

TALENT MANAGEMENT AND PATIENTS' OUTCOME IN TERTIARY HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS IN NIGER DELTA REGION, NIGERIA: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper was to examine talent management and patients' outcome in tertiary healthcare institutions located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The objectives were to examine the effect of talent attraction, talent development, workforce capability, quality health care delivery and improved patient outcomes in tertiary health institutions. The study employed a conceptual research review method. Based on the review of the study, it revealed that other generic HRM functions such as HR planning, recruitment, performance management, learning and development, compensation and reward and succession planning influenced patients outcome in Tertiary health Institutions. The study found that unpleasant work environment, licensing gap between registered and practicing professionals, uneven distribution of skilled personnel, and weak data base system affect the quality of service delivered. This imbalance in practice and procedure if not check will impact on the overall performance of employees. The study recommended that effective talent management brings to limelight all HR processes and strategies to attract, develop, motivate, and retain high-performing employees. Most importantly, the implementation of this strategy will provide the needed background for employee and patients to adapt to change while remaining flexible to the expectations and vision of the tertiary health institutions.

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KEYWORDS: HRM, HR planning, recruitment, performance management, licensing gap, uneven distribution of skilled personnel, and weak data base system

Introduction

The healthcare sector globally is experiencing unprecedented workforce challenges characterized by talent shortages, increasing employee mobility, demographic transitions, technological disruptions, and growing patient expectations. These developments have heightened the strategic importance of talent management as a critical human resource management function capable of enhancing organizational performance and healthcare service delivery (Collings et al., 2022; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2023). Within healthcare organizations, talent management encompasses systematic processes for attracting, developing, engaging, and retaining highly skilled professionals whose competencies are essential for delivering safe, efficient, and patient-centered care (Helmi et al., 2023). The strategic significance of talent management is particularly

evident in healthcare institutions where human capital constitutes the primary resource for achieving quality clinical outcomes. According to the Resource-Based View, organizations gain sustainable competitive advantage through the effective deployment of valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources, particularly skilled employees (Barney, 1991; Abu-Darwish et al., 2022). In healthcare settings, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, and other healthcare professionals represent critical strategic assets whose knowledge, expertise, and commitment directly influence patient outcomes. Consequently, healthcare institutions that invest in talent acquisition, workforce development, succession planning, and employee retention are more likely to achieve superior patient satisfaction, reduced medical errors, improved clinical outcomes, and enhanced organizational effectiveness (Mitosis et al., 2021; Xulu & Brijball, 2023).

Recent evidence suggests that effective talent management practices contribute significantly to healthcare quality indicators through enhanced employee engagement, professional competence, workforce stability, and organizational commitment (Sariyildiz, 2025). Healthcare professionals who perceive opportunities for career advancement, continuous learning, and organizational support are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment, thereby improving the quality and continuity of patient care (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2023). Conversely, inadequate talent management practices often result in employee burnout, turnover intentions, workforce shortages, and diminished service quality, all of which negatively affect patient outcomes (World Health Organization, 2024). The Nigerian healthcare system continues to face significant human resource challenges despite ongoing reforms aimed at improving healthcare delivery. These challenges include shortages of qualified healthcare professionals, increasing migration of skilled personnel to developed countries, inequitable workforce distribution, inadequate professional development opportunities, and poor employee retention mechanisms (Adebayo et al., 2024). The situation is particularly pronounced in tertiary health institutions that serve as referral centers for specialized healthcare services and medical training. As the demand for quality healthcare continues to rise, these institutions face increasing pressure to maintain an adequate workforce capable of delivering high-quality patient care while adapting to evolving clinical and technological requirements.

Within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, healthcare workforce challenges are further compounded by socioeconomic inequalities, environmental health concerns, infrastructural deficits, and persistent difficulties in attracting and retaining highly skilled healthcare professionals. Although the region contributes substantially to Nigeria's economic development through oil and gas production, healthcare institutions continue to grapple with workforce instability, inadequate staffing levels, and high employee turnover rates. These challenges threaten the capacity of tertiary healthcare institutions to provide timely, effective, and patient-centered healthcare services. Given that patient outcomes are increasingly recognized as key indicators of healthcare quality and organizational performance, understanding the role of talent management in enhancing these outcomes has become both a practical and scholarly imperative. Existing

studies have extensively examined talent management and organizational performance across various sectors; however, empirical evidence linking talent management practices to patient outcomes within tertiary healthcare institutions in the Niger Delta region remains limited. Most studies have focused on employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, with relatively little attention devoted to patient-centered outcomes such as quality of care, patient satisfaction, treatment effectiveness, and service responsiveness. This gap in the literature underscores the need for context-specific investigations capable of providing evidence-based insights into how strategic talent management practices influence healthcare delivery outcomes within resource-constrained environments.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the relationship between talent management and patient outcomes in tertiary health institutions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study explores how talent attraction, talent development, and talent retention contribute to the attainment of improved patient outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on strategic human resource management in healthcare while providing policy-relevant recommendations for healthcare administrators, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to strengthen healthcare performance and improve patient care outcomes in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV), originally developed by Barney (1991), posits that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage through resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Within healthcare organizations, highly skilled healthcare professionals constitute strategic assets whose knowledge, expertise, clinical competence, and commitment are difficult for competing institutions to replicate. The RBV suggests that organizational performance depends not merely on the possession of resources but on the effective management and deployment of those resources to create value. In contemporary healthcare systems, talent management has emerged as a strategic mechanism for acquiring, developing, and retaining human resources capable of improving organizational outcomes. Healthcare institutions that successfully attract competent physicians, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, and other healthcare professionals are better positioned to deliver quality healthcare services and achieve improved patient outcomes (Abu-Darwish et al., 2022). Recent healthcare management studies indicate that strategic talent management contributes significantly to workforce stability, employee productivity, service quality, and organizational effectiveness (Pomaranik & Kludacz-Alessandri, 2024; Aggarwal et al., 2024).

Furthermore, evidence suggests that healthcare organizations that effectively manage their human capital experience improved patient safety, enhanced service responsiveness, reduced medical errors, and higher patient satisfaction levels. The RBV provides a suitable theoretical lens

for this study because tertiary health institutions depend heavily on specialized healthcare professionals whose competencies directly influence healthcare quality and patient outcomes. Talent attraction enables institutions to acquire valuable human resources; talent development enhances employees' capabilities and adaptability; while talent retention preserves institutional knowledge and clinical expertise. Consequently, healthcare institutions that effectively manage these talent dimensions are more likely to achieve superior patient outcomes than those experiencing persistent workforce shortages and turnover.

Propositions of RBV Relevant to the Study

1. Talented healthcare professionals constitute strategic organizational resources.
2. Effective talent attraction enhances the acquisition of valuable and scarce healthcare competencies.
3. Talent development strengthens organizational capabilities and service quality.
4. Talent retention preserves institutional knowledge and workforce stability.
5. Sustainable patient outcomes can be achieved through effective management of human capital resources.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, advanced by Becker (1964) and subsequently expanded by Schultz (1961), posits that investments in employee education, training, knowledge acquisition, and skill development enhance productivity and organizational performance. The theory views employees as valuable assets whose competencies generate economic and non-economic returns for organizations. Within healthcare organizations, human capital comprises clinical expertise, professional experience, technical competence, problem-solving ability, and continuous learning capacity. The theory suggests that organizations that invest substantially in workforce development through training, mentoring, continuing professional education, career progression, and leadership development are more likely to achieve improved organizational outcomes (Collings et al., 2022). In healthcare settings, these investments contribute to enhanced diagnostic accuracy, evidence-based clinical practice, patient safety, and overall quality of care.

Recent studies emphasize that healthcare institutions that prioritize workforce development experience higher employee engagement, organizational commitment, service quality, and patient satisfaction (Helmi et al., 2023; Alkan et al., 2024). Human Capital Theory further argues that employee retention is essential because organizational investments in knowledge and skills yield optimal returns only when talented employees remain within the organization long enough to apply and transfer their expertise. Consequently, high turnover rates often diminish organizational performance and negatively affect healthcare quality. The theory is particularly relevant to tertiary healthcare institutions in the Niger Delta because these organizations depend on highly specialized personnel to deliver advanced clinical services. Investments in talent attraction, talent

development, and talent retention therefore represent strategic mechanisms for improving patient outcomes through enhanced workforce capability and organizational effectiveness.

The integration of RBV and Human Capital Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between talent management and patient outcomes. While RBV emphasizes talented employees as strategic organizational resources, Human Capital Theory explains how investments in employee capabilities enhance organizational performance. Together, the theories suggest that tertiary health institutions that effectively attract, develop, and retain talented healthcare professionals are more likely to achieve improved patient outcomes.

Literature Review

Talent Attraction and Patient Outcomes

Talent attraction refers to organizational strategies designed to recruit highly qualified, skilled, and competent employees capable of contributing to organizational objectives. In healthcare settings, attracting competent healthcare professionals has become increasingly challenging due to global workforce shortages, migration, demographic shifts, and increasing healthcare demands (WHO, 2024). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that healthcare institutions capable of attracting qualified personnel achieve better patient outcomes than those experiencing staffing shortages. Mitosis et al. (2021) found that healthcare organizations implementing structured talent management systems reported improvements in workforce quality, organizational effectiveness, and patient-centered service delivery. Similarly, Aggarwal et al. (2024) observed that talent acquisition strategies significantly influence healthcare resilience, adaptability, and service quality in increasingly complex healthcare environments.

Studies conducted across developed healthcare systems indicate that attractive work environments, competitive compensation packages, professional growth opportunities, and supportive organizational cultures are significant predictors of healthcare workforce recruitment and service quality (Alkan et al., 2024). Evidence further suggests that healthcare institutions with adequate staffing levels experience lower mortality rates, shorter patient waiting times, reduced medical errors, and improved patient satisfaction. Within developing countries, workforce attraction remains a major challenge. Research on healthcare workforce retention and recruitment in low- and middle-income countries indicates that poor working conditions, inadequate remuneration, and limited career opportunities undermine healthcare quality through persistent staffing shortages (Jinah et al., 2024). Consequently, effective talent attraction practices are expected to positively influence patient outcomes by ensuring the availability of competent healthcare professionals capable of delivering quality healthcare services. Healthcare institutions that successfully attract competent professionals experience improved service quality, enhanced patient care, and greater organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, Alkan, Cushen-Brewster, and Anyanwu (2024), in a systematic review examining workforce development, recruitment, and retention, found that supportive organizational environments, leadership quality, career

opportunities, and favorable working conditions significantly influence healthcare workforce attraction and organizational performance.

Talent Development and Patient Outcomes

Talent development refers to organizational initiatives aimed at enhancing employees' knowledge, competencies, skills, and professional capabilities through training, mentoring, coaching, continuing education, and career development programmes. Healthcare organizations increasingly recognize talent development as a strategic imperative due to rapid technological advancement, evolving clinical practices, digital transformation, and changing patient expectations. According to Human Capital Theory, investments in employee development improve individual performance and organizational effectiveness. Mitosis et al. (2021) identified talent development as one of the most critical dimensions of healthcare talent management because it strengthens employee competence, leadership capability, and organizational sustainability. Likewise, recent evidence indicates that healthcare organizations that invest in workforce development achieve improvements in patient safety, treatment quality, clinical effectiveness, and patient satisfaction.

A systematic review by Alkan et al. (2024) revealed that professional development opportunities, continuous learning programmes, mentorship initiatives, and supportive organizational environments significantly enhance workforce performance and healthcare quality. Similarly, Morris et al. (2023) reported that education, training, and workforce development interventions contribute positively to service quality, employee competence, and patient care outcomes. Recent studies further indicate that healthcare professionals who receive regular professional development opportunities exhibit higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and greater engagement in patient-centered care practices (Ellethiey et al., 2024). Therefore, talent development is expected to positively influence patient outcomes through enhanced workforce competence, improved clinical decision-making, and increased service quality.

Talent Retention and Patient Outcomes

Talent retention refers to organizational efforts aimed at maintaining a stable workforce by reducing employee turnover and encouraging talented employees to remain within the organization. Retention has become one of the most significant challenges facing healthcare organizations worldwide. High turnover rates disrupt continuity of care, increase recruitment costs, diminish organizational knowledge, and adversely affect patient outcomes. Studies consistently demonstrate that workforce instability negatively influences healthcare quality and patient satisfaction. Russell et al. (2021) found that retention strategies such as financial incentives, professional development opportunities, supportive leadership, and conducive work environments significantly improve workforce stability and healthcare service delivery. Similarly, De Vries et al. (2023) identified workload management, organizational support, career advancement

opportunities, and positive workplace culture as critical determinants of healthcare workforce retention.

A recent scoping review by Jinah et al. (2024) revealed that educational support, professional incentives, regulatory interventions, and career development programmes significantly reduce physician turnover in low- and middle-income countries. Healthcare institutions implementing comprehensive retention strategies reported improved workforce stability and better healthcare outcomes. Furthermore, studies demonstrate that healthcare organizations with higher employee retention rates achieve superior patient satisfaction, lower mortality rates, improved treatment continuity, and enhanced quality of care (Pomaranik & Kludacz-Alessandri, 2024). Talent retention preserves organizational knowledge, strengthens team cohesion, and facilitates continuity in patient care processes. Consequently, talent retention is expected to positively influence patient outcomes by ensuring workforce stability, continuity of care, and sustained organizational performance.

Patient Outcomes in Healthcare Organizations

Patient outcomes represent measurable changes in patients' health status resulting from healthcare interventions and service delivery processes. Contemporary healthcare literature identifies patient satisfaction, quality of care, patient safety, treatment effectiveness, reduced mortality, reduced hospital readmission, and timely access to healthcare services as critical indicators of patient outcomes. Recent human resource management research increasingly recognizes healthcare workers as central determinants of patient outcomes. Human resource practices influence employee competence, motivation, engagement, commitment, and service quality, which subsequently affect patient experiences and clinical outcomes (Qin et al., 2023; Nwankwo et al., 2024).

Evidence from healthcare workforce studies indicates that institutions with effective recruitment, development, and retention systems consistently achieve superior patient outcomes compared to institutions experiencing chronic workforce shortages and instability (Alkan et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2023). Accordingly, patient outcomes constitute an appropriate dependent variable for examining the effectiveness of talent management practices within tertiary healthcare institutions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Research Gap

Although substantial literature exists on talent management and organizational performance, empirical studies linking talent attraction, talent development, and talent retention directly to patient outcomes remain relatively limited, particularly within tertiary health institutions in developing economies. Existing studies have largely focused on employee performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workforce productivity, with limited attention devoted to patient-centered outcomes. Furthermore, empirical evidence from

Nigeria and the Niger Delta region remains scarce. This study therefore seeks to address this contextual and empirical gap by investigating the influence of talent attraction, talent development, and talent retention on patient outcomes in tertiary health institutions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Methods and Materials

This study adopted the conceptual review approach. It maps out key variables, identifies research gaps, and helps build a theoretical framework by defining and structuring ideas rather than testing them. A conceptual review is a research method that interpretes and synthesizes existing literature to clarify complex theories, concepts and models rather than summarizing existing empirical findings. The purpose of adopting the conceptual model was to define, refine, or introduce the constructs in the researcher's model (licensing gap, uneven distribution of talents, unconducive work environment and weak data base) as particularly useful in discussing talent management in tertiary health institutions in the Niger Delta region.

Findings

The study found that effective and efficient talent management practice is inevitable to retain skilled and experienced employee who are exiting the institution in high numbers. This aligns with the findings of Augustian et al (2023) that innovation and change is driven by competent and agile employees and this will help in creating a formidable background for long-term growth.

This strategy provides support for professionals and ensures that the right people are effectively engaged in the right roles (Mat, 2025). Secondly, employees who find themselves in an unpleasant work place feel unsafe and may not be willing to perform well. This submission is supported by Mitosis et al. (2021) who found that healthcare organizations implementing structured talent management systems reported improvements in workforce quality, organizational effectiveness, and patient-centered service delivery. Thirdly, there is a visible gap between talent retention and patient's outcome within the healthcare system. The study found that retention has become one of the most significant challenges facing healthcare organizations worldwide.

High turnover rates disrupt continuity of care, increase recruitment costs, diminish organizational knowledge, and adversely affect patient outcomes. This submission aligns with the submission of Russell et al. (2021) that retention strategies such as financial incentives, professional development opportunities, supportive leadership, and conducive work environments significantly improve workforce stability and healthcare service delivery. Finally, the study identified patient satisfaction, quality of care, patient safety, treatment effectiveness, reduced mortality, reduced hospital readmission, and timely access to healthcare services as critical indicators of patient outcomes. This also align with the general submission that effective recruitment, development, and retention systems consistently achieve superior patient outcomes compared to institutions experiencing chronic workforce shortages and instability (Alkan et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Globally, the health workforce shortage remains a major constraint to achieving universal health coverage. Inadequacy in attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled personnel, poor infrastructure and bad governance undermines the level of success in the sector. Achieving improved patients' outcome will require a holistic approach to strengthen equitable deployment of personnel, effective retention strategies, and enhanced workforce data base for effective planning. The study confirmed that talent management and development strategy significantly impacts the performance of tertiary health institutions. By investing in the development and growth of their workforce, institutions can unlock the full potential of their employees, leading to numerous benefits for both the organisation and its patients.

Recommendations

The study recommended that proper human resource planning technique should be adopted as a management instrument to forecast, anticipate and utilise skilled and talented resources within an organisation. Secondly, Organizations should provide a safe, secure environment where employees feel accommodated and encouraged to discharge their functions. Also, bureaucratic or administrative bottlenecks, frequent increment in renewal or practicing fee, and other sundry issues should be put to check by relevant authorities to boost the performance of employees in tertiary health institutions.

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