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**An Examination of the Factors Employed To Manage Room Attendants' Turnover in Some Selected Three-Star Hotels in Takoradi-Ghana****Author Details: Margaret Asiedu-**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Staff turnover has become a problem for a lot of organisations especially the hospitality industries that try to have the proper staffing levels to foster the growth of the industry. The study is an attempt to examine the factors employed to manage room attendants' turnover in some selected three- star hotels in Takoradi-Ghana. Four three-star hotels were considered for the study. The research instruments that were used for the study are semi structured interview guide and a questionnaire. The sample size used for the study was sixty five respondents comprising General Managers, Human resource managers, Assistant managers and Supervisors. One of the major findings from the study was that certain policies and strategies have been put in place to combat this menace in hotels. It is recommended that staff in the hotels should be motivated to stay in the industry.*

**Key Words:** Staff turnover, Room attendant, Retention, Hospitality industry

**INTRODUCTION**

Employees are extremely crucial to the organization, since their value to the organization is essentially intangible and not easily replicated (Meaghan and Nick, 2002). A number of hotels and restaurants depend on large numbers of staff to occupy jobs that the entry requirements are low, jobs that have little interest and which people see as not having any future (Miller, Walker and Drummond, 2002). Most people take these jobs because no special skill, ability or experience is required. Staff turnover is of much importance in the hotel industry as a result of the level of contacts between customers and staff in the course of rendering services (Denvir and McMahan, 1992 cited in Madanoglu, Moreo and Leong, 2003). An industry with a high staff turnover may face serious problems and with time can lead to service problems. Again the reputation as well as the competitive position of businesses that render a lot of services such as hotels will be influenced. In the United States, the hospitality industry is one of the industries that contribute to billions of dollars economically. It is estimated that almost 88% of the US labour force is employed in the service sector of which the hospitality industry is part (Travel Industry Association of America, 1996; Stalcup, 1997 cited in Madanoglu, Moreo and Leong, 2003).

According to Hemdi and Nasuridin (2006), hotels all over the world experience high turnover. Globally, the turnover rate in the hotel industry is estimated to range from 60 percent to 300 percent annually far higher than other industries. Estimates that have been made so far indicate that, in a country like Israel, average turnover rate is 150%, with the bulk of employees leaving the industry within the first four months of employment (Hofmann, Johnson and Lefever, 2000). According to Armstrong (2006), the average permanent job in the UK lasts six years. He added that every worker is five minutes away from handing in his or her notice, and 150 working hours away from walking out of the door to take up a better offer somewhere. There is no such thing as a 'job for life' most workers are on the verge to look for greener pasture. "Furthermore with the labour force becoming increasingly mobile, fewer employees are staying with one organisation throughout their careers (Hall, 2002 cited in Mckinney, Bartlett and Mulvanney, 2007 p.51)".

Gustafson (2002), also added that the hospitality industry is filled with positions that require working late in the night, early mornings, weekends, holidays and split shift (this implies working lunch shift, break and return for dinner shift). Again the industry demands long hours, often standing and usually at a poor time of the day. It is not unusual for staff to work 50-60 or more hours per week in high season. Excessive long hours that has been perceived has been linked to turnover (Price, 1977; Crandall et al., 1996; Klara, 1997; Castagna, 1997; cited in Gustafson, 2002). Organizations invest a lot in their employees in terms of induction, maintaining and retaining them. Therefore managers must at all cost minimize employees' turnover (Parvin and Kabir, 2011). In the light of the above the researcher sought to examine the factors employed to manage room attendants' turnover in some selected three-star hotels.

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Staff turnover is an aspect of organisational life. Employees arrive in an organisation only to depart later. Staying in or leaving an organisation forms an important part of an employee's behavioural decision. This makes it a big challenge for the human resource managers as well as scholars who are interested in having an in-depth knowledge of the behaviour of individuals in an organisational setting.

The hospitality sector is one of the world's fastest growing industries. However a huge problem still exists in attracting and retaining the skilled workforce (Druce, 2007). The relationship associated with employment is undergoing some form of changes hence it implies that there should be some form of attraction, motivation, and retention of talented employees (Roeling et al., 2000 ; Turnley and Feldman 2000; Horwitz et al., 2003; cited in De Vos and Meganck, 2009). Staff turnover has now become an important issue for industries as they fight tight labour markets and skill shortages. In the view of the researcher, there are many competing definitions for turnover, and failure to arrive at an agreement has frequently diverted important discussion into semantic dispute. The common element that runs through almost all usage of the term staff turnover is in agreement to the fact that there is movement of employees out of an organisation. High turnover can be harmful to a company's productivity. If skilled workers are often leaving then the worker population contains high percentage of novice workers.

In the view of Hoffman, Johnson and Lefever (2000), the departments that are affected most by staff turnover are the housekeeping and the food and beverage departments. Since the entry requirements that are needed to obtain this job are very low, it is extremely easy to replace employees. Furthermore a lot of new hotels are springing up and these hotels are able to attract such employees from their employers and with time such employees also become "victims" of newer hotels.

According to Milman (2001), various studies that have been conducted indicate that certain factors have an impact on turnover rates. Some of these factors are demographic and personal characteristics of the employee, overall job satisfaction, the work environment and the organisation, alternative jobs available to the employee and job performance. The perception that employees have compared with other alternative opportunities at the organisational and labour market are some of the factors that can shape the decisions taken by employees to leave their jobs (Mano-Negrin, 2001). Drawing from these two ideas, the common element of availability of alternative job opportunities seem to be running through them. It can be argued that if employees get to other bright opportunities in other organisations, they are likely to leave their jobs for the new one. By contrast, Walker (2006) points out that staff turnover are not always a bad thing. He argues that some mild turnover can be beneficial because it allows staff to move up the ladder to more senior positions, giving them more opportunities. Again it allows new blood into the organisation that is new people, new ideas, enthusiasm, and motivation. All these help increase productivity in the organisation.

Al-Refaei and Omran (1992) also added that, the movement include employees either coming into the organisation (accessions and engagements) or leaving the organisation (separations or departures). They explained further by saying that, turnover excludes promotions and transfers within the organisation, deaths, retirements, retrenchments, marriages and pregnancies. Conversely, Price (1995) describes staff turnover as a social process that is very much like vertical mobility and migration. The question is what then determines staff turnover?

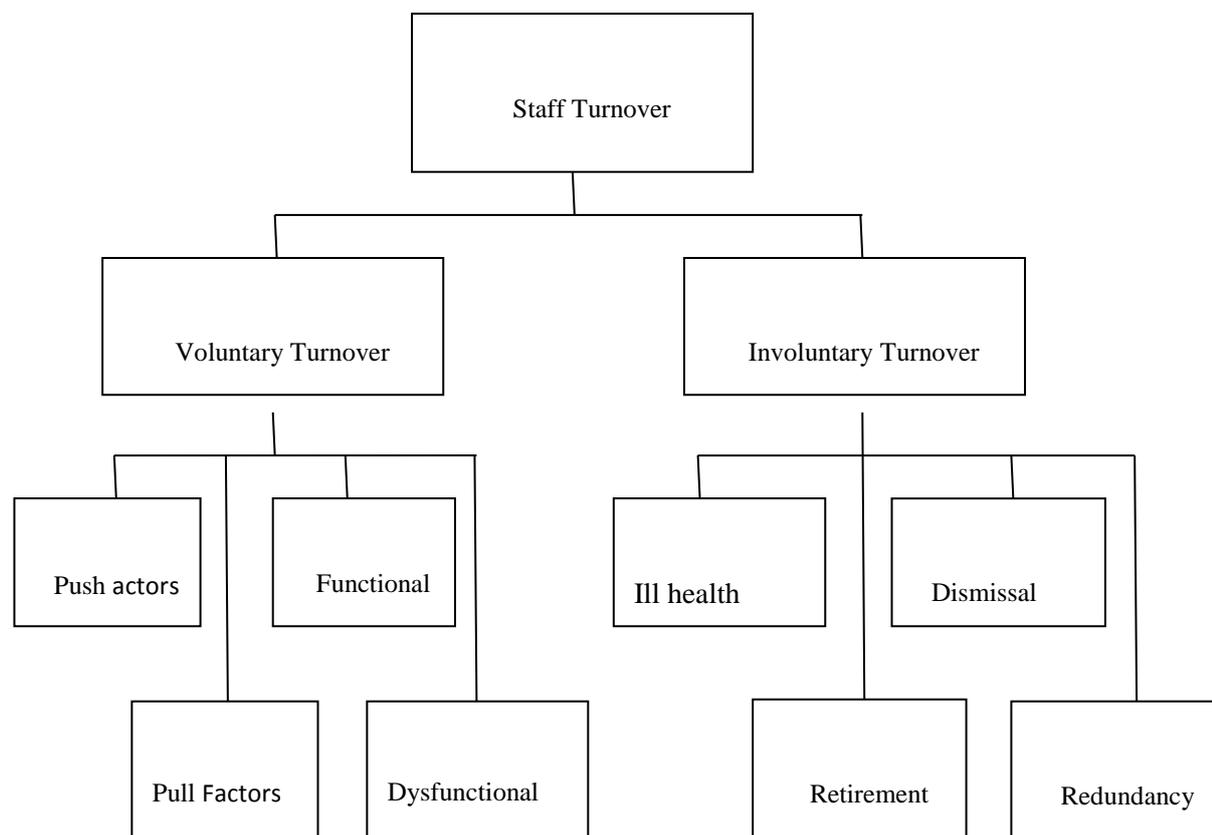
According to Jackofsky (1984, cited in Moncrief III, Hoverstad and Lucas Jr, 1989), there are two occurrences that make up staff turnover. These two things are the desire to leave and the opportunity to leave. They are of the notion that these two things must be present for turnover to take place. Conversely Mobley (1977, cited in Westaby, 2003 p.1), argued using a turnover model that explains that "employees undergo a progression of turnover thoughts, from job dissatisfaction to thoughts about quitting to eventual turnover intentions and behaviour".

In the view of Armstrong (2006), staff turnover is part of organisational functioning. In most cases employees do not just leave their jobs; they rather make a change from their present position in favour of a specific alternative occupational destination which can be within or outside the employee's present work

site. Al-Refaei and Omran (1992) expressed the view that, staff turnover is a somewhat strange phenomenon, for there are instances whereby poor performers are not the only people who leave their jobs. This is supported by a study that was conducted by Farris in 1971 which showed that 35% of the professionals who left their jobs were among the top half who were very useful to their organisation. And in one other organisation, 23% of those who left were judged to be among the top 10% in usefulness to the organisation.

Finding and keeping good employees is a growing challenge for most organisations. In the view of (Torrington, Hall and Taylor, 2005), the rate of turnover goes up when the economy is strong and there are a lot of jobs available for individuals to change employers. But during recessions staff turnover falls because only few attractive permanent positions are made available. According to Westaby (2003), as a result of the recent increase in unemployment, most employees might stay in their companies because of job security reasons. Although employees will like to leave if there were other job opportunities available, the fear of not having a secured job seem to be a strong motive in keeping some employees in their unfulfilling positions.

Unemployment is high especially among the youth in Ghana. It is now a social canker among graduate students. There are a lot of graduate students who are seeking for employment day in and day out in the formal sector (www.modernghana.com, 2012). One thing that is worth noting is that a lot of Ghanaians go into self-employment, that is small scale business ventures to enable them earn a living. In some cases others go into self-employment till they get a job that they can earn monthly income.



Source: Author’s construct, 2016

**Figure 2.1 Figure showing the various components of staff turnover**

One other way of distinguishing voluntary turnover is by using the push and pull factors. The Table 2.1, shows some push/pull factors that contribute to voluntary turnover.

**Table 2.1: Push and Pull Factors associated with voluntary turnover**

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Inadequate career opportunities (Schneider, Tucker and Scoviak, 1999).	Status of the one who earn wages in the household (Mobley et al, 1979a; cited in McBey and Karakowsky,).
Poor line management (Schneider, Tucker and Scoviak, 1999).	Family commitments (Mobley et al, 1979a; cited in McBey and Karakowsky,).
Dissatisfaction with pay (Schneider, Tucker and Scoviak, 1999).	Job alternatives that are available (Mobley et al, 1979a; cited in McBey and Karakowsky,).

Source: Author's construct, 2016

### 3 Forms of Involuntary Turnover

There are basically four forms of involuntary turnover, and one of these forms is retirement. The issue on retirement has generated much discussion over some time now. This is because in some countries the government is trying to change attitude towards early retirement (Williams, 2005). In Ghana the statutory retirement age is sixty years, but there are still some cases whereby some people are still needed in service hence they remain in the labour force on contract basis till they volunteer to retire from active service. One other type of involuntary turnover is ill health. Employees are protected against arbitrary dismissals on grounds of ill health under section 50 of the labour Act 651(2003) in Ghana.

**Table 2.2: Forms of Involuntary Turnover**

Retirement	This is when employees have reached their statutory age for retirement (or retires for other reasons).
Ill health	This may arise from accidents on the job, and affected victims are usually compensated.
Redundancy	This is when the services of employees are no longer needed.
Dismissals	This is when the services of employees are dispensed off on grounds of serious misconduct.

Source: Authors Construct, 2016

One other form of involuntary turnover is redundancy. This form of involuntary turnover is common in Ghana when companies are sold out or when businesses go into divestiture, partnership or joint venture depending on the reasons that go with such propositions. One typical example of this is the state owned Atlantic hotel in Ghana that laid off all its workers some years ago when the hotel was sold out. In Ghana, according to law (1988), under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, redundancy is presumed to occur when the services of employees are dispensed with because the employer ceases or intends to cease, to carry on business, or does not require so many employees to do a certain kind of work. Talking about dismissals some employee turnover is inevitable and it may indeed be an advantage to the organisation in minimizing planned redundancies. To defeat an unfair dismissal claim, an employer will need to demonstrate a fair reason for the dismissal, such as reaching retirement age (Williams, 2005).

### 5 Strategies for the improvement of retention rates

Employee retention has become a bigger issue than recruitment for most hotels, hence retention must be considered from a holistic perspective. According to Holbeche (1998, cited in Armstrong, 2006), some of the factors that help with the retention and motivation of high performers include, providing some form of challenge and achievement opportunities, mentors, self-assessment that are realistic and also giving

feedbacks. Torrington et al; (2005) found out that answers to the question of how best to retain staff is to provide them with a better deal, in the broadest sense. Terms and conditions play a significant role, but other factors are more important. The Table 2.3, shows areas that need to be looked at when considering how best to retain staff.

**Table 2.3: Areas That Retention Strategy should Address**

1)Pay	Problems arise because of unfair pay systems.
2)Rewards	Employees are not given the due recognition.
3)Jobs	If jobs are not rewarding there can be dissatisfaction.
4)Performance	Employees become demotivated if they are not given feedback.
5)Training	Employees feel they need to be trained or have not been trained properly to satisfy a particular demand.
6)Career development	Employees not satisfied with career prospects.
7)Commitment	Employees unable to identify themselves with the organisation, hence no desire to stay.
8)Lack of group cohesion	There are no teambuilding programmes to encourage group cohesion.
9)Dissatisfaction	Employees not satisfied with management and supervision.
10)Recruitment, selection and promotion	Turnover can arise out of poor recruitment and selection.
11) Over marketing	Giving false impressions about career and the opportunities that go with it.

Source: Adopted from Armstrong (1999, pp.76-77).

In every organisation, retention policies and programmes are meant to ensure that the organisation gets and keeps the talent it needs. Furthermore these policies are designed as a matter of fact to commit employees to remain in the organisation (Armstrong, 2006). In most cases when these policies are enacted, the end result is “a talent flow that creates and maintains the talent pool”. Employers need to bear in mind that an employment climate that encourages staff to stay should be introduced.

Hensdill (2000) reported that if hoteliers take good care of their employees, then their employees will reciprocate by taking good care of the guests. Torrington et al; (2008) found that answers to the question of how best to retain staff is to provide them with a better deal, in the broadest senses, than they perceive they would get by working for alternative employers. In that case there should be clear and effective communication, training and education opportunities, offering career advancement opportunities as well as giving treatment to employees that make them feel like a commodity rather than a cost. One example of a hotel that has scored so much in employee satisfaction and through that has achieved high levels of guest satisfaction is the Atlanta based Ritz Carlton hotel (Hensdill, 2000). The hotel offers its employees different training courses in areas such as food and beverage operations as well as other managerial areas. These are all part of the hotel’s policies to help further career development. This strategy registered with the 17,000 employees who impressed the Balridge judges in 1999 as they were all able to give answers to questions on corporate philosophies and strategies.

Furthermore giving feedbacks, reviewing pay levels on the basis of market surveys, increasing holiday time or giving birthday offs, giving praise and recognition for achievements, treating staff with openness and honesty will encourage them to continue working for the organisation (Hensdill, 2000). On the other hand Milman (2001) reported that most organisations use incentives such as pay, promotions, benefits and training to find and keep employees. He added that these efforts sometimes miss their target as research has shown that the front-line manager is the one who can attract and retain employees.

Finding why employees leave when the terminations are voluntary should be an automatic procedure for an organisation (Katz and Docherty, 1994). McConnell (1999, p.12) paints a grimmer picture by adding that “the exit interview is by nature a locking-the-barn-door-after-the-horse-has-been-stolen-action as far as the departure of the moment is concerned”. In the view of the researcher, interviews should be conducted on employees to find out why staff are leaving. It is possible that some staff might not tell the truth, but it will help handle some of the problems quickly and with so much care. Again Management can talk to staff on

departmental basis to find out about some of the good or bad things about the organisation, so that the necessary action is taken on time.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The philosophical stance taken in this study has therefore provided the direction, the logic, flow and the structure of the study. In view of this, data was collected from four hotels and from few respondents to enable the researcher interact closely with the participants. The emphasis of the study was on producing analysis and explanations from the respondents' views and opinions on factors employed to manage room attendants' turnover.

Data pertinent to the objectives were gathered by interviewing the managers using question guide, administering questionnaires to the supervisors. Three star hotels were considered for the study because the study area has three star hotels as the ones being patronised a lot by business men\women and leisure travellers. According to Christians (2000), when conducting research studies, in order to protect people's identities and the research locations, the codes of ethics should be adhered to. Thus the names of the hotels that were used for the study were not mentioned. Instead the hotels were named as hotel A, B, C and D. The respondents were made up of General managers, Human resource managers, departmental heads and supervisors. In all 65 respondents were used for the study.

The data collection methods that were used for this study are semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The researcher wanted to have a wide range of views from the managers and supervisors perspective; hence these designs were adopted to achieve that goal.

Appropriate dates and time convenient for the interviews were scheduled for each of the managers. The researcher started the interview schedules with warm up questions as a strategy to establish some form of rapport with the managers. This was followed by the main questions which were linked to the research questions that were used to address the issue of staff turnover in the hotel industry.

Because the semi-structured interview was adopted, the researcher did not go strictly according to the questions that had been put down. Open ended questions were used because the researcher wanted to encourage the managers to feel free to express their views on the questions that were posed by the researcher. Open ended questions are used to encourage the interviewee to give an extensive and developmental answer. Again it may also be used to reveal attitudes or obtain facts.

In the course of the interview session, some of the questions were restructured to give more meaning and some probing questions were asked to obtain more information. The interview sessions for the four hotels were conducted within two months based on the days and times that were agreed upon by the researcher and the respondents.

While the initial results may indeed be encouraging, this study is not without some limitations. One major problem associated with the study was the difficulty in getting access to all the three star hotels in Takoradi. Indeed the researcher would have loved to use all the three star hotels in the study area as a larger sample would have helped in the robustness of the findings.

#### 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

**Table 4.1: Efforts being made to manage room attendants' turnover**

Efforts Being Made to Manage Room Attendants' Turnover	Frequency
Pay	62
Rewards	45
Promotion	32
Training and career development	44
Dissatisfaction at the workplace	34
Commitment	43
Recruitment and Selection	25
Conducting Exit Interviews	20

Frequencies tabulated based on (Yes) responses (multiple responses)

#### RESULTS

Table 4.1 indicates that out of the total number of respondents(65) used for the study, sixty two (62) respondents agreed that an increment in the pay of the room attendants was the strategy that the management of the hotel have adopted to reduce the turnover rates in the hotels. The above figure indicates that all the hotels used for the study are using pay rates as a prime weapon to retain staff. Thus, it can be seen that pay has a role to play as a satisfier in managing staff turnover.

Giving various forms of rewards to staff was identified as the second strategy that management use to manage turnover in the hotels. This is indicated by 45 respondents as seen on the above table. The rewards that were given to the staff were in two forms, that is financial and non-financial rewards.

Training and development was rated the third strategy that the management of the hotels have adopted. This is indicated by 44 respondents as indicated on the above table. Twenty two respondents (22) out of the 44 added that training opportunities enhance commitment to an employer on the part of individual staff, making them less likely to leave in order to develop their careers elsewhere. They are of the view that promoting a work environment that fosters personal and professional growth promotes harmony and encouragement at all levels.

Again 43 respondents stated that since they want the staff to stay and identify themselves with the hotel, some of the common efforts were to introduce some soft loans with no interest to staff, refunding medical bills that are not so huge, and serving lunch as well.

Reducing dissatisfaction at the workplace was the fifth strategy that was registered amongst the efforts being made. Forty three respondents agreed that staff need to be comfortable working with their managers, supervisors and their co-workers. This is because when the staff are satisfied with their work, they would not have the intentions of quitting their jobs.

Furthermore 32 respondents ticked promotion as the strategy being used to reduce the turnover rates as well as 25 respondents who also ticked good recruitment and selection policies. Eight out of the twenty five respondents added that before the first day of work, it is important the interview and hiring process expose new hires to an explanation of the hotel; as this will enable individuals know whether the job is their best choice.

Surprisingly, the least number of respondents that is only 20 respondents had made it a habit to conduct exit interviews on their staff. This shows that the most managers and supervisors do not conduct exit interviews on their staff to know why they quit their jobs. Exit interviews should seek to establish the real reasons for

leaving, any problem or grievances, if and how the job differs from the job description and, if it needs redesigning, what kind of person should be recruited as a replacement.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study was to find out about the efforts being made to manage room attendants' turnover in three star hotels. One important thing that hoteliers want to see is that all the employees that they employed at the beginning of the year are still working for the hotel by the end of the year. The study results suggest that the hotels are making efforts to manage staff turnover in one way or the other. In addition various forms of efforts emerged from the data. Before explaining the findings in details, the researcher will discuss some common efforts that the hotels have put in place. Some of these are increase in salaries for all staff, introduction of special packages and incentives, and awards for the staff that excel at work. These are some forms of motivations that will give the staff the ego to work. As the General Manager of hotel B commented, "Because we want to pin the staff down to remain loyal to the hotel, firstly we brought their salaries to an appreciable level".

Despite the similarities that have just been pointed out, there were distinctly different ways that increment in salaries were done in the hotels used for the study. In the case of hotel A their main target was the room attendants, so they first increased their salaries and even went to the extent of reducing the number of rooms that they clean from 15 to 12, as well as employing extra staff to help reduce the workload. Alternatively hotel B increased the salaries of all the staff at a goal. In the view of the researcher the strategy that hotel A adopted on the room attendants helped reduce the rate at which the room attendants were leaving previously as stated by the General Manager in the interview. Maybe this is the reason why the rate of turnover amongst the room attendants has reduced and the problem has now shifted to the front office and the food and beverage departments as gathered from hotel A.

Again the study revealed some efforts that had been put in place by hotel A to reduce staff turnover. Some of these efforts include: encouraging and sponsoring further studies and on the job training and promoting those who have served the hotel for long. On the other hand, the policies that have been put in place to manage staff turnover in hotel B are not meant to promote staff on the number of years that they have served with the hotel, but rather on one's qualification. Again if one wants to further his/her education then the person has to sponsor him or herself. One notable thing that is worth mentioning is the fact that the Human Resource Managers of hotel B and C conduct exit interviews on the staff who quit their jobs voluntarily. Whilst the Human Resource Managers of hotel B and D do not conduct exit interview. The two General managers explained that the staff are supposed to give prior notice to management before they quit their jobs, but this is something that they do not do. The researcher can deduce from the above that, exit interviews play a very important role when the issue of staff turnover is being discussed. It aims to establish why people are leaving, and not to persuade them to stay.

An analysis of the reasons why employees are leaving should be considered and trends can also be noted. In a way if this practice had been taken seriously, the researcher is of much conviction that some of the problems related to staff turnover in the hotel would have been solved. In every organisation, especially the bigger ones, it is relatively important that the situation is examined by the Human Resource Manager to prevent any re-occurrences or forestall any further occurrences. It is rather unfortunate to point out that many managers do not really know why some staff quit their jobs, and the worse part of it is that they do not bother to know why.

Finally one other distinction among the hotels is that the staff of hotel A, C and D do not have any local union representing them in the hotel as it is the case of hotel B. That means that all their grievances are channelled through the regional union rather than a local union. In the view of the researcher, with the fast changing and turbulent employment climate, and labour asserting its rights and agitating for better management practices throughout Trade Union activities, there is the need for management to change its approach of managing its staff. At a point in time staff need to have a mouth piece that can channel their

internal problems across every now and then, other than waiting for quarterly or monthly meetings to be conveyed before this can be done.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The policies and retention strategies that have been introduced by the management of the four hotels to manage staff turnover amongst the room attendants are recommendable. This is because if the policies go down well with the staff, in the nearby future the issue of staff turnover will reduce to some extent. Again if these policies are managed well, the staff would be motivated to stay committed to the hotel.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Incentives have long been recognised by organisations as a motivational tool to reward employees for outstanding accomplishment. Companies reward achievements such as customer satisfaction, reaching financial targets and so on. Now that the hotels that were used for this study have embraced this challenge in an effort to reduce room attendants' turnover, it is recommended that it should be made a continuous or permanent programme. Management should not wait for trouble to brew before they implement policies to save the situation.

It is recommended that exit interviews be conducted by management at all times on staff that leave voluntarily. If this is done, then managers will know some of the reasons why they are leaving, and such information can be used to forestall future staff turnovers in the hotel. If this exercise is taken seriously managers can save the situation by convincing them to stay, and thus relieving the hotel from some financial and non-financial losses.

Again it is recommended that further research be carried out in a lot of hotels and in different areas to help with the robustness of the findings as only four hotels and one area were used for this study. Future research should also attempt to examine some more factors that are being used to manage staff turnover among room attendants.

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