

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the methodology selected for this research and discussed the selecting of the sample that will complete the questionnaire. In this chapter, the responses to the questionnaire are analyzed and discussed. Each question in the Likert scale is analyzed individually and in some cases are represented graphically for easy comparison and understanding. The open ended questions are discussed through the comparison and similarities of all respondents to a particular question.

5.2 OCCUPATIONAL BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.2.1 Salary and Remuneration

Salary and remuneration seems to be factors that are consistent globally as a concern to the emergency medical service as per the literature review. Although this problem was improved, the issue of migration still persists (Dambisya, 2007). The results of the survey are evidence that this problem of salary and remuneration is one that still persists within South Africa.

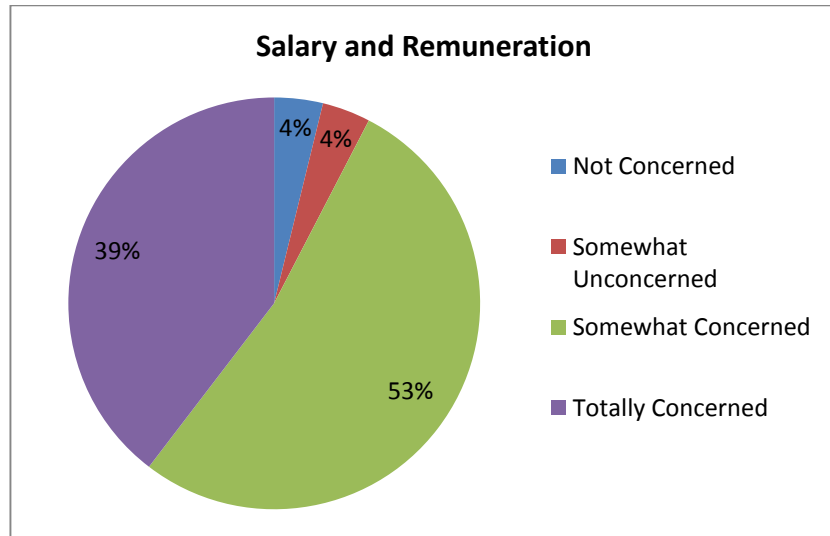


Figure 1: Salary and Remuneration (Source: Own source)

As revealed in figure 1, it is clearly understood that a total of 92% of all respondents are either concerned or express some concern over this factor. The remaining categories of concerns are negligible in comparison to the fact. The figure of 92% is staggering; however it can be argued that no employee will be comfortable with their current earnings or remuneration. In whichever direction this argument may lead, this fact still remains that paramedics view salaries and remuneration as a concern and cannot be taken lightly. The possibility of this being a primary cause for the migration of paramedics exists and should certainly be a cause of concern for any organization attempting to retain their paramedics.

5.2.2 Provident and Pension Fund Benefits

Both figure 1 and figure 2 express similar reservations on the category of being totally concerned in that provident and pension fund benefits together with salary and remuneration benefits can be viewed as a package when calculating total cost to company employment.

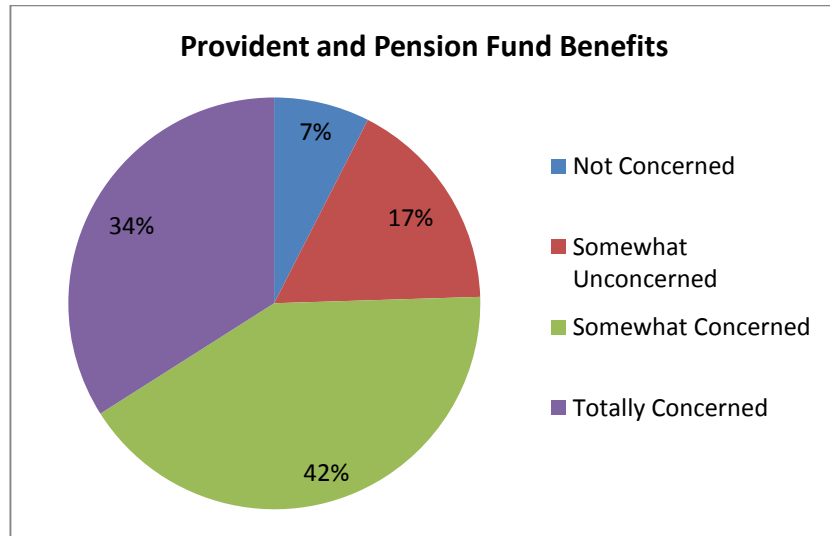


Figure 2: Provident and Pension Fund Benefits (**Source:** Own source)

This data is not as biased as that of direct salary and remuneration where 34% revealed that there is no definite concern with provident and pension fund benefits. In comparison, salary and direct remuneration to the employee is more important, but 76% are concerned about provident and pension fund benefits. Undoubtedly this requires attention to enhance paramedic retention.

5.2.3 Opportunities for Training and Development

A significant majority of 85% respondents expressed their concern regarding training and development of whom 47% indicated that they are totally concerned (Refer to Annexure E). These results show that there is greater concern for training and development than that of provident and pension fund benefits. These results may be due to the fact that only a limited number of facilities are able to offer training to paramedics for further development which may be costly.

5.2.4 Career Advancement into Management

Paramedics in most cases do not remain operational, respond to emergencies or stay in the profession for a very long period of time. This may be as a result of burnout or post traumatic stress disorder as pointed out by Kriek (2008). In these cases as examples offered, the paramedic after being operational for while may explore opportunities for career advancement within the industry.

It is a possibility that the need for training and development are required for the paramedic to improve the opportunity for career advancement and due to burnout or post traumatic stress, this would be the better environment for the paramedic to explore. It is unfortunate that the results of the survey have indicated that 77% of all respondents are concerned with the fact of career advancement into management with 42% expressing themselves as being somewhat concerned. These results also clearly indicate that paramedics in South Africa have an interest for management and methods need to therefore be developed to encourage such enthusiasm.

5.2.5 General Stress and Trauma Related Support

Kriek (2008) had identified management of stress as a need for paramedics. She also further mentions that paramedics have a tendency to consult, debrief and console each other through social support. Organizations may offer formal support to deal with more strenuous situations. Strangely though, the survey had yielded interesting results.

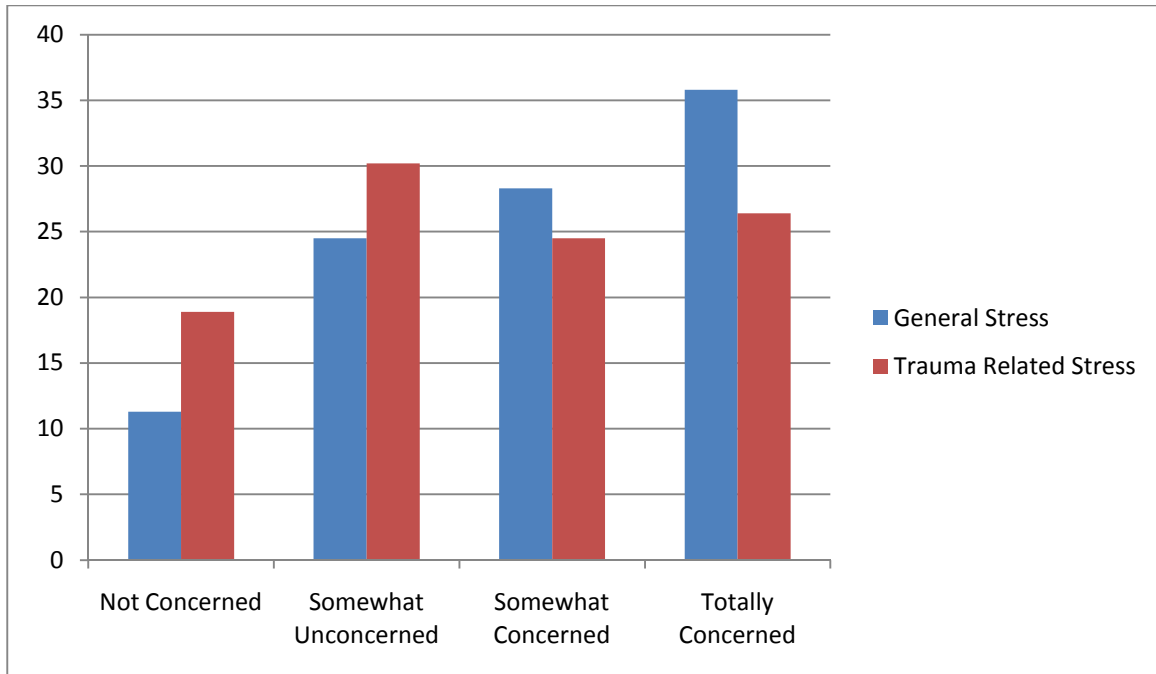


Figure 3: Comparison between General and Trauma Related Stress (**Source:** Own Source)

Figure 3 above illustrates the comparison between general and trauma related stressors in the industry. Naturally there would be an expectation that due to the nature of the industry there would be high levels of trauma related stress. On the contrary, as illustrated, the categories somewhat and totally concerned received higher results for general stress that is being experienced. The remaining two categories indicate that there is no major concern in trauma related stress as compared to general stress.

The reasons behind these results may not be adequately understood, but the results for general stress may be as a result of trauma related stress. From the results obtained thus far, there may be a reason with paramedics debriefing at a social level within the industry with practitioners that can relate to their work experience. This opportunity may not exist outside the working environment resulting in general stressors being experienced. This conclusion of the result is an opinion that will require further investigation.

5.2.6 International Salaries

It is clear that respondents are aware of international offerings, particularly the salaries. With 60% of respondents indicating such benefit of international salary offering, it may be the primary reason for paramedic migration especially when it has been indicated that salaries, provident and pension fund benefits are of such concern in comparison.

The retention of paramedics around these factors is made very difficult and will result in individual organisations investigating their own probabilities of improving these benefits. This will certainly rely on the location of the business, type of organization like private or provincial and affordability of that specific business.

5.2.7 Emigration Offers Better Living Standards

The opinions of paramedics are obvious. Internationally there exist jobs with lucrative salaries coupled with living standards that are better than those offered in South Africa. Organizations within South Africa unfortunately do not have influence over this factor but it definitely provides insight to organizations to function as a strategic tool to enhance other factors that play a role in retention. For example, although living standards are better in a specific foreign country according to the opinion of the paramedics, other factors influencing retention can be negotiated to enhance the retention strategy required. A total of 77% of respondents agree to emigration offering better living standards.

5.2.8 Conclusion

- Organizations should investigate salaries further against market standards, grading levels of the job scope and affordability of the organization

- Provident and pension fund benefits is a definite problem but other factors like training and development, salary and remuneration may take priority over this category
- Training and development together with career advancement has attracted respondents substantially as areas that require attention within the industry
- General stress rather than stress that is trauma related has impacted paramedics more
- International offerings both salaries and remuneration as well as living standards are seen as beneficial factors for migration

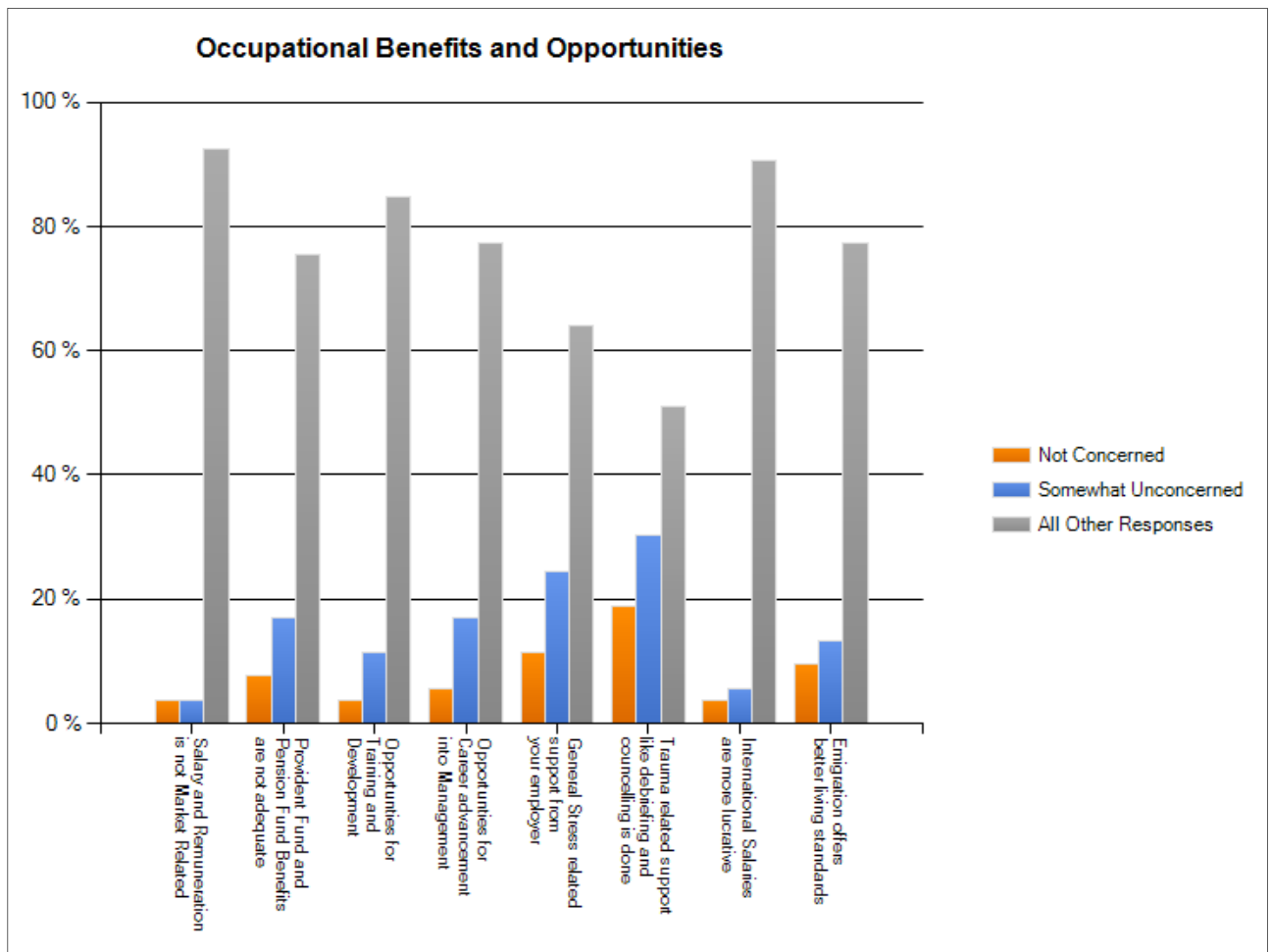


Figure 4: Occupational Benefits and Opportunities summary Illustration (**Source:** Own source)

Figure 4 illustrates the influence of all the factors mentioned in the survey that is included in the section of occupational benefits and opportunities as reflected in question 1. The results are overwhelming that concerns are at levels as high as these evidenced and will play a pivotal role in strategic development of retention strategies of paramedics.

5.3 WORKING ENVIRONMENT

5.3.1 Safe Working Environment

49% of respondents have some concern over this factor with 25% of respondents being totally concerned. In recent years, legislation and processes are being enforced to ensure higher safety standards within the country as seen in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 181 of 1993. Workers have become more aware of the Health and Safety Act and its implementation and therefore may view safety more strictly hence the higher rating.

Enhancing safety of emergency medical care practitioners is improving in many areas like the implementation of safer vehicles, improved warning and lighting systems and protective wear provided to personnel. These items may mitigate risks to a large extent for the paramedic however it doesn't prevent events like hijacking of response vehicles.

5.3.2 Stable Working Environment

Stability of the working environment takes into consideration the feeling of the paramedic in their working environment. There may be a feeling that the industry is not as stable as it should be due to migration of paramedics or problems of training and development of new paramedics in the industry. Alternatively it could be a paramedic working in a private organization that is not able to sustain itself

financially. Either direction of thought may contribute towards the feeling of negativity or dissatisfaction in the industry therefore establishing an unstable work environment. This may be the reason behind almost 70% of respondents indicating some or total concern for stability of the work environment.

5.3.3 Work Relationship with Hospitals and Other Medical staff

In knowing that every human has their own personality, it can be expected that conflict between working personnel may exist. This may exist more in situations where paramedics transport patients to opposition organizations or hospitals where working relationships may be affected.

The results of the survey show that 40% of respondents are somewhat concerned with 13% being totally concerned and 36% of respondents are somewhat unconcerned with 11% being unconcerned. As illustrated below in figure 5, it is almost an equal split between respondents over being concerned or not concerned. As already mentioned, personalities at work will play a role in these figures however the survey doesn't indicate any one sided result to prove that this is a problem that exists in this area.

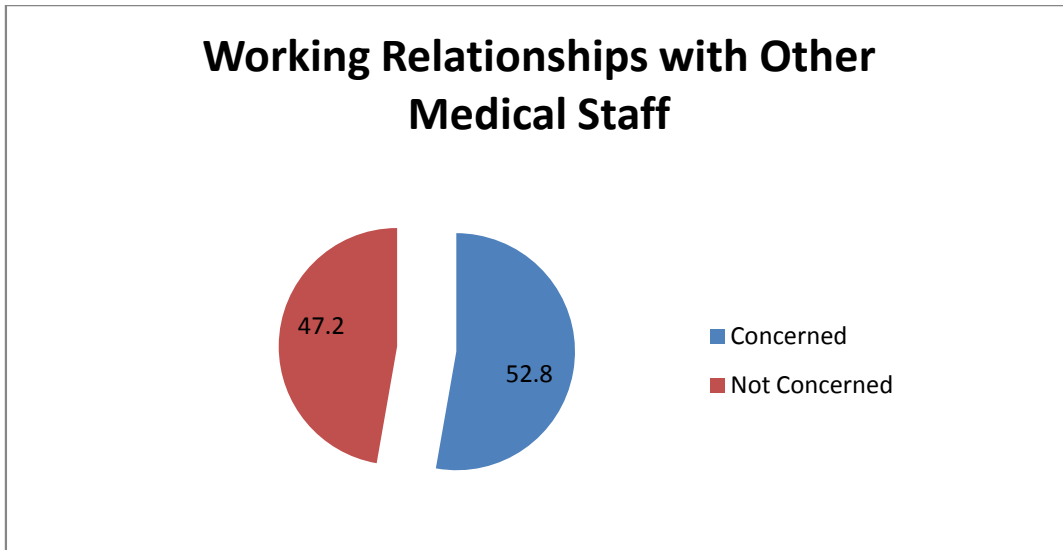


Figure 5 Working Relationships with Medical Staff (**Source:** Own source)

5.3.4 Recognition and Appreciation in the job

Recognition and appreciation in the job forms a vital role in job satisfaction and therefore contributes towards retention of paramedics in the country. It is dependent on the organization that the paramedic is employed in but a better understanding through the survey will assist managers in enforcing their contribution towards recognition and appreciation of the paramedic. A considerable 47% of respondents expressed total concern regarding recognition and appreciation in the job and 30% showed some concern. This is a total of 77% of respondents which indicates that a problem does exist in this area. Recognition and appreciation which can be basic components of needs and job satisfaction are areas that can be easily resolved. Urgent resolution may enhance the possibilities of retention of paramedics and contribute to the prevention of migration.

5.3.5 Support Provided by Management

Following through from recognition and appreciation in the job, support provided by management has yielded results from the survey that is similar. Figure 6 below illustrates the congruency of these results.

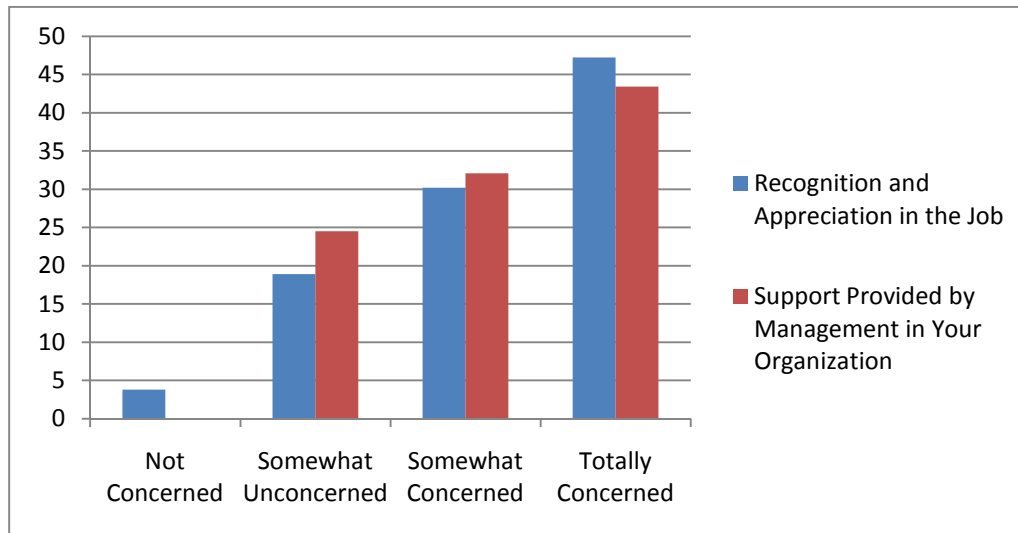


Figure 6: Comparison between Support Provided by Management and Recognition /Appreciation in the Job (**Source:** Own Source)

The results show that 76% of respondents have serious concerns around support from management within their organization. This may give reason for the 77% of respondents feeling that there is no recognition and appreciation in the job. The results are consistent. In this case, management within the organizations of emergency medical services are required to provide greater support to their employees. This support provides the opportunity for similar growth in recognition and appreciation in the job shown through the consistency of the illustration in figure 6.

5.3.6 Balance Between Work Life and Home Life

This factor of balance between work life and home life and responses received have proven to be interesting in that working hours of employees are legislated by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) and should essentially be no different to other jobs. This doesn't seem to be the case if 77% of respondents have indicated that this balance is a concern to warrant a response of this size. There are many questions that can be asked around this response which include the legality around current hours of operations and the reasons as to why these occurrences exist. A possibility could be the abuse of paramedics due to the skills shortage and paramedics willing to engage these hours due to the issues of salary and remuneration. This specific question and response is able to initiate various possibilities that will certainly require further investigation as to why paramedics feel that this balance between work and home life is an issue. Organizations taking the responsibility to investigate this further and assist in resolution will certainly add value to the industry in retaining paramedics.

5.3.7 Conclusion

- The improvement of safety is multi faceted in that internal safety measures are currently being addressed however external measures are still a concern
- Work relationships do not indicate a threat to paramedics and their reason for migration
- Recognition and appreciation in the job may well be as a result of poor support from management of the relevant organizations
- Balance between work and home life although not clearly understood requires further investigation and analysis into the reasons for paramedics not acquiring this balance
- Figure 7 below provides a summarized illustration for comparison of the results received in the working environment

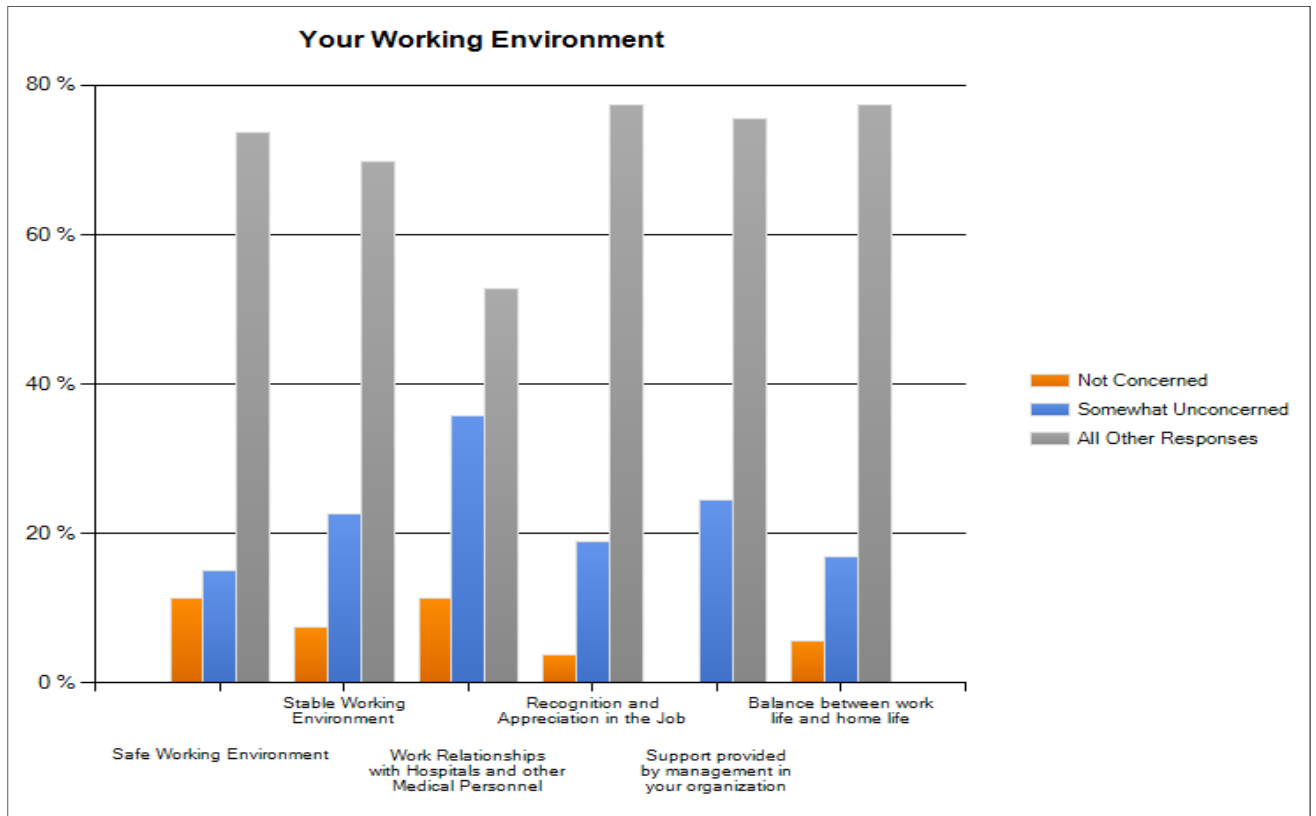


Figure 7: Your Working Environment Summary Illustration (**Source:** Own source)

5.4 HUMAN RESOURCE

5.4.1 Excessive Workloads on Paramedics in South Africa

The results of having excessive workloads on paramedics may be as a result of the scarcity of the paramedic as one problem. The job description of the paramedics is known but it is very difficult to quantify workload on the paramedic. The job is naturally one that demands both physical and psychological strengths which will vary from one person to another. What may be excessive for one paramedic is easily absorbed by another and this makes it difficult to analyze. This concept is partly visible in the results where 32% strongly agree with the

statement, 34% agree and 25% disagree. The result is shared across these scaled answers and is slightly biased towards agreement with the statement.

5.4.2 Shift Work

Shift work certainly doesn't seem to be a problem with retention on strategy. Not many respondents indicated that they strongly agree or strongly disagree. In fact this figure indicated that the response was 10% in each category. The remaining responses were either agree or disagree with the highest response rate of 51% indicating that they disagree with the statement.

5.4.3 Excessive Hours of Operation

Hours of operation is a topic that is being repeated when it was discussed in the balance of work life and home life. To reiterate, paramedics are required to work a specific amount of hours as stipulate in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997). If this is the case, it is difficult to understand how paramedics seem to think that they are currently working hours that are excessive. In the survey, 30% of respondents indicated that they agree that they are working excessive hours and 25% strongly agree. More than half of the respondents in this survey have indicated that they work excessive hours which is a cause for concern and is against the legislation of the basic conditions of employment.

5.4.4 More Lucrative Offers for Employment

In this question there is no doubt of paramedics being aware of more lucrative offers being offered. Approximately 87% of respondents agree/strongly agree with the statement. Being aware of this statement may be interpreted that paramedics have either been investigating these offers or have been offered these positions

that are more lucrative. The purpose of this question is to establish this fact. Knowing what the current market is offering, organizations should be expecting staff turnover of paramedics to these positions.

5.4.5 Considering Leaving your Current Employment

Almost 55% of respondents are considering leaving their employment which is an extreme concern especially when the volume of paramedics available is scarce. Such turnover rates can be devastating to a business and will have a substantial impact to the industry. Organizations with greater infrastructures should leverage on opportunities like this in order to retain paramedics in the industry in South Africa.

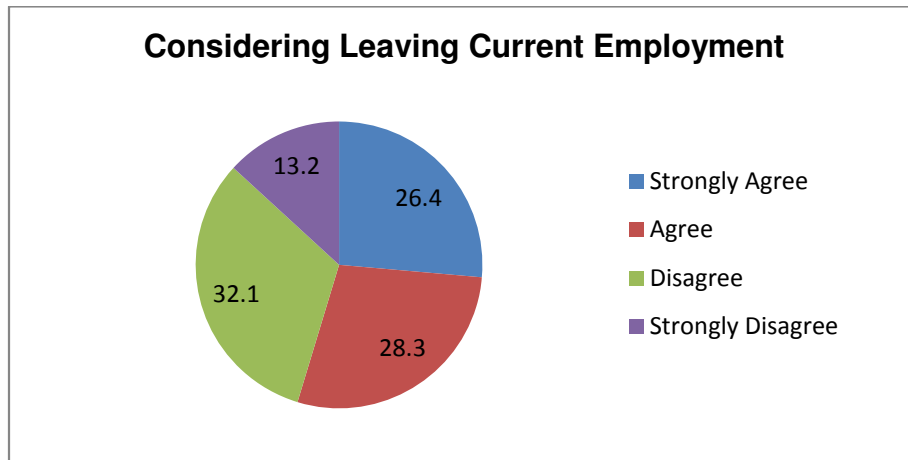


Figure 8: Considering Leaving Current Employment (**Source:** Own source)

Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of the result of this question from the respondents. Although it shows that 45% of responses either disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, to have 55% of paramedics considering leaving their current employ is a damaging figure in this context.

5.4.6 Absolute Loyalty towards Your Organization

With 42% agreeing and 23% strongly agreeing (a majority of 67%) to have absolute loyalty towards their organization, makes the researcher think about the reason why 55% of these paramedics are still considering leaving their current employ. This is a change in thought which can prove to a marginal extent that organizations, as they currently stand, are trying to keep their paramedics motivated, otherwise they wouldn't necessarily display such loyalty. With all the responses thus far, many of which dealt with organizations possibly not being efficient to improve retention of paramedics, this result has certainly obscured this fact. The question then is 'If paramedics to such an extent are loyal to their organization and possibly the industry; why then the consideration to leave their current employ?'

5.4.7 Feeling of Burnout

The feeling of burnout of staff in any organization is not beneficial especially when dealing with peoples' lives. This is an industry that cannot afford to have paramedics treating patients and do not feel like they want to be there. We now understand that paramedics have responded by way of this survey that there are feelings of burnout in the industry and is an issue that certainly requires attention.

5.4.8 Conclusion

After analyzing these questions in this section of the survey, we have a situation where there are problems identified in the industry which to a large extent involves the organizations that employ paramedics. It is the responsibility of these organizations to ensure that their staff are motivated and have job satisfaction.

Paramedics do not seem to be happy enough to stay due to them considering leaving their current employ, but at the same time they display absolute loyalty towards their organization. The results indicate that excessive hours are being worked; excessive workloads are enforced to the extent that they feel burnt out and more lucrative offers exist in the industry but yet they stay. Surely this reason for them displaying such loyalty can be found because whatever this reason is, it has a profound positive effect on the paramedic.

5.5 RISK FACTORS

5.5.1 Contraction of Disease

Being involved in the pre-hospital industry and working directly with blood products and other bodily fluids, being exposed to disease and the risk of contamination is inevitable. Statistically, South Africa unfortunately has a reputation of being one of the highest countries in the world with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). This, as an example, is one of the diseases the paramedics are exposed to in their job. Although the fight against the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a global phenomenon and South Africa has invested funds into the treatment and awareness of this disease, it cannot be resolved immediately. The paramedics are in the position where they will deal with it in their line of work. The responses have indicated that there are serious concerns around dealing with these patients and the risk that is associated with it. It is unfortunate that there is no immediate cure to AIDS and may be the reason for the migration of paramedics to lesser affected areas of the globe. If this is one of the main reasons for migration of paramedics and knowing that there is no cure for AIDS, then no matter what strategy is implemented for retention, the outcome will remain to be poor. The results indicate that 55% of the population in the survey are totally concerned and 21% are somewhat concerned. This is a total of 76% of paramedics who completed the survey.

5.5.2 Medical Legal Risk

Medical legal risk is a reality that the paramedic is faced with. Often paramedics are found defending their actions of patient treatment in court. Lawsuits against the paramedic can lead to various outcomes including being arrested for malpractice or simply losing their licence to practice via the Health Professions Council. Penalties of their actions will vary on the extent of damage or malpractice. Paramedics may choose to work out of South Africa to mitigate the risk of having legal action taken against them. The response from the survey certainly indicates concerns around this type of risk. Interestingly, not a single response for the category 'not concerned' was reported. This alone proves the seriousness of the risk factor together with 19% indicating total concern and 57% indicating some concern.

5.5.3 Being Involved in a High Speed Response Accident

It can be assumed that no normal person would like to be involved in a high speed motor vehicle accident. Paramedics in the pre-hospital environment are required to respond to emergencies at high speed in rapid response vehicles. This response driving at high speed is of higher risk than normal driving with the possibility of having a motor vehicle accident.

Paramedic response to this factor shows that 40% of them are totally concerned about having a motor vehicle accident. It can be argued that, being a paramedic obviously entails rapid response driving and shouldn't be a problem. A paramedic should know what they are getting themselves into when they applied to study the profession, but many paramedics in reality are working in remote sites and clinics as examples. Taking on this risk of response driving might be a deterrent for paramedics to be operational. Some concern was expressed by 36% of respondents which, when coupled with those who have total concern, indicates that the larger majority of paramedics are not happy with response driving.

5.5.4 Injury at Work

Most of the respondents in this question favoured being somewhat concerned representing 47% of responses. Somewhat unconcerned had representation of 25% and totally concerned being 28%. The responses received here for this question is similar to the responses received for the question regarding medical legal risk. No respondents had indicated that there is no concern once again proving that there is some seriousness to this risk factor.

5.5.5 Crime Situation in the Country

The response to this question by far outweighed all questions previously asked thus far in terms of being totally concerned. The result indicated in this category was 57%. This may be due to paramedics having experienced crime being committed daily through incidents like shootings and stabbings. Their exposure to crime may be the primary cause of migration to other countries to seek a safer and better lifestyle for themselves as well as their families. Figure 9 below illustrates the impact of crime on paramedics in South Africa.

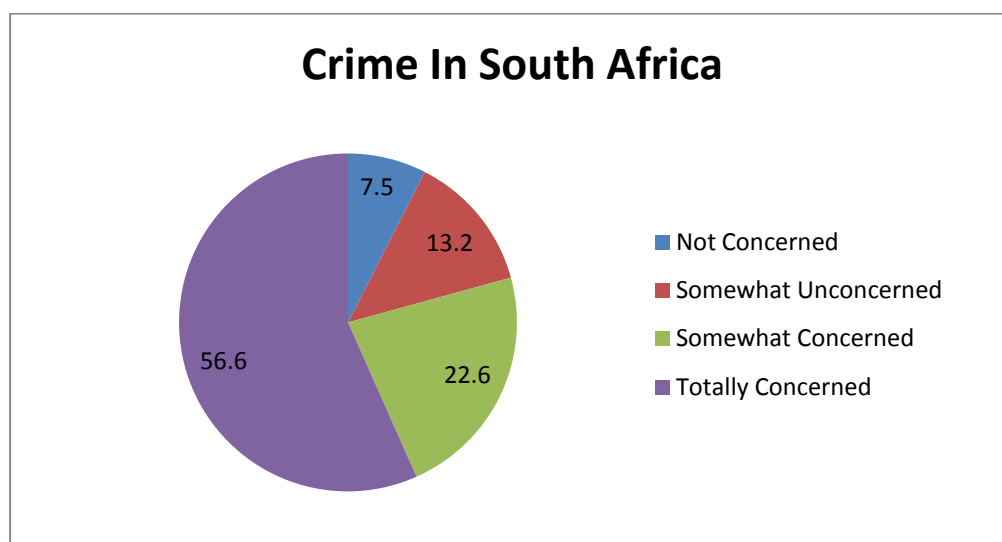


Figure 9: Crime in South Africa (**Source:** Own source)

5.5.6 Conclusion

Risk to any business, profession or job is inevitable. However, some may have greater risks attached to them than others. The paramedic is faced with risks that are considered to be high like working with a disease that can be contracted through various means. AIDS, as the example used, is a disease that cannot be controlled, but still exists which influences the mindset of the paramedic - hence job retention is compromised.

They are also faced with medical legal risk where they are responsible for the well being of a patient and often questioned or investigated regarding the patient treatment delivered to patients. This has repercussions on the paramedic and his future career path.

Dangers of the job were identified through factors like high speed driving and crime in the country which they constantly encountering. Major concerns were expressed in this section of the survey where dangers and risks of the job were questioned.

5.6 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

5.6.1 Paramedics Working by Themselves on Response Vehicles

From the risks and dangers already identified together with its concerns in the survey, it can be assumed that paramedics would prefer to work with someone on the rapid response vehicle to assist in the mitigation of some of the risks already identified. In a normal day of the paramedic, it expected of them to work alone on the vehicle and respond to ambulances wherever advanced life support interventions may be required.

Figure 10 below illustrates a different picture to what is thought should happen from the risks that have been identified to be of concern. Figure 10 shows a more even spread of responses around paramedics working alone on response

vehicles. It is difficult to understand why, if the risks identified are of concern, many paramedics still show no concern or little concern with working alone. Further investigation is required here in this factor to better understand the rationale behind the thought.

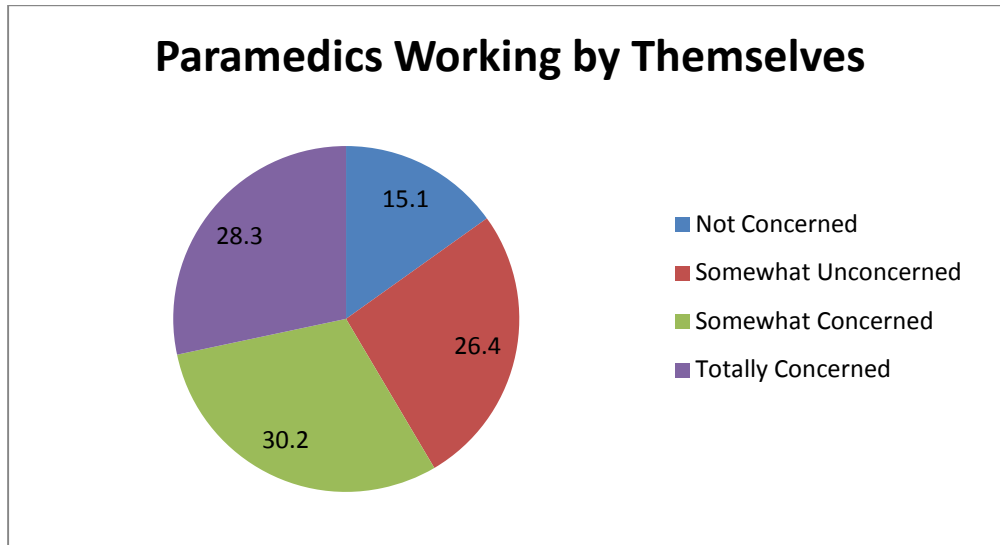


Figure 10: Paramedics Working by Themselves (Source: Own source)

5.6.2 Levels of Competency

Paramedics deal with ambulance staff on a daily basis and often rely on them for assistance in patient treatment. These ambulance personnel certainly make the job easier if they are efficient and competent to do the job at their level and scope of practice. It is not pleasant treating patients that have conditions which are worse than when the medical practitioners originally arrived. This leaves the paramedic in a situation to rectify the problems with patient care and treat more efficiently. After all, we are dealing with peoples' lives and cannot afford to make mistakes. The responsibility then becomes that of the paramedic to maintain and often they find themselves fixing a problem that has been encountered.

The survey shows that 43% of paramedics are totally concerned with the levels of competency and efficiency of medical practitioners in the country and 32% expressing some concern. It can be extremely frustrating working with other

medical practitioners on the scene of an emergency and having to deal with staff of this nature as well. This scenario may possibly contribute towards the feeling of the emergency service system failing and adding to the push factors identified earlier for migration of paramedics.

5.6.3 Utilization of Equipment

It is vital for a paramedic to have the right equipment to do the job more effectively. It is not ideal to be in a situation where a procedure can't be done due to lack of the necessary equipment especially where the patient outcome may be significantly improved. This failure will rest upon the paramedic contributing towards post traumatic stress and setting off a chain of events to the detriment of the paramedic.

It is definitely not the ideal situation for 51% of paramedics responding to the survey showing a total concern to this category. This amount of total concern can certainly be damaging to the industry in totality. Some concern was identified by 30% of respondents, thus yielding a total majority of 81% of respondents proving that utilization of equipment is poor or technologically not up to date.

5.6.4 Autonomy in the Work Environment

Being an advanced life support practitioner in the pre-hospital industry automatically places the individual into a supervisory role. The paramedic treats patients at higher a scope of practice than other medical practitioners and offers advice and guidance to ensure a better standard of patient care is available. The figures obtained is not as high as other responses received with 68% of paramedics showing concern of which 49% of the respondents only being somewhat concerned. The problem of autonomy in comparison to other problems identified does not seem to be the main issue that will affect retention of paramedics.

5.6.5 Effects of Work on Family

The results obtained in this instant are consistent with some previous results like the balance of work life and home life as well as the increase in excessive workloads being experienced. Paramedics show that 34% are totally concerned and 36% are somewhat concerned about the effects work has on their family (revealing a majority concern of 70%). It is however inconsistent with categories like working shifts where it would be expected that working shifts would interfere with family time. A total of 60% of respondents indicated that shift work is not a problem. Although there is establishment of effects of work on the family of paramedics, the contributors to these effects may well have been identified in the survey and if resolved will alleviate this factor.

5.6.6 Monotony of the Job

This is the only category of the survey which yielded results where no concerns and somewhat unconcerned outweighed that of all concerns in the rating scale. It is clear that the job is not monotonous in nature and may affect a few as indicated in the survey. This category thus can't be the problem for the migration of paramedics.

5.6.7 Limitations on Scope of Practice

The aim of this question was to identify whether paramedics were not satisfied with their current scope of practice and may be the reason for migration. The result shows that 42% of paramedics have no concern or are somewhat unconcerned and the remaining response is 58% with 21% indicating total concern.

There is however a limitation to this question which came to surface after its distribution and piloting. With the introduction of the Bachelors of Technology in

Emergency Medical Care and rescue, the scope of paramedics at this level has increased while other advanced life support practitioners remain on the standard scope of practice of paramedics. This means that some advanced life support paramedics will show concern while others will not. This question will therefore not be a true reflection of the opinions of paramedics working in the pre-hospital environment.

5.6.8 Conclusion

From the analysis of the questions in this section of professional practice, there are two main issues that have been identified that will affect the retention of paramedics in South Africa. These issues are the current levels of competency and efficiency of medical practitioners that paramedics must work with in the industry, and the utilization as well as availability of working equipment that is technologically up to date. These issues and its effects have been described briefly and if resolved may well add value to the industry, the profession, patient management and retention strategies of paramedics.

5.7 ATTRACTION OF BECOMING A PARAMEDIC

The reason in asking this question was to ascertain an understanding of why paramedics did choose this field. There are possibilities that there are attractions that were present in the past that no longer exist, or paramedics of today were led into this profession under false information, hence the poor retention. The question is an open ended question therefore giving the paramedic an opportunity to state their feeling.

There are many variations to the responses received as per annexure E but a summary into the reason of becoming a paramedic are:

- Past experience or dealing with a paramedic has offered encouragement into the profession

- Many had started in the fire department and progressed into the medical aspect
- Paramedics in the past were treated with respect which influenced the decision to be a paramedic. One response pertaining to this fact had shown frustration where the respondent asks the question of the pre-hospital industry changing and requiring motivation to stay in the industry.
- Many have indicated the passion for the field of medicine
- The job is not a monotonous one where challenges are offered on a day to day basis
- The most common answer received is that of having the ability to assist people and making a difference

Interestingly, the survey had started with questions around salary, remuneration and benefits and not a single response in this question of becoming a paramedic had reflected salary or remuneration. This adds value to the retention strategy of paramedics because these factors or needs that encouraged them to become paramedics may have been altered or changed during the course of time. The feeling of them being valuable and making a difference or encouraging respect in the industry may well be strategies that are required to enhance retention.

5.8 FEELINGS OF BEING A PARAMEDIC

Finding out the feelings of the paramedic currently and comparing it to the overall reasons as to why they became a paramedic initially provides the information of change. This change is blatant in some responses where paramedics started out positively and currently have many concerns still being in the profession. Most negative responses in this case concern issues with money, personal growth and development in their career, family time and general negativity in the industry.

The most common issue highlighted in this question is that of salary and remuneration. This issue was certainly not highlighted in the previous question as

to why they had become a paramedic. The industry in recent years have improved salaries but still remains to be a problem as already mentioned in the literature review. There are many unanswered question around salaries of paramedics that may only be answered upon adequate investigation. Personal growth and career development was the next common issue highlighted. This was expressed earlier as concerns where advancement into management and opportunities for training and development was asked. It is now highlighted again in the open ended question which is a reiteration of its importance and role it may play in the retention of paramedics in South Africa.

The majority of responses were indeed very positive where paramedics still absolutely love what they do. The positivity in this question far outweighed the negativity. This proves that paramedics enjoy their job and from some of the responses it can be seen that there is passion in what they do.

5.9 QUALITY OF LIFE

In analyzing these responses, it was expected that many paramedics would not have the quality of life. Many paramedics sound despondent of the long working hours especially those paramedics working in the rural areas of the country. There are fewer paramedics available in these areas making it more difficult for those available to have sufficient rest periods. These comments from the questionnaire have indicated that some paramedics work on standby systems for twenty four hours a day and seven days a week.

The surprising result though, after the negativity is that 77% of paramedics state that they achieve quality of life. Many of them report that this quality of life is something that they must work towards. The shift systems indicated by a few responses state that it provides some time to assist in creating quality of life.

5.10 MAIN REASONS FOR LEAVING CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

This question is direct in terms of what is required. It is important to know why a paramedic would leave and by having this answer it will be the vital piece of information to use in order to retain them. Majority of responses so far have been consistent with the answers that were provided to this question.

I have summarized the key reasons for paramedics leaving their current employment. They are:

- Remuneration or salary. Provident or pension fund benefits had never been mentioned since asked in question 1
- Management Support
- Personal Development
- Career Advancement

These are the reasons that are key to the strategy for the retention of the paramedic.

5.11 INTENTION OF LEAVING IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS

It is now known what are the main reasons for paramedic's leaving and the factors required to retain them. This question places management of paramedics in the seat of understanding with regards to the time they are dealing with. This question was also a simple 'yes' or 'no' with regards to the intention of the paramedic for leaving their current employ within the next three years. It also reveals a level of dissatisfaction with their current employer or organization. The response to this question is illustrated below.

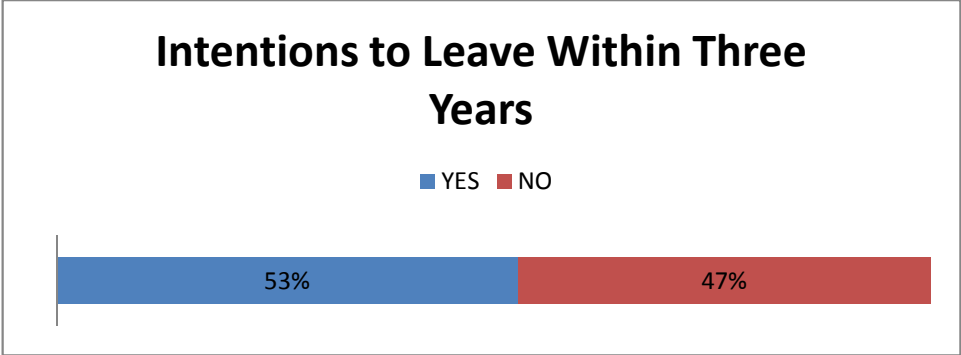


Figure 11: Intentions of Paramedics for leaving current employment within 3 Years (**Source:** Own source)

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

In the industry of pre-hospital medicine, the skills shortage of paramedics is known and many paramedics migrate both nationally and internationally between organizations. This research is aimed at identifying retention strategies of paramedics in South Africa and reiteration of the problem statement serves this purpose which is:

Paramedics play a vital role in the business of emergency medical services through its management structure and service delivery to patients and therefore necessitate strategies for the retention of paramedics in order to mitigate their migration both nationally and internationally.

The vital role that the paramedic has in the industry has been proved through the literature review and shows their importance on advanced patient care. It is therefore important to retain paramedics and mitigate their migration from their current organization.

One objective in resolving this problem was to identify key reasons for the migration of paramedics. The questionnaire had identified these key reasons through two types of questions which applied a Likert scale type question and questions that were open-ended that enabled paramedics to state their opinion freely. Majority of the questions had revealed that there are many problems that exist. However, the key reasons identified are those problems that require urgent attention before focusing on the remaining issues. These key reasons that were identified as set out in the objective were:

- Remuneration and salary
- Support from management within their organization
- Personal development

- Career advancement

Another objective was to evaluate the levels of job satisfaction within the industry. The questionnaire was informed by the theoretical considerations as discussed earlier in the project to achieve this objective. The Two Factor theory for example had informed questions like working hours and availability of equipment which has provided information on the level of job satisfaction. This objective then was achieved as well.

We are in a situation where paramedics that have completed the questionnaire have resulted in majority stating that they absolutely love what they do. Not every employee enjoys their job no matter what they do or what industry they work in. There are key issues that have been brought to surface in the job of the paramedic which if rectified will enhance the retention of paramedics in South Africa. The perception currently in the industry is that paramedics will work wherever the salary being offered is more lucrative which affects staff turnover. To a large extent this statement is true which is evident in the achievement of objective one. There are however other problems that have been identified together with salary and remuneration as already shown. These items need to be modified and enhanced to improve retention strategies of paramedics but may be area specific. The retention of paramedics in Cape Town for example may differ to that in Durban and Johannesburg but the fundamental findings in this research project will apply nationally.

Increasing the population of paramedics in the country may assist with the skills shortage currently being experienced. However, it will not prevent paramedics from leaving until the basics of needs and job satisfaction is addressed. Organizations should leverage off this information in making the pre-hospital industry more attractive to paramedics. With the negative attitude behind some of the responses received, organizations should also prioritize these issues in changing the current culture being developed.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Emergency medical services within the country should develop employee retention programs coupled with policies regarding the retention of paramedics which must be evidence based
- Priority should be given to the reevaluation of salaries and grading systems within the organization as this was identified as one of the key issues for job satisfaction
- Organizations must formalize and implement an adequate succession management plan for candidates to fill management roles
- A culture of retention within the industry should be created and organizations should not just be business specific. Being business specific with the current fierce competition may influence the industry negatively. All relevant stakeholders within the industry are recommended to communicate a unified strategy for a positive future for the pre-hospital environment
- Recognition, appreciation and a culture of respect must be part of the retention program when developed together with a working support structure from management

6.3 FURTHER STUDIES

There are a few subjects for consideration in further studies which resulted from this research. Many responses indicated that career development is an issue within the industry and further studies regarding the abilities of paramedics to manage emergency medical services as a business may be beneficial to the industry.

It would also be beneficial for this research project as a further study to target advanced life support paramedics that are currently working internationally for

further analysis. It is currently a wonder whether their reasons for leaving are for the same reasons identified in this research project.

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