

ABSTRACT

The researcher was in the view that the human resource component of the Sri Lanka Air Force had been neglected though they had been contributing their effort to achieve objectives of the Air Force and win wars for the country. The researcher was also in the view that human feelings needed to be addressed in order to get people self driven for work.

Having been a member of the SLAF for the past 19 years, the researcher felt that much could be done to increase the levels of motivation, job satisfaction and performance of the people working therein. The researcher also realized that the human resource was not treated well at most instances. The researcher also assumed that the lack of knowledge in Human Resource Management contributed immensely towards this.

Growth and productivity in any organization is achieved by giving prominence to treat the human resource as an asset. In other words, people tend to work hard when they are satisfied in their jobs. Job satisfaction sparks motivation and in turn motivation sparks performance. When these factors are fulfilled people are committed to work willingly. Therefore increasing the levels of job satisfaction, motivation and performance for people to work willingly is the work of Human Resource Management.

In the SLAF many of the Human Resource Key Result Areas are practiced administratively which does not address the human need. As a result job satisfaction, motivation and performance levels of people are low. In other words the lack of Human Resource Management knowledge amongst the leadership has contributed towards this end, the ultimate resulting in 'absenteeism'.

The researcher was convinced that absenteeism was at its peak in the Gunner trade. Therefore statistical data was collected to analyze and confirm this status. It was revealed that the highest number of absenteeism were from the Gunner trade serving at SLAF Poovarasankulam / Mankulam in the operational areas whilst the Gunners were the highest number of absenteeism rate at SLAF Katunayake though located in a non operational area. This information goes on to prove that people needs have not been taken care of and the location was not a determinant to prevent absenteeism. It was also revealed that absenteeism was most in Gunners during the early years of their service life.

Therefore the researcher undertook to conduct research for the Gunner trade only. The researcher also focused attention to Gunners having three years service and serving at SLAF Poovarasankulam / Mankulam. In order to analyze this situation Maslow's Hierarchy Type of Motivation and Herzberg's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Type of Motivation was used while special measures were used to analyze the job satisfaction and job performance levels of Gunner trade personnel. As a result it was revealed that job satisfaction was low resulting in decrease levels of motivation and performance.

The researcher also interviewed certain Directors and senior staff officers to analyze the level of Human Resource Management knowledge in them. It was revealed that the management lacked knowledge in this area which contributed immensely towards all levels of management using their own ad-hoc practices. The researcher also distributed a questionnaire to analyze the need to establish the Directorate of Human Resources in the SLAF. The questionnaire was distributed amongst senior administrative and other branch officers who had good knowledge and some knowledge in HR practices. The questionnaire was also distributed amongst officers who had no knowledge at all in this area. As a result it was revealed that officers who had a good knowledge about HR contributed positively towards answering the questionnaire.

Since data collected proved the worth of establishing the Directorate of Human Resources in the SLAF, the researcher felt motivated to justify the cause. Therefore some interviews were conducted based on the best practices of HR. Towards this end some HR Practitioners and some HR Consultants were interviewed who confirmed that the questionnaire and the interview was on the right focus to analyze the need to establish the Directorate of Human Resources in the SLAF. When some Directors too were interviewed on the same lines they too were in support for the need to establish the said Directorate. Therefore the need to establish the Directorate of Human Resources in the SLAF was justified. The researcher also found that the US Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force had already established HR and were using such HR applications to achieve organizational and human resource objectives.

Therefore the researcher has proved through research that the SLAF needs to establish the Directorate of Human Resources to increase the levels of productivity and growth of the human resource as well as of the organization. In order to achieve this, the researcher proposes the need to align and link HR strategies with Air Force operational strategies geared to meet organizational strategies through the effective application of human resource strategies.