

## **MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES FOR RETENTION: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE GAMBIA'S EXPERIENCE**

**Hassan Afees Olumide, PhD**

Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

**Muhammad, Hassan Tamedou**

Administrator in the University of The Gambia, Serekunda, The Gambia

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Motivating employees, especially skilled ones, in order to ensure their retention has remained a critical task for managers of human resources in organisations - both public and private. This is more challenging when it comes to knowledge industry like the university. The study assessed how workers in the University of The Gambia (UTG) were motivated and subsequently retained. The study relied on data obtained through questionnaire administered to selected academic and non-teaching staff of the UTG; and interviews conducted with Director of Personnel (Human Resource) and Heads of Schools/Faculties in the UTG and ten (10) former staff members of the university, who voluntarily resigned their appointments. The study found that the workers of the institution were not adequately motivated and subsequently, high rate of attrition/turnover was recorded. The study recommended that adequate attention should be given to the institution's workers motivation to save her the associated cost of employees' turnover.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Workers' motivation is crucial for optimal functioning and organisational productivity. The success of any organisation - public or private – depends largely on how it is able to attract, motivates, develops and retains its employees. Motivation is a catalyst for achieving organisational efficiency. Closely related to employees' motivation is their retention. The world over, retaining skilled employees has remained an issue of serious concern to managers of human resources, particularly in the face of ever increasing employee turnover. Today's business environment is very competitive thereby making skilled employees the major differentiating factor for most organisations. Skilled employees constitute a key to organisational growth. Both public and private organisations rely, to a large extent, on their expertise to compete favourably and gain competitive advantage in the market. They are major contributors to the efficient achievement of the organisation's goals.

Attracting and retaining the cadre of highly skilled, independent, internationally marketable and mobile individuals that constitute intellectual capital is critical for organisations. For this reason, an organisation's ability to retain productive workers is a significant component in determining its present and future success. The financial impact of productive worker turnover is under-appreciated by organisations as the hidden nature of turnover costs, such as loss of organisational memory, conceals its true magnitude (Sutherland & Jordaan, 2004).

The need to train and retrain new employees makes it more important to retain the old talented ones from getting poached. A number of factors underlie the importance of employees' retention. Among such is the turnover cost which adds large amount of money to the company's expenses. Calculating real turnover cost is difficult. This includes hiring costs, training costs and productivity loss. Equally significant is loss of company's vital information. This further reiterates the significance of retention.

Motivation and retention of critical staff remains a serious issue across organisations, whether private or public. It becomes more serious when it comes to the knowledge industry like the University system. This is partly so because it takes a relatively long time to train a University staff, academic in particular; and partly because a highly qualified academic carries a great market value. This is why most Universities often attach conditionality, such as bonding, to training of their staff. The University of The Gambia (UTG), one of the few Universities and the only public University in The Gambia, has continued to experience her share of staff retention crisis. The experience has been such that the staff, academic and non-teaching, involved leave the University after having been trained by the UTG. This raises the question of how much are the staff of the UTG motivated that they shall be willing to remain with the University? This explains the necessity of a study of this nature.

## **2.0 Statement of Research Problem**

Job satisfaction is a key element of employees' retention, which is possible only by making the employee feel comfortable physically and psychologically (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Replacing skilled employees can be problematic. Managers of human resources in both the public and private organisations need to be able to correctly identify and apply motivational variables that can influence employees to stay in the organisation (Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). The questions that confronts social researchers are “why do people leave?” and “why do they stay?” Over the years, the traditional answer to these questions is that people stay if they are satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organisations; and leave if they aren't. For instance, Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001) observe that satisfaction and commitment have consistent, statistically significant, and negative relationships with turnover.

Different studies have attempted to provide answers to the question of workers' retention but with varying outcomes. For example, Shoaib, Noor, Tirmizi, and Bashir (2009) hold the position that attractive pay packages are one of the vital factors of staff retention as it fulfils the financial and material needs of the employee. However plausible this position, while it may not be outrightly refuted, other studies have shown that many factors aside financial inducements determine employees' retention. According to Johnshrud and Rosser (2002), salary has never been found to be the main motivator for workers and hence, it does not affect their decision to leave or stay. Armstrong (2010) in a similar vein argues that though salary is the main extrinsic reward and it provides the carrot that most employees want, its motivation does not have intrinsic meaning. Moreover, people who are motivated by money may find their tasks less pleasurable. Beardwell and Claydon (2007) corroborate this as they observe an increasing realisation that high pay cannot be sufficient for the retention of employees. A host of other factors that motivate and retain employees, as found in existing literature, include work overload and role ambiguity, marriage, honoured employee status, relative pay (both inter-firm and intra-firm wages), speed of promotion, and economic cycles (Ing-Chung, Hao-Chieh, & Chih-Hsun, 2005), and attachment of more importance to career path than organisational loyalty (Kassa, 2015).

The multiplicity of studies notwithstanding, motivation and employee retention remains an inconclusive debate. While some studies have shown how workers' motivation promotes or hinder productivity, some have gone further to provide explanations for workers' turnover and how to address it. Despite these efforts, little or no attention has been specifically given to motivation and retention of university workers, especially in developing economies, where the universities are comparatively disadvantaged in competition with their developed economies counterpart. This study therefore set out to contribute to literature by assessing how workers' motivational strategies adopted in the University of the Gambia have fared in retaining the valuable workers. That is, investigate the effect of motivation on retention of staff in the University of The Gambia.

### **3.0 Literature Review**

Contemporary business environment has become highly competitive that having qualified and talented pool of human resources are the major differentiating factor for most organisations. Human resource has long been seen as a crucial resource in organisations and one of the critical and effective components of human resource management is employee motivation – that is, maintaining an effective and productive workforce. Motivation is an internal arousal which directs and maintains achieving set goal (Ololube, 2005). This definitional exposition has not only stated the meaning of motivation but made inputs on the role of motivation to the worker. The concept of motivation is abstract as different strategies produce dissimilar results at various times and there is no single strategy that can produce guaranteed favourable results all the times (Halepota, 2005). There are several motivation factors identified which include, “reward, promotion, recognition from managers, challenging work, good working conditions, good work schedules, job security” (Chiang & Canter, 2008).

Motivation represents a critical component of measuring the extent of employee's commitment to their employer (Stoke, 1999 in Tella, Ayeni, & Popoola (2007). This covers the causes and sustaining of a patterned behaviour that is considered beneficial to the organisation. According to Stoke, motivation is a tool at the disposal of managers to awaken the spirit of performance in their employees. When Human resource managers become aware

of what drives the employees, then they have the power to channel and re-direct their attitude towards a desired direction to the benefit of the organisation. In essence, motivation represents the process of appealing to the needs of the employees in return for an enhanced performance. This is succinctly captured by Olajide (2000), who holds that motivation is “a goal-directed, and therefore cannot be outside the goals of any organisation whether public, private, or non-profit”.

Various studies have provided varying answers to the question of workers’ retention. For example, Shoaib, Noor, Tirmizi, and Bashir (2009) maintain the position that attractive pay packages are one of the vital factors of staff retention as it fulfils the financial and material needs of the employee. However, there have been mixed results in empirical findings on the role of salary on employee’s decision to stay or leave. Salary has never been exposed as the main motivator for workers and hence, it does not affect their decision to leave or stay (Johnshrud & Rosser 2002). Financial reward in form of pay or some other form of remuneration, Armstrong (2010) argues, is the main extrinsic reward and provides the carrot that most employees want but its motivation does not have intrinsic meaning. Moreover, people who are motivated by money may find their tasks less pleasurable. Dibble (1999) has earlier observed that managers of various organisations suspect that financial reward is the underlining factor of retaining highly skilled professionals. He opines that although money is a major attractive factor that draws people to organisations compared to other factors, it does not guarantee their retention. He however concludes that organisations must be competitive with rewards and remuneration while recruiting employees but should understand that pay and remuneration packages alone cannot ascertain the retention of employees.

Beardwell and Claydon (2007) corroborate the above as they observe an increasing realisation that high pay is not sufficient for the retention of employees. As such, measures like profit sharing, a secure career, better communication among others are usually offered to retain employees in sectors with highly skilled employees. In a study conducted by Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2013) on labour turnover and retention in New Zealand, they find that reason for job change is multidimensional as no one factor suffices to explain employee turnover. While they find interesting work as the strongest attractor and retainer in the labour

market, their results also reveal that there is a strong staff expectation that management should make personnel decisions using merit as the benchmark, demonstrate that extrinsic rewards (such as pay, promotion and security) play a role in both employee retention and turnover, lend support to the view that there is growing concern with work-life balance, and underline the retention value of good relationships with co-workers and supervisors.

The effectiveness of employee retention is realised when a systematic and concerted effort is made to create and foster an ambience that promotes and supports employees to remain employed by maintaining strategies and practices in place that address their divergent needs. Sandy and Kumar (2011) see employee retention as the process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with an organisation for a maximum period or until the completion of a project. Although employee retention has become a herculean task, it remains beneficial to organisations and the employees. They further emphasised that a talented employee would remain open to numerous opportunities. If a person is dissatisfied with their present job, they may switch to another of their choice. The top organisations rank highest among their peers because they prioritise the welfare and other issues related to their employees which keep their human resources glued to the organisation. Employees' decision to stay or leave an organisation is based on various reasons which may be personal or professional. The central determinant, according to Sandy and Kumar, is job satisfaction.

In knowledge-based organisations, in the recent times, the fact that knowledge-based professionals exhibit a lower level of organisational commitment when compared with the higher commitment displayed for their colleagues has become popular. Intra-workers' loyalty is found to be stronger among the knowledge-based professionals than to "an amorphous, distant, and sometimes threatening corporate entity" (Feldman in Capelli, 2000). This kind of displayed loyalty is rooted in informal ties among the employees and this in the end may propel employee cohesion and the platform for an enhanced performance. This can equally reduce the rate of employee turnover especially as it relates to skill deficiency rather than as it may have to do with accumulated social capital wasted through voluntary turnover. Therefore, tackling this menace in the knowledge sector requires that the problem of

management and retention of organisational investment in the employees in general be prevented through the available informal unions.

In a study, Rosser (2004) finds that financial reward and remuneration is an important personal issue which may influence the satisfaction of academic members in colleges and universities. Though, much of the overall study on faculty members shows that financial reward or remuneration in form of salary is not the most significant contributor to their work life and satisfaction, salary is one of the main factors that made faculty members leave their institution. Comm and Mathaisel's (2003) study on faculty workload and compensation of Australian academics showed that 51% of the academic members of the faculty disbelieved that they were fairly compensated in comparison with their contemporaries in other similar institutions. As a result, 50% of the respondents declared the necessity of working outside their institutions to complement their income by earning extra income.

It is imperative to note that talents that have competencies are integral to the survival of an organisation and these talents are difficult to retain because they often prioritise their individual career path than organisational loyalty, which in turn can result in voluntary turnover (De Vos & Meganck, 2009). Universities - public or private – are training grounds for individuals undertaking various comprehensive courses to translate theory into practice (Adonike, 2011). The fundamental goal of knowledge-oriented institutions like universities is to provide a repertoire of human resources which are meant to meet the employee needs of both private and public sectors for national development which helps in the attainment of sustainable development in the long-run.

Narrating Kenya's public universities experience, Tettey (2006) observes that the main concern in the public universities in Kenya is the rapid expansion amid declining finance, which has exposed the universities to challenges in terms of physical facilities, overcrowding and staff disillusioned due to several factors including inadequate and non-competitive salary package, and dissatisfaction with non-monetary factors such as poor conditions of work, heavy workload, institutional governance among others. These factors, according to Tettey, have contributed to the exodus of teaching staff to the private sector or overseas as they seek

better opportunities even though these institutions have heavily invested in their training and development. Public universities in Kenya have experienced consistent expansion in their enrolment. Public school enrolment regarding universities constitute regular and self-sponsored students over the last decade without corresponding increase in their quantity of staff and replacement of departed members owing to numerous reasons as turnover and brain-drain.

The most challenging situation occasioned by increased enrolment in public universities, as observed by Kipkebut (2010), is staff shortage which has forced universities to recruit from each other. This recruitment scenario is known as poaching, with the most vulnerable lecturers being those whose promotion is tarried by their respective universities either as a result of their inability to meet the promotion requirements or the unavailability of positions in the establishment. Statutes and policies (e.g. promotion and training policies, recruitment policies among others) guide the public universities; however, academic staff disillusionment has been the resultant effect of the way these policies are implemented.

Universities are not exempted from the debacle of staff retention particularly regarding the academic staff; meanwhile, the prioritisation of the retention of the core employees of this institution is expedient. Indeed, the challenge of academic staff retention is a global phenomenon which affects both developing and developed countries. A survey of full-time faculty members in the United States in 2000 showed that over 40% of them had contemplated changing careers (Sanderson *et al.*, 2000). Also, according to a study carried out in Australian Higher Education institutions, not less than 68% of the academic personnel pointed out that they wished to leave higher education (Yousaf, 2010).

In South African higher education institutions, available data indicate that a substantial number (between 5% and 18%) of academic staff leave higher education institutions (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). It is established that several qualified members of the academic from public universities emigrate every year and replacement of departing staff is impossible in some universities owing to financial constraints. In several cases, universities have discovered that the graduates sent abroad for training usually opt not to return or join the private sector or



resign shortly after returning in order to search for better remuneration and condition of work. The issue of brain-drain among academics is real within the public universities and this influences their ability to retain staff. Additionally, another common phenomenon is the internal brain drain which entails the movement of highly skilled professionals from higher education institutions to other sectors within the same country (GoK, 2006).

#### **4.0 Methodology**

The Gambia is a small West African country surrounded by the Republic of Senegal on all sides, except western outlet to the Atlantic Ocean. According to the 2013 census conducted by The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS), the total population of The Gambia is 1,835,389. Founded in 1999, University of The Gambia is a public higher education institution located in the small city of Serekunda, Banjul. Officially accredited and recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Gambia. University of the Gambia (UTG) is a coeducational higher education institution (enrolment range: 2,000-2,999 students). It is the only public university and one of the few universities in the country. University of The Gambia (UTG) offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees such as bachelor degrees in several areas of study.

The study population (389) consisted of 306 academic staff and 83 administrative staff members of the UTG. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected with use of questionnaire and in-depth interviews. A total of 195 copies of questionnaire (covering 50% of the population) were administered to respondents using a 2-stage sampling procedure. At the first stage, copies of questionnaire were distributed among the schools/faculties using probability proportional to size technique. With this, each school/faculty received copies corresponding to its size within the study population. The distribution of the copies of questionnaire is as follow: Academic staff distributed by schools/faculty as: Agriculture, 11; Journalism, 2; Education, 7; Arts & Sciences, 66; ICT, 12; Business & Public Administration, 25; Law, 8; School of Medicine & Allied Health Sciences, 23; Administrative Staff, 41

At the second stage, respondents were drawn from each school/faculty and administrative staff using simple random sampling technique. This gave every member of the study population an equal chance of been selected since the subject of study (motivation and retention) affect staff members equally. In-depth interviews were conducted with Director of Personnel (Human Resource) and Heads of Schools/Faculties in the UTG. Also, using convenience sampling, ten (10) accessible former staff members of the UTG, who voluntarily resigned their jobs were interviewed. Secondary data, on the other hand, were collected from sources including official documents of the UTG, journal articles, books and internet resources. Data collected were analysed with use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics include use of percentages and measures of central tendency (mean), while *t*-test was used in testing the hypothesis.

## **5.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

### **5.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

A total of 195 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents drawn from eight (8) schools/faculties in the University of The Gambia (UTG). Out of these, 166, copies, representing 85%, were returned completed. Six (6) characteristics of the respondents were discussed in the section. They were: respondents' ages, sex, educational qualification, staff category, school/faculty and years spent in the service of UTG.

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The age distribution of the respondents showed that majority (74.1%) of the respondents fell in the middle age bracket of 26 to 45 years of age, while 22.9% of them were above 45 years. Only 3% of the respondents were below 25 years. In all, 77.1% were under 45 years of age. An implication of this was that most workers, academic and administrative, in the UTG still had age advantage that could make them easily move to other organisations if not motivated to stay. The gender distribution as shown in table 1 was male biased. That was simply a reflection of gender structure in the UTG. With 31.3% of the respondents being female, the distribution could be said to be representative of the overall gender distribution of the UTG.

In respect of educational qualification of respondents, table 1 show that overwhelmingly, 97% of the respondents were educated up to tertiary level. Although that was expected as they were mostly academic staff, the simple implication of the distribution was that the respondent understood the contents and substance of the questionnaire and their responses would therefore be reliable. As shown in the table, 70% of the respondents were academic members of staff as the remaining 30% were administrative staff. The distribution was expectedly academic dominant as a university staff strength would be expected to be dominated by academics. The 30% administrative staff in the distribution provided a balance of perceptions for the study.

The UTG had eight (8) schools/faculties. In the administration of the questionnaire, administrative staff members were separated from academic. That brought the distribution to Nine (9). As shown in the distribution in table 1, Arts and Sciences had highest number of respondents of 35.5%. This was followed by the administrative staff with 18.1%. Business and Public Administration came third with 14.5% of the respondents. School of Journalism with 1.2% of the respondents came last. The distribution by schools/faculties reflected proportional representation, whereby each school/faculty had a number of respondents corresponding to its size within the staff population.

The last characteristic of the respondents considered, as shown in table 1, was number of years spent in the service of the University of the Gambia. The distribution showed that majority (58.3%) of the respondents had spent 5 years and below. That was followed by another 30.5% that had spent between 6 and 10 years in the service, leaving only 11.2% that had spent above 10 years in the service. What the distribution simply implied was that workers hardly stayed long in the service of UTG.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	
Age	18 – 25	5	3.0	
	26 – 45	123	74.1	
	Above 45	38	22.9	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Sex	Male	114	68.7	
	Female	52	31.3	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Highest Educational Qualification	Secondary	-	-	
	Tertiary	161	97.0	
	Vocational	-	-	
	Others	5	3.0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Staff Category	Academic	116	69.9	
	Administrative	50	30.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
School/Faculty	Agriculture	8	4.8	
	Journalism	2	1.2	
	Education	7	4.2	
	Arts & Sciences	59	35.5	
	ICT	10	6.0	
	Business & Public Administration	24	14.5	
	Law	6	3.6	
	Medicine & Allied Health Sciences	20	12.0	
	Administrative Staff	30	18.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	Number of years spent in the service of UTG	1 – 5	88	58.3
		6 – 10	46	30.5
11 – 15		7	4.6	
16 – 20		10	6.6	
Above 20		-	-	
<b>Total</b>		<b>151</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Fieldwork 2019

## **5.2 The Effect of Motivation on Retention of Staff in the University of The Gambia**

To achieve the main objective of the paper, a section of the questionnaire administered to staff of the UTG was dedicated to asking questions relating to their willingness to remain in the UTG job. In addition, ten (10) former members of staff of the UTG, who voluntarily left their jobs were interviewed with a view to knowing what made them leave and how attrition could be reduced to the barest minimum in the future. A total of fourteen (14) questions were raised in the questionnaire. Tables 2a and 2b showed the responses. Four options were given to each question for respondents to choose from. A four-level rating scale was adopted to measure the effect of motivation on staff retention. Where a respondent chose the first option which was the best rated, the institution scored the maximum 3 points on that question. Where a respondent chose the second option, the institution scored 2 points; and where the third option was chosen, the institution scored 1 point. Lastly, where a respondent chose the last option, the institution scored no (0) point. At the end, a mean score was obtained for the UTG on each question based on responses to that question.

The first question as shown on table 2a asked “How happy are you at work in the UTG? Where a respondents was very happy, such a worker would likely stay long in the job. Conversely, a very unhappy worker would likely quit at any available opportunity. A mean score of 1.8 over maximum obtainable 3 points indicated that UTG staff was happy at work. As shown in the table, 74.6% were either happy or very happy. That was against the 25.4% that were either unhappy or very unhappy.

They were asked “How comfortable would you be to refer someone you like to work in the UTG?” As shown in table 2a, 76.3% were either comfortable or very comfortable to refer someone they like to work in the UTG. On the other side, 23.7% were either uncomfortable or very uncomfortable to refer someone they like to work in the UTG. A mean score of 1.8 still indicated that the working environment was not bad for the workers to discourage other people from working.

On how much of understanding of the career or promotion path the respondents had, table 2a showed that 46.2% of the respondents claimed they had very clear understanding of their career path, while 34.8% had little understanding of their career path. The 19% of the respondents had vague or no understanding of their career path. A mean score of 2.2 here indicated a high score for the institution. Respondents were further asked to rate their work-life balance in the UTG. On this, 21.5% claimed they very balanced work-life as 54.4% claimed their work-life was fairly balanced. A mean score of 2.0 here showed a good standing for the institution as far as work-life balance was concerned.

“How valued do you feel you are in the UTG?” was another questioned asked. To this, 16.4% of the respondents, as shown in table 2a, felt they were highly valued as 58.5% felt they were moderately valued. A mean score of 1.8 indicated that the respondents felt they were valued by the institution. Closely related to this was the question of how frequently do respondents receive recognition from their superior. In this aspect, the responses in table 2a showed a low frequency of recognition of the respondents by their superior. With a mean score of 1.3, it implied that recognitions were rarely received from the superior in the UTG. This could demotivate workers.

Another question asked was “how confident are you that you'll be able to reach your full potential in the UTG?” The common response here was a “moderate confidence”. As shown in table 2a, 41.6% of the respondents were moderately confident as 24.8% were very confident that they would be able to reach their full potential in the UTG. A mean score of 1.7 was obtained here.

**Table 2a: Perceived Effect of Motivation on Retention of Staff in the UTG (a)**

Questions	Respondents' Answers	Frequency	Percent	Mean Score (3)
How happy are you at work in the UTG?	Very happy	8	5.0	<b>1.8</b>
	Happy	112	69.6	
	Unhappy	35	21.7	
	Very Unhappy	6	3.7	
	<b>Total</b>	161	100.0	
How comfortable would you be to refer someone you like to work in the UTG?	Very Comfortable	19	11.9	<b>1.8</b>
	Comfortable	103	64.4	
	Uncomfortable	29	18.1	
	Very Uncomfortable	9	5.6	
	<b>Total</b>	160	100.0	
How much of understanding of your career or promotion path do you have?	Very Clear Understanding	73	46.2	<b>2.2</b>
	Little Understanding	55	34.8	
	Vague Understanding	22	13.9	
	No Understanding	8	5.1	
	<b>Total</b>	158	100.0	
How would you rate your work-life balance?	Very Balanced	34	21.5	<b>2.0</b>
	Fairly Balanced	86	54.4	
	Unbalanced	37	23.4	
	Highly Unbalanced	1	.6	
	<b>Total</b>	158	100.0	
How valued do you feel you are in the UTG?	Highly valued	26	16.4	<b>1.8</b>
	Moderately Valued	93	58.5	
	Weakly Valued	29	18.2	
	Poorly Valued	11	6.9	
	<b>Total</b>	159	100.0	
How frequently do you receive recognition from your superior?	Very Frequent	13	8.1	<b>1.3</b>
	Frequent	50	31.1	
	Infrequent	63	39.1	
	Very Infrequent	35	21.7	
	<b>Total</b>	161	100.0	
How confident are you that you'll be able to reach your full potential in the UTG?	Very Confident	40	24.8	<b>1.7</b>
	Moderately Confident	67	41.6	
	A Little Confident	26	16.1	
	Not Confident	28	17.4	
	<b>Total</b>	161	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork 2019

When asked how long they foresaw themselves working in the UTG, only 11.8%, as shown in table 2b, thought of staying till retirement in the UTG. Though majority (62.5%) thought of working fairly long, unwillingness to work till retirement was an indication that they were in the UTG expecting a better offer elsewhere and quit.

On how comfortable the respondents felt giving upwards feedback to their superior, 77.4% of them were either comfortable or very comfortable to do that while 17% were uncomfortable and 5.7% felt very uncomfortable. A mean score of 1.9 indicated a high level of willingness by the respondents in giving upwards feedback to their superior. Giving upwards feedback to superior could not be of usefulness unless the management was willing to take the feedback with seriousness. The respondents were thus asked how seriously they thought the management of UTG took their feedback. Unfortunately the responses shown in table 2b revealed that the management didn't take the feedback seriously. Less than 1% (0.7%) of the respondents thought the management of UTG took their feedback very seriously as 18.8% thought the feedbacks were taken seriously. A mean score 0.9 in this aspect was a very poor score.

Table 2b also revealed that transparency in the UTG management was poor. With 25.8% of the respondents claiming there was a little transparency and another 35.8% claiming that the UTG management was not transparent, the integrity of the management became questionable. A mean score of 1.1 implied a poor level of transparency.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of respect and tolerance they felt co-workers gave each other in the UTG. Table 2b showed that 20.5% of them rated the level of respect as high while 64.6% rated it as moderate. A mean score of 2.1 here meant respect and tolerance for co-workers in the UTG was very encouraging. Furtherance to the issue of respect and tolerance among workers, the respondents were asked to rate the level of fun they derived from their job, as that could go a long to determine how long one would be willing to remain in a job. Table 2b showed that 15% of the respondents derived high fun while 50.3% derived



moderate fun. Another 24.2% derived little fun as 10.5% claimed they derived no fun from the job.

“If you were given the chance, how comfortable would you be to reapply to your current job in the UTG?” Answering this question, table 2b showed that 41.2% of the respondents claimed they would be comfortable to reapply to their current job in the UTG, another 7.4% claimed they would be very comfortable. Conversely, majority (39.2% and 12.2%) claimed they would either be uncomfortable or very uncomfortable. A mean score of 1.4 was relatively poor.

Finally, an open question was asked that “hypothetically, if you were to quit UTG job tomorrow, what would your reason(s) be?” Various reasons were advanced by the respondent that could make them quit the UTG job earlier than expected. Prominent among the reasons given were: poor motivation, specifically in terms of remuneration and career/capacity development; absence of encouragement for research, especially funding; and availability of a better offer elsewhere.

What the foregoing analysis implied was that while the respondents enjoyed certain conditions that could retain them in the UTG, there were others that could as well, sooner than expected, made them quit the job. With a grand mean of 1.68 out of maximum obtainable 3 points, the UTG management could retain its valuable workers by improving on certain areas and could as well suffer attrition if the conditions were allowed to degenerate.

**Table 2b Perceived Effect of Motivation on Retention of Staff in the UTG (b)**

Questions	Respondents' Answers	Frequency	Percent	Mean Score (3)
How long do you foresee yourself working in the UTG from now?	Till Retirement	18	11.8	<b>1.8</b>
	Fairly Long	95	62.5	
	A Short Period	30	19.7	
	Very Short Period	9	5.9	
	<b>Total</b>	152	100.0	
How comfortable do you feel giving upwards feedback to your superior?	Very Comfortable	26	16.4	<b>1.9</b>
	Comfortable	97	61.0	
	Uncomfortable	27	17.0	
	Very Uncomfortable	9	5.7	
	<b>Total</b>	159	100.0	
How seriously do you think the management of UTG takes your feedback?	Very Seriously	1	.7	<b>0.9</b>
	Seriously	28	18.8	
	A Little Seriously	76	51.0	
	Not Seriously	44	29.5	
	<b>Total</b>	149	100.0	
How transparent do you feel the UTG management is?	Highly Transparent	5	3.1	<b>1.1</b>
	Fairly Transparent	56	35.2	
	A Little Transparent	41	25.8	
	Not Transparent	57	35.8	
	<b>Total</b>	159	100.0	
Rate the level of respect and tolerance you feel co-workers give each other in the UTG	High	33	20.5	<b>2.1</b>
	Moderate	104	64.6	
	Little	24	14.9	
	None	-	-	
	<b>Total</b>	161	100.0	
Rate your level of fun derived from your job	High Fun	23	15.0	<b>1.7</b>
	Moderate Fun	77	50.3	
	Little Fun	37	24.2	
	No Fun	16	10.5	
	<b>Total</b>	153	100.0	
If you were given the chance, how comfortable would you be to reapply to your current job in the UTG?	Very Comfortable	11	7.4	<b>1.4</b>
	Comfortable	61	41.2	
	Uncomfortable	58	39.2	
	Very Uncomfortable	18	12.2	
	<b>Total</b>	148	100.0	
<b>Grand Mean</b>				<b>1.68</b>

Source: Fieldwork 2019

To complement the questionnaire, two groups of people were interviewed. The first group consisted of the Director of Personnel and Heads of Schools/Faculties in the UTG. The second group consisted of ten (10) former staff of the UTG, who voluntarily quit their jobs. For the first group of people, the only question they were asked, relating to this section of the study, was how would they describe staff retention situation in the UTG? The popular submission was that staff retention in the UTG was poor and had remained a problem for the management. The following were some of the responses. “Attrition rate is very high. The UTG is losing staff members to the police and the Management Development Institute (MDI). The UTG sponsors people to attend non-Western institutions because they believe people fail to return when they go to the West. There is little motivation.”, “Staff retention is poor. Some staff members travel and fail to return due to lack of comfort at the UTG.”, “Those who stay do it out of love for their jobs, but the UTG does not do much in this regard.”, “It is a problem. Some people express dissatisfaction only after they have completed their studies sponsored by the UTG. Management is doing its best to motivate staff.”

For the second group, questions bothering on the reasons behind their leaving UTG job as well as comparison between their former and current jobs were asked. “How long did you work in the UTG?” was the first question asked. Out of the 10 respondents, only two worked in the UTG for more than four years. The others spent between two and four years. This was an indication that attrition rate was high in the UTG, consequently implying a failure to motivate and retain valuable workers.

The question that followed was why did they leave UTG job? Responding to this, the former UTG workers gave varying reasons for quitting the job but an underlying and common factor was absence of motivation. For instance, one of them said “There is no clear policy to retain young academics to realize their full potentials. The kind of strategy necessary to promote research was not readily available.” Another claimed “I left for various reasons, two of them being lack of support and lack of opportunities.” In a similar context, another respondent claimed “...the main reason is that I wanted to work at GBoS was because I fit better because of my field of study. Another reason is lack of motivation.” Other reasons alluded to include poor remuneration, absence of job security as workers were employed on contract basis; and

irregular promotion of workers. The reasons went on and on, but all came down to poor motivation.

When asked how happy they were while working with the UTG, it was interesting to hear that almost all of them were happy principally owing to the fact that they loved the university job. Some of the comments were “I loved teaching. It was my passion. I was happy when I came back from studies but became dissatisfied due to discrimination”, “I loved the job as a lecturer. It is rewarding to interact with students and colleagues in the academia.”, “I liked the job. It was good for me”, “I loved teaching. It was my passion”, “I was happier there than at the Ministry of Higher Education. I had more benefits and free time at the UTG.” A possible deduction from these comments was that the category of workers could have been retained with little encouragement and motivation.

The former UTG workers were further asked “now that you have left, how comfortable would you be to refer someone you like to work in the UTG?” A common response to the question was that they would only reluctantly refer people, especially those that had alternatives, to work in the UTG. Similar responses were also given when asked that if given another chance, how comfortable would they be to reapply for their former jobs in the UTG? The popular response was that they wouldn’t be comfortable. However, asking how valued did they feel they were in the UTG? Most of the interviewees felt they were valued, especially by their colleagues.

“Were you ever confident that you could reach your full potential in the UTG, assuming you did not leave?” That was yet another question put across to each of the former staff during the interviews. To this, mixed responses were received. While some were optimistic, others felt otherwise. For instance, someone’s response went thus “Of course yes. I think I would realise my potentials if stayed. I would be given the chance to do PhD studies free of charge.” Another similar response was “I am confident I would be able to do PhD studies.” On the contrary, a response was “I may not. Motivation is key, and it is lacking there. I am now given free hand and encouraged. The UTG de-motivates staff.” Another remarked “I didn’t see that much encouragement. Some people there lack professionalism.”

When asked that if given the opportunity to correct any administrative lapse in the UTG, what would they try to correct? Most responses revolved around remuneration and incentives, which pointed to the major reason behind their quitting the UTG job. When asked what they found in their new jobs that were missing in the UTG. Their answers included: regular promotion, career opportunities, improved research potentials, better staff trainings among others.

“In terms of remuneration and other benefits, how competitive is UTG among other organisations in the country and sub region?” The interviewees were unanimous that UTG was not competitive, neither was it comparable to many other institutions in the country and sub region. When asked to assess management-workers relationship in the UTG? The popular view was that the relationship was not cordial enough and there was a need for improvement. But on the level of respect and tolerance among co-workers in the UTG, a very high rating was given by all the former workers interviewed.

A final question asked was what would any of them do assuming he/she found himself/herself a in position of authority in the UTG, to ensure workers, especially the good ones, are retained. The responses were simply the need to correct all the inadequacies they earlier raised.

### **5.3 Test of Hypothesis**

A hypothesis was tested in respect of the effect of motivation on workers’ retention in the UTG. Thus, the null hypothesis was stated as given below.

H<sub>0</sub>: The motivational strategies adopted in the University of The Gambia did not result in a significant level of retention.

To test the hypothesis, the mean scores obtained across the 14 issues raised in tables 2a and 2b were used against an adopted test value of 2 points using one-sample *t*-test. Given a maximum obtainable 3 points, a test value of 2 points was considered satisfactory, such that

where the mean scores obtained across the 14 assessment criteria were not significantly below 2 points, a significant level of workers' retention would have been attained.

Tables 3 and 4 respectively showed one-sample statistics and on-sample test. Table 3 showed the number (14) of sample (issues) denoted with N, the mean (1.6786), standard deviation and standard error of mean. As shown in table 4, a *t*-obtained of -3.211 with 13 degree of freedom was significant at 0.007 level. Specifically, the mean score is -0.32143 less than the test value. Because the significant value of .007 (2-tailed) is less than .05 (95% confidence level), it would be concluded that the mean score of 1.6786 was significantly far away from our test value of 2; and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that “the motivational strategies adopted in the University of The Gambia did not result in a significant level of retention” was therefore accepted.

**Table 3 One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Retention	14	1.6786	.37453	.10010

**Table 4 One-Sample t-Test**

Test Value = 2						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Retention	-3.211	13	.007	-.32143	-.5377	-.1052

## 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Owing to the poor motivation, retention of staff in the UTG could not be guaranteed. Consequently, the motivational strategies adopted in the University did not result in a significant level of retention. A high rate of turnover was recorded by the UTG. An overwhelming majority (88%) of the people sampled for the study had spent below ten (10) years in the institution, meaning that workers were not used to staying long in the UTG job. It was also found that majority of the former staff of the UTG interviewed spent only five years or less before they voluntarily resigned their appointments owing to poor motivation.

Specifically, the study found absence of job security and non-competitive remuneration compared to other institutions in the country among other factors resulting in high rate of attrition in the UTG. There was the need to overhaul the motivational strategies of the institution by addressing key issues raised in the study.

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