Exploratory study on challenges associated with short-term employment in **Ghana**

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Abstract

Globally, the use of temporary workers is assuming an alarming proportion and is cutting across industries from manufacturing to services, construction workers, registered nurses, bankers and information technology expects. Industries using temporary workers has surge considerably due to increased global competition and the imperative management strategy to reduce business costs in order to stay competitive on a turbulent business environment. The study examined the effects of short-term employment on an organization. The researchers employed the convergent parallel mixed method approach in an attempt to describe, explain and interpret the challenges of short-term employment contract in Ghana. This involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative tools with a study population drawn from three organizations in Accra and having a sample size of 14 respondents for the quantitative and 7 participants for the qualitative study. Though exploratory in nature, certain patterns that relate to challenges of short-term employment emerged from the analysis that centered on emotional well-being, job opportunities, financial security, job security and a sense of belongingness. These factors include insufficient socialisation, incidence of injustice arising out of summarily dismissals, marginalisation from decision-making, prospects for permanent work, lower wages and tenure, lower tolerance for inequity, low levels of commitment and curbed motivation. It is plausible that chaotic Human Resource Practices are underway with this phenomenon of Short-Term Employees in Corporate Ghana.

1. Introduction

In the wake of global competition, posit that western businesses had to respond to the challenges of advanced technology [1]. Consequently, the business inclination is to focus their energies on core activities and buy in other functions and services. This has imposed a further inclination for organisations to reduce in size (that is, to downsize) and to buy services from other organisations (that is outsource), in the belief that this is more efficient in terms of cost reduction and therefore more rational. Thus, the two basic push factors behind the growth of contract employment are cost reduction or rationalisation and the strategic shift in the way organisations are managing their businesses.

The incidence of high unemployment is a pivotal drawback to efficient use of resources and when this persist, people's disposal incomes are stressed during such periods. The difficult economic stress situations can have the aggregate effect of affecting people's emotions and family lives. It has also been realised from research that employee productivity is a function of motivation and all these thrive in a work environment that is conducive and give the employee the needed satisfaction with their jobs.

The use of temporary workers is budding precipitously cutting every imaginable industry be it construction, manufacturing, financial sector, health workers and educational professionals. This stress has been occasioned by heightened global competition on one hand, and the inclination of business owners to reduce cost to survive. A Global Outsourcing Survey by concluded that cost maintenance of core business functions, addressing capacity issues in a timely manner serves as the rationale to outsource [2]. The survey also revealed that industry leaders in a variety of industries use outsourcing to create transformative change and improve company outcomes.

observed the increasing pattern of the patronage of temporary employment contracts in Western societies in recent decades [3]. The nature of such contracts can be on-call contracts, temporary agency work or acts and fixed-term contracts. These arrangements provide flexibility to employers as laws on employment protection sometimes choke adjustments that are needed to balance the workforce. It has been said that, contract employment arrangements give an opportunity for employers

to avoid adjustment costs. Short-term employment is also seen as a reaction to continuous changes on how work is being programmed in our world especially over the past three decades [4]. The effect of this new programming on the employees and the organisation still has to be fully established because the observed outcomes can be influenced by a variety of factors. It has been reported that, as a business module in the 1990s, temporary work constituted ten percent of total job growth. In the preceding decade to that, the recorded figure was twice that of ten (10) percent, that is during the [5]. The projection figure of 1996 is expected to be increased by sixty percent come 2006 [6]. These firms resorting to contract employees with the aim of enhancing their competitiveness in a globalised business environment apply several techniques in the management of their human resources by resorting to temporal employment acclimation, coaching, socialisation, and assimilation.

In line with this submits that a number of variables related to the management of short-term personnel may contribute to greater labour turnover rates [7]. Too little socialisation, feelings of injustice, not being part of the governance structure, hope for a permanent job, poorer levels of wages and contract, reduced acceptance for inequity, low levels of commitment, and little intensities of obligations are some of these reasons. By reducing their compensation and benefits, as well as the costs associated with turnover, temporary aid agencies appear to have encouraged the deployment of more "risky" workers in low-skill industries. The use of agency temporaries in non-professional occupations in tight labour markets remove strain on employees to incessant increment in employee's compensation. This possibly may have contributed to the moribund state of wage increment and low unemployment experienced in the 1990s [8, 9].

Again, some firms still make use short term workers due to the seasonality of their business, cost-savings motives, and the need for specialised kind of skills [3]. In this type of business, the investment of socialisation, professional and organisational development of temporary employees in all probability will be more significant than the benefits. Also, a number of firms use the temporary engagement business module as a strategy to serve as a pseudo-probationary phase to screen staffs. This is to prevent people who do not fulfil working standards and so do not represent a suitable "fit" for the company and its culture. Alternatively, it can be used as a tactic for the company to extend a long-term employment offer to selected candidates [10]. Scarcity of jobs account for why individuals enter the short-term employment but a large number of them do so hoping to obtain a proposition for sustainable jobs [11].

However, at the global stage, there seem to be some improvements on sight, but generally, organisations still appear to be indifferent in bringing short-term employees into the main stream of work. The European Union has not achieved its end to reach a legally binding arrangement on how the Agency Workers Directive should be worded, which aimed to improve the rights of temporary workers [12]. Short-term employees appear to be used by governments and businesses in developed nations to build lower labour costs and more flexible labour markets [13].

The irony is that individuals who use the short-term employment module are deliberately supporting its own expansion and avoiding regulation [13].

Although there has been a significant increase in short-term employment in organisations around the world, most study has focused on permanent employees. Few studies have been undertaken that integrate strategic human resource processes toward the management of temporary employees who do not have the same expectations as their permanent counterparts [4]. Short-term work, according to several experts, has far-reaching consequences for both people and corporations. [14, 15]. The study's objective was to look into the consequences of temporary labour on a business has bemoan the absence of a theoretical foundation to analyse the outcome of temporal employment [14]. The literature is replete with studies that leans on the field of psychology and were propounded with permanent employment relationship as the underlying motive. These theories are in two units namely, Social Comparison or Social Exchange Theories and Work Stress Models. propounded the Social Comparison Theory [16].

The idea is that, individuals have a want to seek to external imaginings in order to evaluate their own perspectives and talents, according to the theory. These imaginings can be thought of as some realities or other people in the organisation in a bid to assess what is obtainable and realistic for them. In his seminal theory, Festinger et al., 1954 hypothesized that humans are certain to evaluate themselves by subjecting their opinions and capabilities in appraisal of others. Therefore, when in the comparison, one sees a difference between himself and the other, such comparisons tends to decrease. He also proposed that everyone strives to climb the social ladder based on their ability, non-social constraints, on the other hand, make change practically difficult, and public opinion often ignores this [16].

When the short-term employment module is employed by organisations, work stress models illustrate some of the elements that produce job-related strain, indicating the impacts of shortterm employment [14]. Three applicable variables explain this situation. Firstly, short-term employees are marginal to the organisation and may not border employers so much in terms of benefits, salaries, promotions, and more training are just a few examples. This idea is equidistant to Flexible Firm Model and the Dual Labor Market model [17]. When such workers work under adverse conditions, their health and work performance both deteriorated [18]. Short-term employees had to decide by what method to conduct their work, how to manage their skills, and how to make decisions in the workplace in many cases [19]. Secondly, short-term employees may be relatively new in the organisation, and may be on the learning curve required to adapt procedures and other cultural aspects of the organisation, which can present a likely starting place of stress [14]. When assistance is especially lacking from colleagues, superiors or even the union, then obviously stress levels increased much to the detriment of their well-being [19]. The third determinant is the excessive expectation that temporary employees might go through with regards to the demands of the establishment (or employers).

outline the methods and purposes that make people acclimate to their workplaces [20]. Adjustment is depicted as a person's (P) relationship with their environment (E). As a result, interaction is defined as P and E acting on and reacting to each other. This idea emphasises the point when the needs of the organisation and the needs of the employee collide. First and foremost, the organisation must consider the employee's needs and expectations, which must be met, according to [20]. Second, the individual possesses abilities that will enable him or her to succeed within the organisation. Finally, the majority of interactions between workers and employers are focused on fulfilling these goals. There will still be a modification in the individual's behaviour known as dissonance if there is a specified amount of disparity seen between individual's wants and the rewards supplied by the organisation. Employee discontent is caused by dissonance, according to there are two options for managing the disputes: adjusting the individual's expectations or modifying the business's workplace environment [21]. When the employee's strategies fail, he or she will eventually depart the organisation [20]. Peoples and their organisations enter into exchange agreements based on expectations that are either expressly stated or implicitly conveyed by the agreement. Even though some workers like the fleeting nature of temporary work, majority do that hoping to find a full-time position.

In general, according to equity theory, an individual will indeed be dissatisfied if one 's output/input ratio is less than or more than what they perceive as the output/input ratio of the other person in the relationship [22]. According to equity theory, short-term workers who perform the same tasks as their comparable colleagues (in this case, permanent employees) and yet are compensated less might react to reestablish fairness by boosting outputs or reducing input attempts. Considering contract workers get consistently compensated less than permanent employees, for even comparable jobs, the odds of this happening are high [23]. Simply defined, people desire equal pay for efforts across the workforce of that they are part, according to Adams' equity thesis. People might act accordingly if that was the situation. People might lose motivation if this is no longer applicable.

2. Methodology

Various research philosophies underpinned the study. This included phenomenology where the researchers' engaged participants in ways to explore multiple realities of their unique lived experiences with respect to short-term employment [24].

The philosophy of pragmatism was also at play for this study where the researchers did not particularly resort to favouring objectivity (positivism) or subjectivism (constructivism) but rather inter-subjectivism [25]. The study sought to ascertain what worked in the situations of these contract employees and to propose solutions to problem [26].

With symbolic interaction as another philosophy guiding the research, the underlining motive is that people derive meaning from interaction and that reality comes into being through human interaction. Therefore, the interactions with these employees gave vital insights into what pertains in the respective places of

work. Finally, critical theory as a philosophical strand also guided the study. This aims to examine systems or societies, review the issues with a view of exposing systems of dominations.

The researchers employed the thematic analysis approach with an attempt to describe, explain and interpret the challenges associated with short-term employees in Ghana. The research looked into the circumstances, practices, patterns, discrepancies or interactions that emerged, as well as ongoing processes or trends. The population of the study was drawn from three institutions/ organisations in Accra. A total number of 14 respondents answered the questionnaire while 14 others were interviewed for the qualitative aspects from three organisations.

3. Results and Discussions

Gender was one of the major variables in the analysis with more than half (64.3%) of respondents being females compared to 35.7 percent who are males. Females are observed to have higher dominance possibly because respondents were drawn from the service sector.

Age refers to the completed number of years lived by the respondent since birth to the time of the survey. The age data were grouped into three age groups and it emerged that, majority of the respondents, 78.6 percent were aged 26-30 years, 14.3 percent were aged 20-25 and 7.1 percent were aged between 41-50 years.

The statutory or formally accepted joining of two persons as spouses in a close connection is known as marriage. In the study, single status respondents were 78.6 percent and 21.4 percent were married. The importance of education cannot be overemphasised, as it is a function of employment. In the survey, respondents were asked about the highest level of education attained. Respondents were categorised into Diploma and First Degree/ Higher National Diploma qualifications. The study indicated that 71.4 percent have had their first degree/ HND, and 21.4 percent had Diploma qualifications. It can be deduced that, all the respondents interviewed had attained good formal education.

Respondents were mainly in the operation department that had approximately 35.7 percent, followed by Information Management Data, Human Resource Department and Finance all occupying 14 percent. The least number of staffs according to the survey worked in the Sales/ Credit Department, Technical Department and Information Security, which was 7.1 percent.

Work is a term that refers to any productive activity that involves mental or physical effort in order to attain a goal or a result in order to earn money or get economic benefit. The respondents have mainly worked between three (3) months and a little over two (2) years. The respondents were asked to indicate their monthly salary and this range from GHC 570.00 to GHC 1,460.00. Indeed, 35 percent of respondents earn GHC 1,000.00 but 57 percent 0f respondents did not declare their salary.

The qualitative aspect of the study captured the unique lived experiences of the contract employees. The recorded interviews

were transcribed. A total of 14 respondents were interviewed and this was made up of 7 males and 7 females. The average age of the respondents was 27.4 years. Thus, 7 of the respondents work with two private international banks with 7 working with one public organisation. The average number of years worked in these organisations by the respondents were 2.1 years.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data at three levels of global, organizing and basic themes. Results are presented in five organizing namely, emotional well-being, equal opportunities, sense of belongingness, financial and job security. A descriptive characteristic of respondents is presented.

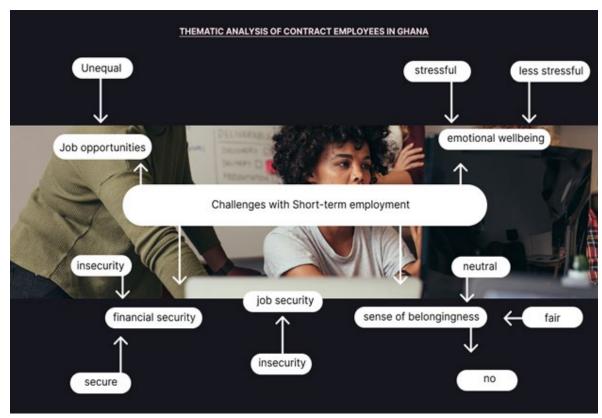


Figure 1: Thematic Analysis of Contract Employees in Ghana

Figure 1 is an overview of challenges of contract employees in the three organisations. All organizing and basic themes are discussed in the context to challenges of short-term employment as the global theme.

Emotional well-being

This organizing theme is concerned with the emotional wellbeing of the contract employees Interviewed. This theme is composed of two basic themes.

Stressful

Majority of the respondents (6 participants) cited the nature of the job and distance to work as very stressful.

"I will say it's full of stress. Yes, you are arranging your own components, applicants come in and you quickly need to attend to them, interview them, some would have to go and come back because documents are not complete, they come back again and you still have to repeat the process" (R3: Public Contract Employee)"I will say it's not good due to distance. I live at Obuasi and my centre was at Panteng.... I perched at Pokuasi and the traffic I go through every day was very tough for me. I have to get to work very early at 7 am, so I will say my emotional well-being is not good" (R4: Public Contract Employee)

Stress free work

A respondent stated that the proximity to work does not make the work stressful.

"Ermmm.... Looking at my present work I am not all that stressed. I am not all that stressed because looking at the proximity I stay to my center is very close. The road I use to my center is traffic free. So, I am able to get here on time and close on time. So am not stressed out, it's ok for my emotional wellbeing" (R1: Private Contract Employee).

Job Opportunities

This organizing theme is concerned with opportunities that exist for contract employees to become permanent employees. This organizing theme consist of only one basic theme.

Unequal

Participants intimated those opportunities within the firm are not announced to contract employees to apply for the position of interest. Rather such opportunity is limited to permanent staff of the organisation.

"All you will see is that there will be new people all over. Nothing is announced" (R5: Private Contract Employee)

Other participant stated that contract employees are denied of bonuses although permanent staff are given bonuses at the end of the year. "At Christmas, those in Head Office we heard received some bonuses, but we did not get anything" (R2: Private Contract Employee)

Financial Security

This organizing theme focuses on the financial security of contract employee. This is composed of two basic themes. Respondent were asked to express their opinions about **financial security** in the organisation they are working. Financial security refers to the peace of mind you feel when you are not worried about your income being enough to cover your expenses. It also means that you have enough money saved to cover emergencies and your future **financial** goals.

Secured

Some participants perceive that, they have financial security at their current organisation.

Interviewer:" Alright, how about your financial security"?

Respondent: "We will take it like that.... but I don't have job security but financial security is cool". (R7: Private Contract Employee).

Insecurity

Participants stated that they could be sacked any time since they are paid on weekly wages.

Respondent: "Yes, it's a contract and you need to be paid on the days you work, so once you are not at post, it means you do not earn anything. Your appointment gives you 6 months, but later they ask you to go home for some time and for that period, you do not earn anything" (R10: Public Contract Employee).

Interviewer: "So how about the financial security"?

Respondent: "So bad, not secured at all!" (R7: Private Contract Employee)

Job Security

This organizing theme is concerned with how participants feel they are secured with job. This relates to losing their jobs at any time. There was only one basic theme. Respondents were asked to express their perceptions about job security in the organisation they are working. Job security is the assurance (or lack of it) that an employee has about the continuity of gainful employment for his or her work life. It usually arises from the terms of contract employment, collective bargaining agreement, or labor legislation that prevents arbitrary termination, layoffs and lockouts. It may also be affected by general economic conditions.

Insecurity

Participants felt they are unsecured because they could be dismissed summarily.

"Don't have job security". (R2: Private Contract Employee) Respondent: "With job security, I will say it's really not hundred percent"

Interviewer: "Why"?

Respondent: "Yes because, the contact says before you leave, you must serve my organisation with 2 weeks' notice, but as a

contract staff, once you make a mistake, you are sack that very day" (R11: Public Contract Employee)

Interviewer: "So what about your job security"?

Respondent: "I don't think am secured because for this organisation, any least mistake, you will be sacked" (R6: Private Contract Employee)

Sense of Belongingness

This organizing theme relates to how participants are involved in decision making in their respective organisations. Respondents were asked to express their views on their sense of belongingness to the organisation as an outsourced staff. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions.

Unsure

Some participants were not sure about their involvement in decision making at the organisation.

Interviewer: "Based on what you have just said, do you have any sense of belonging to your organisation?"

Respondent: "Its "fifty- fifty", am not too sure!" (R3: Public Contract Employee).

Fair

Participants stated that due to the skills they possess they are allowed to be involved in decision making.

"Yes, in the sense that we meet different people from different places and when you have challenges, you

could talk to them and sometimes they are able to help as they have companies they may want to recruit

people into" (R1: Public Contract Employee)

"Because, with my back ground as engineer specializing in Telecommunications from the Poly Technic, there are times they call on you for meetings and I give them inputs" (R5: Private Contract Employee)

Interviewer: "So when it comes to decision making, do you feel you are part of your organisation"?

Respondent: "Yes, because at meetings they ask for opinions and we give them feed -back from the fields which we see some being implemented." (R3: Public Contract Employee) [27, 30].

No

Some participants also perceive that they are not involved in the decision-making in their various

organizations. Some attributed this to the poor structure of the organisation they work.

"Decisions are made without even consulting those of us on the field" (R9: Private Contract Employee)

"No because of the way they do their things in this organisation. I think things are not well structured over there, so if you are working there, you will never feel that sense of belonging" (R4: Public Contract Employee).

4. Conclusion

Though exploratory in nature, certain patterns are emerging

from the analysis that centered on emotional well-being, job opportunities, financial security, job security and a sense of belongingness. These factors include insufficient socialisation, incidence of injustice arising out of summarily dismissals, marginalization from judgement call, the lack of possibilities for long-term employment, reduced income and permanency, a reduced acceptance for inequality, a lack of commitment, and a lack of desire are all factors.

It is the view of the researchers that, even among one of the financial institutions that volunteered to answer the questionnaire, all the respondents never disclosed their salary levels. Also, for close to three (3) months, none of the organisations under Ghana Club 100 (2017 Edition) approve that, this work be carried out inspite of many visitations and follow-ups. It is plausible that "blackest darkness Human Resource Practices" are underway with this phenomenon of Short-Term Employees in Corporate Ghana.

The above thematic analysis patterns are consistent with findings, which suggests that there are a number of concerns with temporary worker's management that can translate into higher levels of exit ahead to contractual expiry dates [7]. A few of these concerns include insufficient assimilation, unfairness impressions, alienation from judgement call, aspirations for permanent positions, lower wage and duration, less acceptance for unfairness, low levels of dedication, and constrained drive. Therefore, when workers perceived that their work situation is unfair, they will (consciously or unconsciously) muster efforts to return it to a state of fairness. In view of this, organisation may support equity theory in practice by promoting a fair organisational culture. Stories and examples of fairness should be acknowledged while the organisation must make a conscious effort to promote fairness or redress issues of unfairness.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	5	35.7	35.7	35.7
	Female	9	64.3	64.3	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25 years	2	14.3	14.3	14.3
	26-30 years	11	78.6	78.6	92.9
	41-50	1	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Percent distribution of respondents by age

Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
21.4	21.4	21.4	
78.6	78.6	100.0	
100.0	100.0		

Table 3: Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diploma	3	21.4	23.1	23.1
	First degree	10	71.4	76.9	100.0
	Total	13	92.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	7.1		
Total	14	100.0			

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Technical	1	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Information Management Data	2	14.3	14.3	21.4
	Operations	5	35.7	35.7	57.1
Valid	Sales/ Credit	1	7.1	7.1	64.3
valid	Information Security	1	7.1	7.1	71.4
	Human Resource Department	2	14.3	14.3	85.7
	Financial Control	2	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Percent distribution of respondents by department

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	.1	2	14.3	14.3	14.3
	.3	2	14.3	14.3	28.6
	.4	3	21.4	21.4	50.0
	.5	1	7.1	7.1	57.1
Valid	.9	1	7.1	7.1	64.3
	3.0	1	7.1	7.1	71.4
	4.0	2	14.3	14.3	85.7
	5.0	2	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Percentage distribution of respondents by working experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	570.00	1	7.1	12.5	12.5
	800.00	1	7.1	12.5	25.0
Valid	1000.00	5	35.7	62.5	87.5
	1460.00	1	7.1	12.5	100.0
	Total	8	57.1	100.0	
Missing	System	6	42.9		
Total	14	100.0			

Table 7: Percentage distribution of respondents according to organisatio

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