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MANUSCRIPT DETAILS

TITLE: Understanding and improving the retention of Band 3 Prison Officers within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)

ABSTRACT:

Avoidable voluntary turnover negatively impacts an organisation's workforce and decreases its sustainability and productivity. HMPPS' leaving rates are amongst the highest in the public sector. It is, thus, crucial to improve Band 3 Prison Officers' (POs) retention and develop an effective employee retention strategy.

Grounded in retention literature, the present study employs a mixed-methods, cross-sectional, phenomenological research design. Primary data was gathered using an online qualitative survey was sent to POs working at a public sector prison in the North West of England with less than five years work experience.

The results highlight the impact of career development and training & development due to their importance to POs in comparison to the PO's dissatisfaction with HMPPS' performance in both factors. Furthermore, most expectations of retention factors were only partially met, illustrating the need to reform the existing recruitment process and the translation of expectations into the reality of the role. In conclusion, HMPPS should focus attention on performance-improvement especially in relation to career development and training & development as well as on investigating and reforming the current recruitment processes.

CUST_RESEARCH_LIMITATIONS/IMPLICATIONS__(LIMIT_100_WORDS) :No data available.

- improved management of career plans
- increased selection of managers on their management abilities
- evaluating the effect of payment boosts
- increasing training opportunities
- equating staff's access.

CUST_SOCIAL_IMPLICATIONS_(LIMIT_100_WORDS) :No data available.

The role of prison officers and their professional environment has not previously been combined with contemporary retention literature. This research paper is the first of its kind using qualitative data to understand the retention in the English & Welsh prison service.

Understanding and improving the retention of Band 3 Prison Officers within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)

Abstract

Purpose

Avoidable voluntary turnover negatively impacts an organisation's workforce and decreases its sustainability and productivity. HMPPS' leaving rates are amongst the highest in the public sector. It is, thus, crucial to improve Band 3 Prison Officers' (POs) retention and develop an effective employee retention strategy.

Methodology

Grounded in retention literature, the present study employs a mixed-methods, cross-sectional, phenomenological research design. Primary data was gathered using an online qualitative survey, which which was sent to POs working at a public sector prison in the North WestNorthwest of England with less than five years work experience.

Findings

The results highlight the impact of career development and training & development due to their importance to POs in comparison to the POs' dissatisfaction with HMPPS' performance in both factors. Furthermore, most expectations of retention factors were only partially met, illustrating the need to reform the existing recruitment process and the translation of expectations into the reality of the role. In conclusion, HMPPS should focus attention on performance-improvement_a especially in relation to career development and training & development_a as well as on-investigating and reforming the current recruitment processes.

Originality

The role of prison officers and their professional environment has not previously been combined with contemporary retention literature. This research paper is the first of its kind using qualitative data to understand the retention in the English & and Welsh prison service.

Keywords: Recruitment / Prison Officer / Civil Service Reform / Prisons / Employee Retention

Article classification: Research Paper

"You can't sell it outside if you can't sell it inside."

- Slap (2015)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prisons are necessary institutions within our society which serve to protect the public and keep in custody those committed by the courts (Select Committee, 2009). However, prisons are severely understaffed, and workforce statistics with the latest leaving rates of 11.4% in the year to September 2023 being higher than pre-pandemic levels with the latest demonstrate leaving rates of 11.4% in the year to September 2023, such being higher than prepandemic levels display a continuous increase of turnover rates in the years prior to March 2020 (MOJ, 2023). MOJ, 2023 MOJ, 2019; MOJ, 2020). Although the COVID-19 pandemic positively impacted prison officer retention, it is neither a durable nor a sustainable retention strategy for HMPPS and is heavily influenced by morality, ethics, and job security. Further, ILeaving rates are still high in comparison with other public services and are the highest amongst operational staff from Band 2-Band 5 from Band 2 to Band 5. Particularly, the retention of Band 3 Prison Officers (POs), who are entry-level operational prison staff members working directly with prisoners in prisons in England and Wales, has not been researched despite POs making up the largest operational staff group in HMPPS (MOJ, 2022; MOJ, 2016). Particularly, the retention of Band 3 Prison Officers (POs), who are entry-level operational prison staff members working directly with prisoners in prisons in England and Wales, has not been researched despite POs making up the largest operational staff group in HMPPS (MOJ, 2022; MOJ, 2016). Therefore, this study presents empirical data which investigates the problem of PO retention across HMPPS.

HMPPS (2020) highlighted to the Prison Service Pay Review Body that increasing employee retention improves the productivity, knowledge, and experience of staff and, thus, leads to improved outcomes regarding the maintenance of a rehabilitative climate for prisoners. Further, decreasing turnover improves staff's confidence and morale, leading to an increase in safety and security across prisons as staff-prisoner relationships and trust between staff and prisoners improve (Crawley, 2013; Bennett and Shuker, 2010; Crewe *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, these established positive relationships aid prisoner rehabilitation and can thereby increase staff's job satisfaction by instilling a feeling of achievement (Crawley, 2013; Crawley, 2013; Liebling *et al.*, 2011).

March and Simon's (1958) theory of organisational equilibrium and Adams' (1965) equity theory both argue that retention is related to an employee's perception of how their contributions compare to the outcomes they receive in return, thereby arguing that an imbalance results in job dissatisfaction and turnover if an alternative job opportunity is identified. Job satisfaction, as well as job security have been frequently discussed as positively impacting employee retention, <u>both</u> in combination and separately (see Chen *et al.*, 2011; Chiboiwa; *et al.*, 2010; Filwood, 2014). In a prison context, job satisfaction has previously been linked to the 'human services' work completed by PO's, such as courses and programmes for prisoners (Crawley, 2013). Regarding job security, however, Al Mamun and Hasan (2017) argue that it is a factor which can rarely be influenced by an organisation itself and is, to a greater degree, related to the nature of the trade and a society's economic climate. Previously, Crawley (2013) argued that POs viewed their role as a 'job for life'. However, this narrative has shifted due to voluntary redundancy schemes and other job cuts effecting prisons individually. Further, job satisfaction, despite being a major influence on employee retention, can derive from a variety of reasons; known as retention factors (James and Mathew, 2012).

Considering the influence of these factors, Ramdianee (2014) asserts <u>in his research on the</u> <u>retention of volunteers in volunteerin volunteering organisations</u>, <u>in his research on the</u> <u>retention of volunteers in volunteer organisations</u>, that an organisation needs to understand such factors in relation to why their volunteers join, whether or not these expectations are met, and, thus, why the volunteers stay in or leave the organisation in order to establish an effective retention strategy to achieve job satisfaction and, subsequently, improve the organisation's employee retention rates.

To effectively retain employees, an organisation needs to convey realistic expectations of the job and encourage applicants to be transparent regarding their intentions already during the recruitment process, to accurately assess an applicant's person-organisation fit and avoid a waste of effort by both parties (Allen, 2008; Cloutier, *et al.*, 2015; Ramdianee, 2014). A strong person-organisation fit then-leads to improved retention by increasing employee loyalty and effort-commitment to the organisation's mission (Aamir *et al.*, 2016; Cloutier *et al.*, 2015). However, an effective strategy must not solely rely on recruitment procedures (Gabriel *et al.*, 2014). It is equally as important to understand why high-performing employees remain (Ramapriya and Sudhamathi, 2020). Mitchell *et al.*'s (2001) research, for instance, discusses how employees' embeddedness in an organisation resultsorganisation result in higher retention rates. Researchers, therefore, argue that the analysis of turnover intention, and thus of current employees, often describes retention factors more accurately; than reasons for leaving an organisation. (Allen, 2008; Firth *et al.*, 2004; Lambert and Hogan, 2009).

Prison service staff retention is influenced by a variety of retention factors and HMPSS has made concerted efforts to analyse the factors contributing to the service's recruitment and retention problems by implementing a mandatory exit interview for leaving employees. The results yielded that the retention factors influencing prison employees are induction, staffing numbers, pay and reward, learning and development, work environment, roles and responsibilities, health and wellbeing, working processes, career progression, and leadership (HMPPS, 2020). These factors correspond with the retention factors identified through the Rapid Systematic Review (RSR) of the contemporary literature within this study.

Although HMPPS has developed a tool to understand the reasons for leaving the service, little research has been conducted on the expectations of **POs officersPOs** when joining the service, despite the benefits of understanding and subsequently meeting these expectations on employee retention (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Ramdianee, 2014). Additionally, HMPPS (2020) stated that despite common factors, prisons are encouraged to and supported in developing their own employee retention strategy based on their workforce. Nationally, HMPPS states they are committed a commitment to improving their employee retention levels by driving recruitment and investing in staff support systems. However, according to Shilson-Thomas (2020) the commitment to the reform of prisons and prison safety from 2016 has not been upheld. Additionally, HMPPS claims having invested in improving staff induction and line management to provide on-site support for existing employees, however there is no publicly available evidence of such improvements and no information on the specific training line JI Is and gat. managers receive, highlighting the need to audit these structures and gather evidence on their effect on employee retention (HMPPS, 2018).

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

This project evaluates <u>POs'_POs'</u> reasons for joining <u>HMPPS</u>, investigating the differences between their expectations when they joined and how they are met in reality, <u>and as well as</u> why POs stay in the prison service. This information gives an insight into the retention factors of POs and could inform management in planning and implementing a more effective_a-and tailored retention strategy for POs, thereby increasing safety, security, productivity, and job satisfaction within HMPPS and support whilst supporting -HMPPS' wider business strategy.

Primary research question: Which employee retention factors influence Band 3 Prison Officers to join and stay in His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)?

To effectively answer the research question, the research analysis is guided by sub-questions following Ramdianee's (2014) join-stay-leave model:

- (1) What factors influence prison officers to join and stay in HMPPS?
- (2) Do the prison officers' expectations of the role match with reality?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods, cross-sectional, phenomenological research design to investigate the retention factors which impact POs' retention. Firstly, a RSR of retention literature was conducted to identify the ten most common retention factors in employee retention research. The studies needed to be conducted between 2011 and 2021 and were of theoretical and empirical nature. The 3,980 studies initially identified were curtailed by the researcher's access, inclusion criteria of being in a peer-reviewed journal, and by data saturation. After ten separate retention factors, which were mentioned in at least

two of the included studies, were identified and when a further ten studies did not identify additional retention factors, the review was concluded upon grounds of data saturation with 37 different studies presented. The studies needed to be conducted between 2011 and 2021 and were of theoretical and empirical nature. The 3,980 studies initially identified were curtailed by the researcher's access, inclusion criteria of being in a peer-reviewed journal, and by data saturation. After ten separate retention factors, which were mentioned in at least two of the included studies, were identified and when a further ten studies did not identify additional retention factors, the review was concluded upon grounds of data saturation with 37 different studies presented. Second, primary data was gathered using an online survey tailored by the retention factors identified through the RSR. Additionally, the questions posed in the online survey were based on the argumentation of Ramdianee's (2014) join-stay-leave model, investigating the research sample'sparticipants reasons for joining and staying in the prison service. Following HMPPS' (2020) expressed need to understand how to retain the PO's who had joined since the through the 2017 recruitment payment boost, attracted and trained PO's, the survey was distributed to Following HMPPS' (2020) expressed need to understand how to retain the through the 2017 recruitment boost attracted and trained PO's, the survey was distributed to research sample consists of all POs with less than five years work experience (72) all POs with less than five years work experience (72) working in a prison in the Northwest of England, thereby employing purposive, volunteer sampling. All research participants were POs at the point of data collection and have worked less than five years in that position. In total, 19 POs were surveyed. Thematic analysis was the method of data analysis In total, 19 POs were surveyed. Thematic analysis was the method of data analysis of the research data andand was guided by the retention factors identified. It aimed to determine the retention factors most common amongst POs and highlight any discrepancies with the RSR. The research

<text> project was fully approved by the University of Suffolk Ethics Board and the National Research

FINDINGS

This study explored the retention factors which influence POs' decisions to join and stay in the Prison Service as presented in FIGURE 1. The box on the right of the figure indicates the questions on importance of and satisfaction with these factors with the whilst respective outcomes being are presented underneath each factor. The box on the right of the figure indicates the questions on importance of and satisfaction with these factors with the respective outcomes being presented underneath each factor. The key retention factors which became apparent through analysis were career development; nature of occupation; relationship with co-workers; salary; training and & development. Job security and leadership were also mentioned, however, due to only one reference to each of these factors respectively they were not deemed significant to retention. Career development was a prominent retention factor with six participants stating that they joined as the role was a progression from their previous occupation, whilst two participants discussed that they are currently in the service due to the opportunities to progress, especially regarding specialist areas. Career development was deemed extremely important to participants personal job satisfaction. However, the mode yielded that the participants were dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance in career development.

The nature of being a PO was the most common reason to join and to stay amongst participants. Five participants discussed their interest in criminal justice and criminology as a reason for becoming a PO. One participant mentioned that they did not want to work in an office but rather a more varied environment, a theme that also emerged in three responses to the reasons for staying in the service. The most common subtheme, however, was providing meaningful work, with twelve participants stating it as a reason for joining and eight participants discussing it as a reason for staying. <u>The nNature of occupation had not been identified as a retention factor in the RSR</u>, however, its subtheme 'providing meaningful work' to the respondents was

deemed to be extremely important to the respondents, thus highlighting its significance to PO retention. With regards to HMPPS' performance in providing meaningful work, the mode yielded that the participants were satisfied.

The relationship with co-workers was discussed as a reason for staying in the service with five respondents stating that their friendships with colleagues are a reason for them to stay. Additionally, one respondent discussed the teamwork amongst staff positively impacting their retention. This is substantiated by the relationship with co-workers being extremely important to most respondents, being the second most important factor to respondents, and with most respondents being satisfied with HMPPS' performance in this factor.

Salary was discussed by two participants as a reason to join, more specifically as being a better salary than their previous role. As a reason to stay, salary was discussed in terms of being paid at all rather than being paid well for their role. In terms of importance, salary was classed as important in comparison to all other factors being extremely important to the participants. HMPPS' performance in salary was deemed neither satisfying nor dissatisfying most participants.

Training and & development had impacted three participants' decisions to join but was not discussed as a reason for staying. Two participants argued that they were seeking personal development and, thus, became POsos. The lack of training and & development as a reason to s ints whe. stay could be attributed to the factor being extremely important to the participants whereas the majority were dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance.

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the research data was guided by the retention factors identified in the RSR and aimed to determine the retention factors most common amongst POs and highlight any discrepancies with the RSR, such as additional factors or the potential lack of importance of some factors (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). All factors discussed below emerged from the primary data collection and the RSR was used to interpret the results in retention research.

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What factors influence prison officers to join HMPPS?

Lee *et al.* (2008) and Stovel and Bontis (2002) argue that employee retention is related to an organisation's recruitment procedures. Recruiting employees who are suitable for the organisation and role has a significant impact on their retention, thus it is of utmost importance to present the job and organisational culture as accurately as possible. The first sub-question relating to *joining* HMPPS was posed to encapsulate which retention factors influenced the participants to join the service.

Career development

The respondents discussed how career development influenced their decision to become a PO, specifically through the opportunities offered to progress within the organisation. Three respondents discussed that they joined because they saw the job as a career with opportunities to develop and progress into more specialised areas. These findings correspond with the information displayed on job advertisements, such as by the National Careers Service (n.d.), which promote the possibilities to move into specialist roles or into higher ranks. In consistence with March and Simon's (1958) theory of organisational equilibrium, this suggests that the participants desired and expected career development as a prospective reward when joining the organisation. Six respondents raised that they saw the job as career development, whether from their previous occupation or to progress into other occupations such as the police and government. Given that all respondents have been POs for less than five years, this finding indicates a lack of employee loyalty to the organisation and suggests assessing recruits on their person-organisation fit (Allen, 2008; Cloutier et al., 2015; Ramdianee, 2014).

Job security

One respondent mentioned that the job security of working as a PO was part of the reason why they joined, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby opportunities were scarce (Hensvik et al., 2021). In the literature review the effect of job security is discussed as an external factor which increases staff retention but can rarely be influenced by an organisation (Al Mamun and Hasan, 2017). However, due to the nature of the service, relatively consistent job security should nonetheless be considered a partial motivator to become a PO (Morrison and Maycock, 2021).

Nature of occupation

Like job security, the subthemes related to the nature of occupation can rarely be influenced by the organisation and are mainly connected to unavoidable turnover. Nonetheless it is essential to know which elements of the job have attracted new recruits so the organisation can ensure a (greater) emphasis on some of these factors to aid retention. Firstly, 12 participants stated that they joined because they wanted to make a difference to people's lives and assist with prisoner rehabilitation. Although Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) related providing meaningful work to employee retention, Maheshwari and Vohra (2018) argue that clear goal setting is required for employees to feel as though they fulfil this objective. This is especially necessary for occupations which provide distant rewards such as supporting rehabilitation (Arnold, 2016; Maheshwari and Vohra, 2018). Furthermore, providing meaningful work is not exclusive to the prison service, medical professionals or police officers for instance make a difference to people's lives too (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2009).

Closely related to providing meaningful work is employees' personal interest in the occupation. Five respondents discussed their interest in criminology or in the specific procedures within the prison and the criminal justice system (CJS). Humans naturally aim to satisfy their personal interest in their day-to-day duties, however a sole interest in the occupation does not result in retention and still requires an organisation to satisfy the retention factors amenable to their influence (Morrison and Maycock, 2021; Purohit *et al.*, 2020). Like other occupations providing meaningful work, other jobs also offer an insight into the CJS and are concerned with criminology.

Wanting to join an occupation which offers unpredictability and is less sedentary and structured than others, was a reason described by one participant. This is coherent with the findings of Higgins and Swartz's (2020) study on the reasons of correctional officers in the United States for staying in the service, who stated they enjoy the exciting environment. Although job

 interest, whether stemming from the topic of concern or the nature of the occupation, increases job satisfaction and, thus, retention, the impact of other, more amendable retention factors must not be neglected (Yasin *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, other uniformed services, such as the police service offer a similar working environment, thereby offering business competition (Morrison and Maycock, 2021)

Salary

Regarding salary, one <u>surveyed</u> participant stated they wanted better salary and another stated part of the reason they joined was the salary, however they did not specify this statement. Despite salary being frequently discussed in retention research, the small return of salary as a joining factor to the participants shows that the recruitment of prison officers is not strongly related to this (Chiboiwa *et al.*, 2010).

Training and and development

Training and & development opportunities not only increase employee commitment, but can also attract new recruits (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015). Two participants discussed that challenging themselves and developing new skills attracted them to becoming a PO. One of the two also mentioned that offers of additional training and learning opportunities were a recruitment factor. However, the participant related these opportunities to the advertisement of the Unlocked Graduates Programme through which they applied.

What factors influence prison officers to stay in HMPPS?

The second sub-question is used to outline the retention factors influencing the participants to remain deriving from the participants' responses on which of the elements they most and least enjoy about their job influence their decision to remain.

Career development

Like reasons for joining, two respondents stated that the opportunities to progress within the service, whether into specialised areas or higher ranks, influence their decision to stay. The respondents feel as though their work is rewarded with the realistic prospect of career development.

Leadership

One respondent mentioned that although they do not feel as though they currently can lead change, it motivates them to progress into roles within the service in which they can innovate within the system. This statement corresponds with the argument that encouraging participation in leadership programs will ensure that future managers understand their employees' duties and act with empathy, increasing the managers' and employees' commitment to the organisation (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015; Doh *et al.*, 2011).

Nature of occupation

Although the nature of occupation was the most common theme emerging from the data analysis, fewer respondents stated that providing meaningful work (8 respondents) and a stimulating environment (3 respondents) influence their decision to stay than the respondents' decision to join. As previously argued, neither of these sub-themes are exclusive to the prison service and can be sought after in other occupations. Furthermore, the decreased reference to the nature of occupation as an influential factor in combination with the lack of opportunity for an organisation to greatly affect either of these factors indicates that retention is highly dependent on additional factors (Morrison and Maycock, 2021; Yasin *et al.*, 2020).

Relationship with co-workers

The relationship with co-workers was the second most common theme positively influencing the participants to remain (6 respondents). Out of these, five stated that the friendships and formed bonds are an important part of their decision to remain and one argued that teamwork is a reason to stay. Not only is this evidence of PO collegiality, but it also highlights their embeddedness their embeddedness. The findings are coherent with Mitchell et al.'s (2001) and Ramapriya and Sudhamathi's (2020) argument that employee embeddedness results in higher retention rates due to the employees' refusal to disconnect from their established network.

Salary

Like the reasons for joining, salary was only briefly discussed by participants as a reason for staying. Three respondents stated that being paid is a reason to stay whilst one argued for increased salary for improved retention. However, the participants did not state that the salary was sufficient or comparable to other occupations but were rather grateful for being paid at all. This highlights that the participants perceive salary as a factor any occupation could satisfy rather than a retention factor specific to remaining a PO.

Do the prison officers' expectations of the role match with reality?

This section offers a comprehensive and more direct comparison between the participants' expectations when joining and the reality of the job. The sub-question is answered by comparing the participants' expectations with their perceived reality in reference to retention factors.

Autonomy and work-life-balance

and work-life-balance

Although one participant expected long hours and three participants anticipated a lack of flexibility of daily duties, this was not reflected when compared to the reality of the job. The participants stated balanced hours despite the shift work and more opportunities for flexible decision-making than expected. To most participants (8), autonomy and flexibility was extremely important, and most participants (8) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance. These findings indicate that the expectations of autonomy and <u>work-life-balance</u> are more negative than the reality and the participants are partially satisfied with the factor's execution. This positively affects the POs' embeddedness and satisfaction increases their likelihood to remain (Ollier-Malaterre, 2010).

(Monetary) Benefits

Only one respondent mentioned benefits, more specifically pensions, when comparing their expectations with the reality. They stated that they expected a great pension, but this expectation was not met. However, the lack of reference to such benefits by the remaining participants demonstrates Herzberg *et al.*'s (1959) two-factor-theory. As the participants' basic needs for benefits are balanced and satisfied, the benefits become value neutral in terms of retention and, thus, less noteworthy (Dess *et al.*, 2008; Hays, 1999). Additionally, when referring to the participants' evaluation of HMPPS' performance in benefits, most participants (10) were satisfied.

Career development

Whilst three respondents expected career development opportunities, the findings showed that a lack of opportunities to progress in combination with a lack of support from management was actualised and criticised by two respondents. Although most respondents did not comment on the comparison of expectations or reality regarding career development, the findings still

indicate that recruitment commitments are not translated into reality. This is corroborated by most respondents stating being dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance. The apparent lack of opportunities to progress potentially decreases staff productivity and retention and should be highlighted for improvement strategies (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015).

Communication

Although communication was not mentioned within respondents' expectations, one stated that there is a lack of communication. Additionally, communication was deemed the least satisfactory of all factors regarding HMPPS' performance with a mode and median of dissatisfactory, whereas communication was the third most important factor influencing the participants' job satisfaction and retention. Therefore, the findings indicate a strong correlation between an apparent lack of communication in the organisation and employee turnover.

Leadership

Regarding leadership opportunities, two respondents expected opportunities to lead change when they joined. However, three respondents stated that these are scarce and prohibited by time constraints and absence of management support. Although the lack of these opportunities could be a motivator to remain in the service and progress into roles which allow for more leadership initiative, it is important to highlight that a lack of leadership opportunities may negatively affect the POs' pride and job satisfaction and ultimately reduce retention (Almaaitah *et al.*, 2017; Doh *et al.*, 2011).

Management

The lack of management by and teamwork between POs and managers in the reality of the role was discussed by four participants, who raised the need for additional guidance regarding career development. The responses did not distinguish between management grades, grades; thus any line manager grade (Band 5 or higher) is referred to as a manager. An interesting finding was the reference by one participant to a 'divide' between management and officers. **Furthermore Although Although**, good management was deemed the most important factor to the respondents' job satisfaction, whereas HMPPS' performance was deemed neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory clearly indicating the need for improvement of management. The indication of this divide and lack of good management urges for the identification of areas for improvement. The increased selection of managers based on their management to build good relationships and support their employees is likely to increase the performance in management, improving job satisfaction and retention (Allen, 2008).

Mental/Physical wellbeing

Employee wellbeing was the second most discussed theme after the nature of occupation. Four participants in total discussed that their job was less violent than they expected, with one participant stating that there is more self-harm than expected. Although female prisons are commonly assumed to be less violent than male prisons, the assault rates for the 12 months ending in December 2020 were higher in the female estate (MOJ, 2021). However, this information is to be interpreted with caution as underreporting has led to an inaccurate representation of violence in prisons (Ismail, 2020). With regards to self-harm, statistics show that there are over 500% more self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the female estate (MOJ, 2021). Secondly, the lack of efficient resourcing was discussed by two respondents. Staff wellbeing and job satisfaction is negatively affected by an overstretched workforce, which is frequently extended by temporary staff, due to subsequent stress (Nejati *et al.*, 2016; Sizmur and Raleigh, 2018). Thirdly, five respondents expected more staff support, both from

management and other POs, with regards to daily duties and mental well-being. Breaks and appropriate break facilities as well as additional managerial support should improve to ensure staff wellbeing and subsequent retention (Nejati *et al.*, 2015).

Nature of occupation

Sub-themes related to the nature of the job were the most discussed across the respondents' expectations and perception of reality. 11 respondents stated that they expected more meaningful work, especially through one-to-one sessions with the prisoners. However, opinions were divided concerning the reality. Three respondents stated that they feel as though they do provide meaningful work, however six respondents lacked feelings of impacting rehabilitation, instead dealing with more 'minor' tasks. This echoes Crawley's (2013) discussions concerning the mundanity of doing prison work, whereby tasks are often monotonous and viewed as 'less' than the rehabilitative work completed specialised officers or civilian staff. One participant stated:

"I am sometimes satisfied by job, but this is generally linked more closely to running a successful regime or having a positive day rather than promoting rehabilitation like expected." P018

This tendency towards the role's reality providing less meaningful work than expected by the participants is only partially evidenced by the findings on HMPPS' performance which was deemed neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory, indicating a sense of neutrality.

Regarding working in a stimulating environment, respondents' expectations differed vastly from the reality. Three reported expecting a fast-paced, exciting environment which requires POs to adapt. In comparison to the perceived reality, only one respondent stated that the

environment requires creative solutions and adaptation, whilst three respondents mentioned the monotony of daily duties. If the expectations of these do not accurately reflect the job reality, the employees' job satisfaction will decline once inducted. Therefore, it is important to adapt the job description and increasingly recruit based on person-organisation fit (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015; Ramdianee, 2014). Finally, two participants discussed that they expected to learn more about prisoners and gain an understanding of offending behaviours. However, this expectation was not compared to the reality.

Relationship with co-workers

Despite relationships being positively mentioned within reasons for staying, the responses to comparing expectations with reality were mixed. On the one hand, participants expected friendships to form, however, the participants found it difficult to establish a good rapport. On the other hand, three participants expected good teamwork and support among colleagues. According to one participant, this has been actualised, however, they stated the teamwork did not reach the levels they initially expected. With regards to HMPPS' performance, however, most participants (9) were satisfied, thus indicating positive relationships between co-workers, as supported by the participants' reasons for staying. These findings are consistent with Mitchell *et al.*'s (2001) and Ramapriya and Sudhamathi's (2020) arguments that establishing a network and becoming embedded in an organisation positively affects employee retention.

Salary

Two respondents compared their expectations of the salary to the reality, both stating that they expected a better and fairer salary. One of the respondents mentioned the existing wage gap between older and newer POs was an issue that has been previously identified and is targeted by HMPPS (PSPRB, 2020). However, most participants (8) stated being neither satisfied nor

dissatisfied with the performance on salary, suggesting the participants' expectations correspond with the reality to some extent. Furthermore, Herzberg *et al.*'s (1959) two-factor-theory argues that the participants' basic requirement for a salary is balanced and satisfied, thus becoming less noteworthy to the participants (Dess *et al.*, 2008; Hays, 1999).

Training and and development

Training and & development were discussed by three participants, who expected specialist training opportunities and personal development. Only one of the respondents compared this to the reality stating that there have been few additional opportunities. This finding is consistent with the result that nine participants were dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance in training and & development in comparison with six participants being satisfied and one participant being very satisfied, showing a slight tendency towards a dissatisfactory performance and a lack of training and development opportunities.

Well-organised induction process

Although no participant discussed their expectations regarding the initial induction, it is argued that this is expected to prepare a person for a role. However, one participant stated that in reality, thethat, the training was hardly applicable to their work due to differences across prisons. Furthermore, whilst a well-organised induction process was the fourth most important factor to the participants' job satisfaction, HMPPS' performance was the second lowest out of the eleven retention factors with nine participants being dissatisfied. According to HMPPS (2018) investments into staff induction have been made, however, a localised induction plan may be required to adequately prepare new recruits for their role and increase employee embeddedness within the organisation (Salau *et al.*, 2014).

The factors influencing POs' decision to join and stay in the service are career development, job security, leadership, nature of occupation with an emphasis on providing meaningful work, relationship with co-workers, salary, and training & development. Career development and training & development were both mainly highlighted as reasons for joining but could benefit from HMPPS improvements to utilise its positive impact on PO retention. Providing meaningful work, the relationship with co-workers, and salary were shown to be positively impacting retention and should be maintained to the same standards. Leadership was briefly discussed, and it was argued that the desire to innovate positively impacted one participant's sed ti.
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total offer other retention and the effect could, thus, be utilised through existing leadership programmes. Finally, job security can be only partially influenced by HMPPS, but it is nonetheless important to be aware of competition on the job market and offer other retention factors in addition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are a combination between the existing literature and the participants' recommendations on improving retention, thereby aiming to offer actionable outcomes for HMPPS. The areas in which the recommendations were made are career development, management, salary, and training & development. It is important to note, however, that a recommendation in one area is likely to improve other retention factors too. Career development and training & development were identified due to being mainly highlighted as reasons for joining although the participants were dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance in both factors. Management and salary were selected as the two factors were subject to most recommendations by the participants, thus illustrating the participants' desire for improvements in these areas.

Career Development: Mandatory career maps

Despite being an important retention factor to the participants, HMPPS' performance in career development was deemed dissatisfactory. In their study of the professional development of nurses Webb *et al.* (2017) argue for the benefits of career mapping, a method of planning advancement and achievable goals in the process. Similarly, Mathis and Jackson (2011) argue that developing career maps directly improves employee retention. Therefore, this study recommends the compulsory use of career maps as part of HMPPS' line management structure, which should be carefully planned and then forwarded to the HR department which is responsible for gathering more information for the line manager and audit the line managers on their performance in career development.

Management: Manager selection criteria

Good management was the most important retention factor to the participants, participants; however the majority of participants were dissatisfied with HMPPS' performance in

management. Managerial support, especially in the form of line management, is a common HR practice and can be aided by selecting managers not only on their occupational abilities but also on their managerial abilities such as their relationship-building and coaching skills (Allen, 2008; Guest and Bos-Nehles, 2013). Thereby, introducing middle management training and an associated qualification may improve the use the of current line management processes as mandated by HMPPS could be used to their full effect, thus improving employee retention.

Salary: Evaluating the 2017 payment boost

As previously discussed, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory argues that salary is a hygienic factor, thus, it does not motivate retention but can impact turnover if dissatisfactory. However, Crawley (2013) notes that pay is a significant motivation for PO's to stay, highlighting the need to evaluate However, an evaluation of the 2017 payment boost could to shed light on whether or not an increased salary aids PO retention and could be used to inform future retention strategies.

Training and and& development: Increase training opportunities and equate access

Although training and & development impacts POs' reasons for joining, HMPPS' performance was deemed dissatisfactory. Although the lack of opportunities can be partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional training opportunities should be at the forefront of HMPPS' retention strategy, due to their impact on employees' commitment to the organisation (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015; HMPPS, 2020). These training opportunities could be included in the aforementioned career maps and HMPPS could commit to a pre-determined number of training hours per employee to ensure equal distribution of training resources (Allen, 2008).

<text> In conclusion, HMPPS would benefit from establishing a retention strategy which focusses on

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