Bomani and Derera, 2021). Accordingly, Karedza (2018), Chundu (2020), Kajongwe, *et al.* (2021) and Mashingaidze *et al.* (2021) credit SMEs for providing employment and alleviating poverty to most citizenry around the world, with indications that SMEs are in every country around the world. Within the framework of the Organisation for Economic, Cooperation, and Development (OECD) area, 99% of all businesses consist of SMEs, creating approximately 60% of employment and totalling between 50%-60% of value addition (CIPD, 2020). Previous research indicate that in Canada, 80% of businesses are SMEs and these created approximately 80% jobs for most citizens of that country as referred by Roy (2008), referenced in Mashavira (2019). Roy *et al.* (2008) assert SMEs in India and China have driven economic development, generated employment opportunities, alleviated lack and improved the two countries' domestic markets among other benefits. In India, the number of SMEs is estimated to be 42.50 million, contributing 95% of total business units and employing about 106 million (CIPD, 2020).

The adoption of career development strategies as possible solutions for sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in developing countries,

especially in Zimbabwe, has not been adequately addressed (Karedza, 2017, 2018; Manzoni, 2018; Mashavira, 2019; Bomani, 2021). There are several human resource (HR) strategies that SMEs need to focus on to improve performance. HR formal practices such as employee development and rewards, are important for firm performance (Lai *et al.*, 2017). However, according to Wuen *et al.* (2020), training and development process and performance evaluation are significant for SMEs' performance. Hooi and Ngui (2014) agree that all HR practices such as rewards, training, career development; and performance management enhance SMEs sustainability.

Many researchers agree that employee career development through training and development are the most important practices for SME sustainability (Hooi, 2014; Lai, 2017; Zakaria *et al.*, 2018; Wuen, 2020; Kitchot, 2021). Training and development are a process of adding employee's skills, knowledge, and attributes to improving employees' capabilities (Wuen *et al.*, 2020). Employee training and development is an important aspect of human resource management that helps employees improve their skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform their jobs more effectively (Lange, Ottens, Taylor, 2020; Jones, 2020). For SMEs, employee training and development can be particularly important because these organisations often have limited resources and need to maximise the productivity and efficiency of their workforce. By investing in training and development initiatives, organisations can empower their workforce to acquire new skills, enhance existing ones, and ultimately perform at their best, leading to improved proven productivity and success for both the employees and the organisation as a whole (Mashavira, 2019; Bomani, 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of the significance of training and development in SMEs, research in this area has been somewhat overlooked in scholarly works. The bulk of existing research centres predominantly on the significance of managerial training and strategic human resource management (Garavan *et al.*, 2015; Jones, 2020; Lange, Ottens, Taylor, 2020). The implication largely suggests that investing in training and development is a worthwhile endeavour for manufacturing SMEs, promising to enhance business growth (Loan-Clarke, 2019). Predominantly, employees in SMEs have now bigger jobs, with more responsibility and scope. They are empowered, and decisions must be made about where problems and customers are and where the work gets done (Mashavira, 2019; Bomani, 2021).

Manufacturing SMEs are less inclined to offer formal career development initiatives to their employees, a trend attributable to various factors (Kitching and Blackburn, 2017). The reluctance of manufacturing SMEs to provide formal training to their employees can often be attributed to constraints related to time and cost, both of which are typically limited resources for these businesses. Although there is evidence suggesting that skills and training policies in large organisations yield specific benefits, the same does not appear to hold truth for SMEs, as noted by the OECD in 2020 (UNDP, 2020). According to the OECD (2020), SMEs participate in training activities up to 50% less than larger organisations, and the participation gap widens as the size of the business decreases, especially in training and development initiatives.

Certainly, Loan-Clarke *et al.* (2018) observe that established SMEs often prioritise providing further training to their employees because they recognise the value it can add to their operations. By investing in ongoing training and development, these businesses aim to enhance employee skills, boost performance, foster innovation and, ultimately drive greater success and competitiveness on the market. Training and development of staff can indeed be the decisive factor between success and failure of many organisations. Effective training equips employees with the necessary skills, knowledge and capabilities to perform their roles efficiently, adapt to changing circumstances and contribute effectively to the organisation's goals (Chipunza, 2020; Majoni, 2020; Manuere, 2020; Mudavanhu *et al.* 2020; Muranda, 2020; Nyamwanza, 2020). Without proper training and development, SME employees may struggle to meet expectations, leading to decreased productivity, missed opportunities and, ultimately, organisational failure to achieve goals (*ibid.*). Therefore, investing in comprehensive career development programmes is crucial for ensuring sustained success and competitiveness in today's dynamic business environment which this study seeks to establish, focusing on manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Small and Medium Enterprises play a significant role in the development and growth of both developed and developing economies, especially in the area of employment generation, increase in Gross Domestic Product, and redistribution of income and others (Salau, 2022). The adoption of career development strategies as possible solutions for sustainable growth of

manufacturing SMEs in developing countries, especially in Zimbabwe, has not been adequately addressed (Chipunza, 2020; Majoni, 2020; Manuere, 2020; Mudavanhu *et al.* 2020; Muranda, 2020; Nyamwanza, 2020;). As such, manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe are failing to interpret the robust need to integrate career development strategic opportunities to comprehend their strategic business orientation in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business environment. However, the manufacturing SMEs industry in Zimbabwe is not sustainable and productive as hoped for by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8 (promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work) and SDG 9 (improve sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation) all of which are not easily realised. Statistics demonstrate that 60% of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe fail in the first year of establishment, while 25% fail within the first three years and the remaining 15% are likely to survive (Finscope Survey, 2022). This study, therefore, seeks to assess the implications of adopting career development strategies on sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To assess the implications of career development strategies on sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was underpinned by Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) by Dawis and Lofquist (1984). This TWA is a class of theory in the development of a career, and it is based on a person's vocational behaviour (Dawis, 1992). This is also referred to as Person-environment (PE) Correspondence Theory, which views the choice of career and development as continuous processes. This involves accommodating and adjusting when an individual searches for a company or an environment that will match their requirements and the organisation also searches for an individual who will meet their requirements (Dawis 2015, Dawis and Lofquist 1984). Satisfaction is a term that is used to suggest individuals' level of satisfaction with an institution. The main requirements that an individual expects to be met by the organisation are their needs both psychological and physical. The organisation also expects the employees to have the abilities needed in the

organisation. Moreover, it is possible to predict the tenure of an individual employee by analysing satisfaction levels of the company and that of the individual employee. Recently, TWA made speculation on the impact of the style of adverse adjustment. This style can be applied to explaining the way an individual and the company can continuously attain and maintain their correspondence (Dawis, 2015). Four styles of adjustment variables have been determined, that is: flexibility, reactivity, activeness and perseverance. Flexibility refers to the level where an individual can tolerate the dis-correspondence of PE and whether there is a tendency to be dissatisfied with the organisation. Activeness is whether an individual tends to actively change or act on the organisation to lower dissatisfaction or dis-correspondence. The relevance of the theory in this study lies in its involvement of the career path constructs of employees. The key advantage of this theory is that several factors have been created to provide measures of different aspects that relate to the theory. These include satisfaction, needs and values, satisfactoriness and abilities, skills and correspondence indexes (Dawis, 2015). In the past few decades, there have been a few research studies that have been carried out to investigate the proposition that is drawn from TWA, more so in linking abilities/needs satisfactoriness /satisfaction and tenure/work adjustment (*ibid.*). This theory supports the variable: career planning by linking the theory of work adjustment to the performance of employees in SMEs. According to the theory, for a company to attain good performance, the organisation must invest in developing the careers of its employees. Career management strategies of employees can be implemented appropriately if there exists a proper plan that calls for career planning in organisations. The theory is important in this study because an organisation's effectiveness relies on the competency of its workforce. It can be applied to help enhance the efficiency, commitment, satisfaction and productivity of workers through career management practices (Wawira *et al.*, 2021). When skills of workers are developed, the quality of their work consequently improves. Interaction of supervisors with their employees influences their perceptions and attitudes. Feedback on performance given by leaders to workers reflect in their overall productivity.

IMPLICATIONS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF MANUFACTURING SMES

Career management is the process by which individuals collect information about values, interests, skill strengths and weaknesses, identify a career goal and engage in career strategies that increase the probability that career goals

will be achieved (Zacher *et al.*, 2019). Organisations with strategic orientation see career management as a goal to provide their employees with superior opportunities to grow and develop as professionals. Conversely, the concept of career management can always be well explained as an avenue that supports employees to look beyond their present position and prepare for brighter future positions either within or outside the organisations (Osibanjo, Oyewunmi and Ojo, 2014). This avenue consists of both formal and informal activities, including employee career mentors, workshops, job enrichment and job rotation. In an attempt to ensure a successful succession, SME owners must ensure that employees have a career path in the organisation. Career plans should not only be in place, but must also be aligned with employees' goals; it will increase employees' productivity and reduce their turnover. Any employer that wishes to retain staff must give room for a favourable work climate for their career growth (Kitching and Blackburn, 2017).

A workforce that sees its management as a supporter, and as the ones who take care of its future career developments, is likely to its their management and its organisation. SMEs' career management is a very effective tool of human resource management, and many SMEs are offering their employees career advancement to satisfy them, and to increase the performance of their organisation. Walsh and Taylor (2017) mention that career growth and development are the main benefits that employees seek from their employers. For career management to provide maximum benefits, it requires initiatives from both organisations and individuals. Quality SMEs see it as a goal to provide their employees with superior opportunities to grow and develop as professionals. Excellent owners-managers in SMEs create continuity of management and knowledge, and an environment for employees to thrive and grow by hiring the right people and having them develop simultaneously with the company's growth (Kleinknecht and Hefferin, 2015; Rudolph *et al.*, 2019; Shabeer *et al.*, 2019).

There are numerous elements of career administration, including career development and planning centering on planning employees' growth and development; career planning in SMEs seeks to provide SMEs direction and embolden their employees to fulfill their capacities and ensure better use of human resources through more satisfied and fruitful employees. Incongruous use of training and development programmes' funds, the unattainability of employees to fill vacant positions and lower

commitment from the employees are the consequences of firms' denying their employees to plan their careers (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000). A planned programme of career progress provides higher-level talent from within the SMEs (Rudolph *et al.*, 2019). Career planning has now become an essential prerequisite of effective human resource management, productivity improvement and SME growth (Gupta, *et al.*, 2000).

Akinyele *et al.* (2015) reveal that career development has a significant impact on SMEs performance. Osibanjo, *et al.* (2011) and Ishak, *et al.* (2016) conclude that career development has an insignificant correlation with SMEs' performance. There is no doubt that several studies on these lines of study both in advanced economies and emerging economies are categorised with mixed results (Kajongwe, 2020). When SME owners refuse to neither give career management significant attention nor refuse to focus on employees' career plans, it impacts the employee's commitment performance, either positively or negatively (Rudolph *et al.*, 2019; Shabeer *et al.*, 2019). Career management strategies involve personnel in setting their own goals and identifying their power and flaws. It supports personnel with the identification and acceleration of training prerequisites and prospects. This is attained mainly by building a progression of feedback and dialogue into the performance administration system of SMEs (*ibid.*).

Career management strategy seeks to improve the matching of jobs with the right employees even in SMEs (Akinyele and Dibia, 2015). An assessment of the skills and competencies of employees could assist in accommodating them in positions that suit them. Through the application of practices such as transfers and rotation, SMEs' operational effectiveness can be improved. Career management programmes can also result in a reduction in the need to recruit capabilities revealed through their career planning activities (Kitching and Blackburn, 2017). Ikechukwu and Paschal Adighije (2017) analyse the implications of career development on SME employees' performance and ascertain the effect of career advancement on motivation. The research concludes that the impact of career growth on the performance and motivation of SME employees cannot be succinctly stated and recommend that in harmony with the programmes and policies of the organisations where management should not relent in contributing to career growth by providing abundant opportunities for self-development, advancement and others (Kleinknecht and Hefferin, 2015; Rudolph *et al.*, 2019; Shabeer *et al.*, 2019). Lyria, Namusonge and Karanja (2012) assess

the effects of career management as a component of talent management on SME performance. The study results show that career management strategies, as a component of talent management, has a positive and significant influence on the SMEs performance. Based on the study results, the conclusions drawn are that career management practices should be widely adopted by manufacturing SMEs in Nairobi.

In Uganda, Mwanje (2015) did a study in the SME sector of Uganda on motivating employees and the development of careers. Results showed that if the training programme does not increase the chances of an individual being promoted then it is irrelevant. It was revealed that they lacked opportunities in career paths. It was also established that even though the Ugandan SMEs did recognise skills as well as what is accomplished after training, employees were not benefiting in the advancement of their careers after they undergo training. There were a few ways that were identified for curbing those constraints to the advancement of their careers and they were having policies that were clear and transparent and having competition for promotional positions that were free and fair. It was also established that motivation greatly and significantly affects advancement in a career.

Career management of employees in SMEs can be implemented appropriately if there exists a proper plan that calls for career planning in organisations. Schein (2016) states that planning a career is a continuous procedure of discovering developments by a person through their concept, which is a result of their skills, requirements, motivation and aspiration of their system of values. The act of managing a career is a continuous process of self-assessment as well as setting goals for the worker and their employer to attain the goals of the company (Kleinknecht and Hefferin, 2015). Planning a career is a systematic and comprehensive process that targets the practice of managing a career, implementing strategies, analysing opportunities and evaluating the outcome (Mwanje, 2015). It is the responsibility of an individual and the company to plan for careers. Therefore, the SME management should determine their aspirations as well as capabilities by assessing and understanding their requirements to be trained, as well as developed technical skills, and advanced education (Kleinknecht and Hefferin, 2015). Based on this literature gap, this study, therefore, seeks to assess the implications of career management strategies on sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major objective of the study is to evaluate the implications of career development strategies on sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo urban areas. The study is qualitative and uses an explanatory research design. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), research that is exploratory is the one describing what happens, asks questions and assesses the phenomenon in respect to a new aspect; a descriptive study explains a situation exactly as it is without any manipulation; and an explanatory study establishes causal association among variables. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (*ibid.*) also note that the explanatory study explains causal association existing among variables. The study consists of all registered manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo urban areas. According to the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Development and Small to Medium Enterprises (2023), there are 200 registered manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban which is the study population. However, purposive sampling was used to select 20 manufacturing SMEs in detergent, drinks and furniture manufacturing and had been in operation in the same domain within a period of five to 10 years. The purposive selection of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the operational range of 5-10 years was not intended to mean that only 20 existed in that population, but rather, 20 were chosen based on their alignment with study's criteria. Structured interviews were used to collect data which was analysed and presented using themes. Ethical considerations were adhered to where respondents were informed that data was collected for academic purposes and, therefore voluntary, participation was needed. In addition, there was no need to include their names and those of the organisation to protect them from harm. Thus honesty, integrity, accountability and respect (beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and justice) are considered in this study.

RESULTS

RESPONSE RATE

In this study, 20 structured interview guides were scheduled and distributed. However, only 12 interviews were successfully conducted, translating to 60% response rate. The high response rate was attributed to the importance of the matter to manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Based on their professional qualifications, the participants demonstrated a high level of professional intellect in this study with 20% being holders of Diplomas, 70% holding Undergraduate Degrees, and 10% possessing Masters Degrees. This implies that participants were privy to the need for integrating career management strategies to harness the performance of their SMEs so much that they can be at parity with bigger organisations in this domain.

THEME 1

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF MANUFACTURING SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN MASVINGO URBAN

Participants gave various responses based on objectives stated on the implications of career development strategies on sustainable growth of manufacturing SMEs in Masvingo Urban. Participants 1, 4, 7, 9 and 10 underscored that SMEs employees were able to choose career opportunities that suit their needs from a pool identified by the organisation where employees analysed available career opportunities which enabled them to be motivated and innovative.

Participant 1 said:

...Our organisation helps employees to develop knowledge of handling complex tasks from a wide array of training courses availed by our management. From our experience, those who completed the course brought into the organisation new skills of innovation and motivated other employees to partake the mandate of being trained in their area of expertise so much that they can improve on high work performance during the discharge of their various duties.

Participant 4 added that:

The organisation retains employees with technical skills, and this helps in developing employees' computing knowledge. In today's digital era, this can add value in developing online marketing strategies where we need to adopt and implement digital technology to reach so many clients at a goal and attain performance.

Participant 7 commented that:

The organisation provides job and off-job training services to employees. On-job training provides employees with specific skills to perform tasks, while off-job training improves employees' knowledge in their area of work. The employees adhere to the performance culture of the organisation.

Participant 9 avers that:

...through training, our skills are improved and, therefore, organisational productivity also improves. Through training, as employees we become more valuable to the organisation and, therefore, the chances of us being promoted increase since there will be greater chances of organisational expansion with many branches being opened in other cities as well. It is also important to ensure that the programmes designed for training are in line with organisation's objectives and requirements and fit the strategies of the business.

Participant 10 stated that:

...through the process of career management, employees can develop skills, requirements, motivation and aspiration and these affect their performance. It also helps an individual to determine their aspirations as well as capabilities and by assessing, counseling and understanding their requirements to be trained in technical skills, advanced education and needs. By doing so, it enhances performance levels of an employee.

Participants were further probed to indicate how career management strategies affect employee performance in manufacturing SMEs. In this domain Participants 2, 5, 6, 8 and 15 underscored that a planned programme of career progress provides a higher-level talent from within the organisation. It also helps in the optimum utilisation of the managerial resources.

Participant 2 said:

There is a need to enhance the quality and frequency of training in our manufacturing SMEs to increase employee productivity. Therefore, our SMEs organise training and seminars for the employees as this helps to increase employee skills, loyalty and competence, making them more enthusiastic to work harder for the success of the institution.

Participant 5 alluded to that:

In order for our business to attain both long-term and short-term competitive advantage with the company, we match staff members with their skills and the position that best suits them. Based on the company's scope, the economy, technology, character of consumer and the kind of skills of the employees, differ. The structure of the work is affected by peculiarities and the kind of workers recruited for a particular task and the development structure of the task. Majority of the SMEs employers provide various chances of promotions to various kinds of positions, especially the ones that have unique skills that they provide to the company, while others get less chances.

Participant 6 avers that:

The personnel who see their administration as a supporter, and as the ones who take care of their future career developments, are likely to trust their management

and their organisation. Organisational career management is a very effective tool of human resource management, and many organisations are offering career advancement to their employees in order to satisfy them, and to increase the performance of their organisation.

Participant 8 added that:

...career development initiatives identify and nurture high-potential employees, creating a talent pipeline for future leadership roles and ensuring continuity in leadership positions. At the same time, career development fosters a culture of innovation and continuous learning within the organisation, as employees are encouraged to explore new ideas, take on challenges, and contribute to process improvements.

Participant 15 argues that:

Career development initiatives are critical in driving manufacturing SMEs' sustainable growth and success. Through empowering employees, fostering a culture of innovation, and attracting and retaining top talent, these initiatives contribute to organisational success, competitiveness and resilience in the marketplace. Career development initiatives help employees adapt to technological changes, market trends, and industry regulations by continuously upgrading their skills and knowledge to stay relevant in a dynamic business environment.

DISCUSSION

The study findings concur with those of Schein (2016), that planning of a career is a process that involves a continuous procedure of discovery developed by a person through their personal concept which is as a result of their skills, requirements, motivation and aspiration of their own system of values. Ofobruku (2015), studied how staff mentoring affected the way staff performed in selected family businesses in Abuja, Nigeria. The conclusion was that the way staff members perform depends on the level of mentoring programmes in place in the company. Additionally, the study findings concur with literature focusing on implications of career management strategies on sustainability of SMEs. Researches have indicated that career management programmes in SMEs strive to involve employees in setting their own goals and recognising their strength and weakness. It assists SMEs employees with the identification and facilitation of training needs and opportunities and harness performance, which subsequently transform sustainable development (Rudolph *et al.*, 2019; Shabeer *et al.*, 2019). Providing opportunities for career advancement and creating a positive work environment emerged as critical strategies. This includes offering competitive compensation and developing strategies for attracting and retaining top talent in the manufacturing SMEs industry. This discovery

correlates with other findings. Ombayo, Egessa and Shiamwama (2018) studied the association of career training and productivity of staff members in sugar companies in the County of Kakamega, Kenya. Correlation design was applied in determining the relationship between the variables. The association between the variables was established using Pearson's correlation. It was discovered that the more respondents were trained in SMEs, the higher their level of productivity they become. However, the study results are also embedded and inclined to Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) by Dawis and Lofquist (1984), which underpins this study. When the experience, skills and abilities of employees are enhanced, it gives an organisation an added value and a competitive edge in their industry. Ability formulated through education, equipment, promotional opportunities, training, experience, capacities (both mental and physical) and ease of task, result in employees' enhanced career advancement, places the organisation in a better competitive position and results in their steady growth.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study findings show that SMEs that strengthen career planning for employees not only provide them with growing and most potential progress opportunities, but also reduce TIs, and increase quality. Furthermore, research findings show that career development creates promotion opportunities within SMEs, provides training opportunities and skills development to improve employees' employability in the external and internal labour market. Additionally, research findings reflect that career development helps in fostering continuous improvement as well as innovation culture within SMEs. Based on the study results, conclusions drawn are that the existence of career management provides the necessary support for developing knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are essential for both SMEs and individual success.

It is also recommended that manufacturing SME owners should come up with strategies that enhance their experience and guarantee personal growth. This gives employees the necessary confidence in the firm's career growth and development. An organisation should first ensure that its employees are aware of policies of managing career development and that there is sufficient communication from supervisors on ways employees could better their career. For SMEs to attain both long- and short-term competitive advantage, they should match their staff members with their skills and position that best suit them. It is also important for matching to be

based on the company's scope, economy, technology, and character of the consumer, since skills of employees differ. It is crucial to make sure that assessing employees and company needs is done and the findings are applied in selecting the most suitable training practices and in determining the participants in the training. It is also imperative to ensure that the programmes designed for training are in line with state corporations' objectives and requirements as well as fit the strategies of the business, ensuring the programme's success. Longitudinal study needs to be done on the challenges of manufacturing SMEs in adopting career development strategies in Zimbabwe

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