

## **Challenges to Employees' Retention Strategies in Tertiary Hospitals in Southwest of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the challenges militating against employee retention strategies in Federal Teaching Hospitals in Southwestern Nigeria. These were with a view to providing information on knowledge and measures toward the improvement of employee retention strategies in Federal Teaching Hospitals in Southwestern Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, primary and secondary data were collected from selected teaching hospitals in the southwest, Nigeria. The findings revealed that poor hospital funding, inadequate recruitment and poor organisational structure were the major bottlenecks to retention of employees in the study area. . It concluded that employees' retention programmes had been affected by systemic problems such as poor funding, corruption and poor innovations. In view of this, the study recommended succession planning, infrastructural support, and improved staff engagement to strengthen retention strategies*

**Keywords:** Employee retention, retention strategies, tertiary hospitals workforce management, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Employee retention has become a critical concern for healthcare globally, particularly for employees living in rural areas. These challenges include short contracts, bad working conditions, poor recruitment methods, a lack of enthusiasm, and poor or inadequate incentives and rewards, which are all controllable variables. Susana (2019) mentioned additional managerially controllable factors that contribute to challenges affecting employee retention in the uneven treatment of employees, a lack of advancement and growth, poor pay and salaries, confusing compensation methods, less recognition, and a lack of employee input in decision-making as issues in Tanzania's public and commercial sectors, including microfinance and health institutions.

Ukaegbu (2020) investigated the relationship between working conditions and employees' intentions in Nigerian private manufacturing organisations. Twenty manufacturing businesses took part in the survey. The businesses that were chosen were all operational and represented a variety of industries. The study's conclusions indicated that external factors, such as one's job, are important indicators of commitment to staying in any organisation. It was also discovered that

many workers were dissatisfied with their workplace. Employers were advised to try to find a balance between workers' interests and organisational objectives to establish a strong workforce for the success and growth of industries.

According to Mihelic & Plankar (2018), motivation and work-life balance are two factors that influence people's decisions to leave their jobs. Stress, a loss of trust, a change in management, or confrontations with coworkers are some other causes. According to Shahzad et al. (2019), job happiness, job stress, and career satisfaction all affect absenteeism and employee turnover. Employees want to quit a company when they are seen to be uninspired, unsatisfied, or underpaid (Mandhanya, 2015). Additionally, when they fail to adapt to the organisation or its culture, or do not perceive ways to advance inside it.

However, Hausknecht et al. (2019) performed a survey on the reasons why workers remain in their jobs. According to a survey, one-third of the respondents said they might stay because they are happy with their pay, job, or constituency affiliation. 10% to 20% of respondents claimed they had no other options, enjoyed the organisation's dedication, or were employed because of the organisation's reputation. Research has been done to examine employee happiness, motivation, and subsequent retention because of the high costs of staff turnover (Baill, 2017). Recent studies in Nigeria further show that poor hospital infrastructure, persistent brain drain and limited professional development opportunities remain pressing threats to retention among healthcare workers (Adegoke et al., 2015). Consequently, this study analyses the challenges militating against employees' retention strategies in Federal Teaching Hospitals in Southwestern Nigeria, to provide evidence that can inform both organisational practice and national policy reforms.

## **Literature Review**

Employee retention refers to the methods employed by businesses to keep key personnel from quitting their positions (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2023). Taking measures to ensure employee retention involves enticing staff to work for the organisation for as long as feasible (Griffeth & Hom, 2019). Organisations are currently witnessing a shift in the power distribution between employers and employees. It is possible to keep and satisfy employees in organisations that continue to train on how to maintain the highest level of employee satisfaction. According to Sohail et al. (2019), for an organisation's performance to remain competitive, staff retention is a crucial step. Therefore, organisations must have people who are devoted to their work, are focused, and have excellent skills to remain competitive. It follows that developing and putting into effect retention procedures is a key task of human resource management. Therefore, businesses must comprehend employees' expectations before developing retention strategies. In other terms, retention refers to a person's long-term engagement with a company. Employer turnover costs are reduced, and employee loyalty and commitment are increased with the effective implementation of employee retention.

The goal of employee retention is to retain personnel for the longest possible time inside an organisation (Kossivi et al., 2016). According to Mathimaran & Kumar (2015), employee retention involves systematic efforts to create and maintain an environment that encourages employees to remain with the organisation. This is achieved by implementing policies and procedures that address their diverse needs, as outlined by the Workforce Planning for Wisconsin State Government standards. Philips & Connell (2017) define retention as the percentage of workers who remain with the company. High retention rates are essential for fostering effective job performance.

Employee retention is defined as an organisation's attempt to create and maintain a workplace that encourages employees to stay with the organisation (Herman, 2015). Every

organisation should prioritise employee retention since it provides several benefits, including reduced recruitment costs, preservation of institutional knowledge, and greater employee loyalty (James & Mathew, 2012). The requirement for workers to increase their job happiness and remain with the company for a long time is being addressed by many organisations' employee retention policies.

No matter whose organisation it impacts, employee retention is a worldwide issue. Keeping skilled and effective personnel is a challenge for businesses. Leaders must deal with the challenges of employee retention with both new and existing staff (Aruna & Anitha, 2015). Over the years, a lot of studies on employee retention have been conducted, each claiming to categorise the five reasons employees leave (Fleisher et al., 2017). While the studies differ in their facts, they all tell a similar story. Employees resign or leave because their current employment proposition is unacceptable (some combination of tangibles (benefits and pay) and intangibles (work content, work/life balance, management relationship, career path, trust in senior management), and they have the opportunity to join another organisation where, ostensibly, the employment offer is better (Rambur et al., 2015).

As stated by Darkwa et al. (2015), retention happens when organisational leaders create and put into practice strategic initiatives that motivate people to remain with the company. Organisational leaders must be aware that failing to develop a successful retention plan may result in the loss of important workers, a decline in earnings, a damaging influence on the organisation's reputation, and the loss of priceless organisational knowledge (Kraemer, 2016; Swarnalatha & Vasantham, 2017). Employee turnover is difficult since departing employees take with them a plethora of skills and expertise (Nzewi et al., 2016; Strom et al., 2017). When knowledgeable people go, an organisation will pay higher expenditures (Kaur-Sahi & Mahajan, 2017). For an organisation to preserve its goodwill among its partners, customers, and rivals, a retention plan is essential.

To retain valued employees, it's important to take proactive steps. Developing and implementing retention strategies can reduce the chances of employees leaving the company while enhancing their commitment, motivation, and loyalty to the organisation. On the other hand, a lack of retention tactics may lead to a decline in employee motivation, as they might feel that management is indifferent to their needs (Yiu & Saner, 2017). Managers must determine which employees are excellent matches for the company (Wei, 2015). A strategy for valued staff retention should be part of an efficient corporate operations strategy. To accomplish its objectives, an organisation needs to employ a predictable amount of human capital. If the company is unable to recruit and keep personnel, its ability to remain competitive may be in peril. Organisational leaders should be prepared to foster a culture that encourages workers to stick around.

Employee retention is the commitment and willingness of an organisation to keep individuals or staff for a longer period. Numerous tactics have been implemented to deter employees from defecting and joining competitors (De Vos & Meganck, 2019). Employees can stay with their company for a long time, thanks to several effective tactics (Gayathri et al., 2017). Corporate leadership must recognise elements that satisfy all workers to manage and reduce resignations (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2017). Management must identify appropriate strategies to handle the talented workers who remain when some depart.

One of the most significant issues agencies face in a competitive market is how to attract talented employees. Employees who have worked long-term with coworkers will benefit from a productive workplace, strong management relationships, effective succession planning, and training. Failure to maintain key employees, especially new graduates, is expensive for any organisation. Mendez & Stander (2019) stress that the importance of an organisation investing in

retaining employees is essential for success. Competition and a shortage of highly competent and trained workers make it a top priority for organisations to locate and retain talented employees.

Khan (2021) also describes retention as holding talented employees for a long period. Organisations are currently observing a change in the power dynamic from employers to employees. Employee retention strategy is an organisation's set of programmes and procedures to maintain its employees for their entire working lives. In other words, a long-term employee-organisation relationship means continuity.

Employee retention saves many inconveniences for an organisation, including finances, the cost of replacement, the cost of training, and many other costs. These activities may include both professional and casual training experiences for employees that facilitate understanding each other, as well as appointing more experienced employees as role models for newcomers. Additional employee turnover suggests a fundamental problem within the organisation, and for such an organisation, it is massively important to have strategies and processes to retain employees. High-performing organisations are in high demand in emerging markets for recruiting and retaining employees (Khan, 2021).

According to Mathimaran & Kumar (2015), key employee retention is described as an important phenomenon for improving employee satisfaction, increasing sales, nurturing working relationships, enhancing relationships between employees and managers, and facilitating effective succession planning. Organisational information and education are maintained and effectively developed in this process. Also, information development and retention have become key tools for improving competitiveness and enhancing an organisation's capacity to adapt to market changes. The retention of such experts should be characterised by their passion and ability to apply their expertise.

Employee retention over a longer period assists in maintaining and sustaining the best level of employees to meet organisational needs (Armstrong, 2024). It helps employ highly qualified employees to encourage organisations to achieve set goals and produce excellent results. The advantageous image created allows organisations to recruit people with the maximum amount of appropriate technical and behavioural skills. This can attract exceptional humans within the workplace and ensure simple, open, and equitable hiring and selection procedures. While the retention of employees is promoted as much as possible in many organisations, employee turnover is rising. Retention of employees is crucial to recruiting, inspiring, and retaining important individuals to ensure the long-term success of any organisation. The regular accomplishments of any organisation depend on employee retention.

### **Retention Strategies by Federal Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria**

The employee retention Strategies in Federal Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria have always demonstrated that both monetary and non-monetary measures are essential in curbing the high rates of turnover among the doctors, nurses and other clinical personnel. The challenges that these hospitals have to deal with include brain drain, inadequate infrastructure, excessive workload, and remuneration.

Alamu et al. (2025) examined the impact of retention strategies on the performance of chosen Federal Tertiary Hospitals in Southwestern Nigeria. The analysis of the survey data and the regression analysis showed that non-financial strategies such as reward and recognition programmes, team building, effective communication, leadership support, improvement of infrastructure, and provision of residential accommodation had a strong positive impact on performance. Non-monetary factors were found to be more effective predictors of staff retention and service delivery, even though the compensation strategies also played their role.

Okeke et al. (2023) studied the nature of talent management in Nigerian Federal Teaching Hospitals and discovered that the most significant aspect of talent management was talent retention. Their analysis revealed that retention plans (structured) coupled with organisational citizenship behaviour initiatives had a significant positive impact on employee commitment and turnover intentions. To retain competent healthcare professionals, the authors suggested periodic competency improvement and definite career advancement routes.

In a research at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), Osaremwinda et al. (2024) indicated that the integration of technology, better welfare policies, and job satisfaction were predominant factors that led to employee retention and organisational performance. The results highlighted that the main retention measures that integrate new technologies with more favourable welfare benefits may be used to overcome the high workload and the lack of career development opportunities.

Chukwuma (2023) examined the human resource management practices in the government-owned hospitals in Port Harcourt and discovered that performance appraisal and employee empowerment practices were significantly and positively related to retention. The analysis revealed that employee empowerment produced more than 84 per cent of the variation in the retention rates alone, which indicates the relevance of participatory management in the public health care organisations.

Ajuofh (2024) concentrated on career path as one of the retention methods in public university teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria. The findings showed that there was a high positive correlation between clear career progression opportunities, structured training, promotions, and retention of employees. Professional development programmes in hospitals increased the commitment of respondents.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The motivation-hygiene hypothesis of Frederick Herzberg and Maslow's hierarchy of needs serve as the theoretical basis for this investigation. The reason for choosing these two theories is that they place emphasis on employee motivation, and that a well-motivated employee will prefer to remain in the organisation and contribute to accomplishing organisational objectives, which leads to organisational performance.

According to Herzberg (1959), each employee has two sets of requirements, including those for motivation and personal cleanliness. Employee turnover results from failure to satisfy their requirements, which would automatically result in leaving. People are happy with their work because of things relating to that work's substance. Achievement, recognition, intriguing job, responsibility, development, and growth are some of these elements. Dissatisfying or hygiene issues are those that contribute to people becoming dissatisfied with their employment. Organisational policy, supervision, working environment, inter-personal relationships, remuneration, status, and security are all areas where Herzberg discovered unhappiness. They vary from motivators in that they relate to the setting of the job rather than the substance of the labour. Therefore, businesses must develop strategies to encourage workers to stick with them to retain staff. The ability of an organisation to offer high benefits to its workers, who in turn enable greater performance to attain increased competitive edge and flexibility while maintaining cost-efficiency, is what makes it appealing.

According to Guest (2016), if organisations want to promote commitment and motivation, two essential components of good performance, they would be better served to put more emphasis on intrinsic pleasure than extrinsic rewards. To achieve this, employment must be redesigned to provide workers with a feeling of challenge, training, and fulfilment. He adds that in order for

rewards to encourage workers, they must be worthwhile benefits that they accept as payment for their effort or performance. The term "retention" refers to a sustained partnership between an organisation and its workforce. Staff loyalty is increased, and the expense of staff turnover is reduced with the efficient application of employee retention tactics.

According to Maslow (1970), a "need" is a physical or psychological defect that a person is driven to address. This urge may lead to conflicts that have an impact on a person's attitudes and behaviour at work. Based on his concept of need, Maslow developed a theory that contends that human motivation is driven by a variety of wants, which are organised hierarchically. According to Ramlall (2004), only an unmet need may motivate behaviour; a need that has been satisfied does not affect it. It was predicated on the idea that five universal wants drive employees' motivation; according to him, people are driven to meet the need that is most powerful at the time (Maslow, 1970). He categorised them as "lower order needs," which, in accordance with the literature, dominate until they are at least partially met. From this perspective, it is clear that a typical person would focus on addressing wants that were higher up, resulting in higher-order requirements that eventually took over.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Primary data were utilised for the study. Primary data was collected through the administration of a questionnaire and the conduct of an interview. The study population comprises 1974 medical doctors in the selected Federal Teaching Hospitals in Southwestern Nigeria. A two-stage sampling technique was used for this study. In the first stage, stratified random sampling techniques were used to select Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex (OAUTHC) and Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) from the three Federal Teaching Hospitals and Federal Medical Centre Owo and Federal Medical Centre Abeokuta from the three Federal Medical Centres in the Southwest. In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to administer a questionnaire to 333 respondents, derived using the Taro Yamane formula. Proportionate sampling was used in selecting and administering questionnaires to the three categories of doctors, namely: consultants, resident doctors, and medical officers. Secondary data were gathered from relevant books and hospital records for such variables as reports of the total number of patients admitted, discharged, and surgeries performed in Federal Teaching Hospitals.

### **Challenges Militating against Employee Retention Strategies**

According to Table 1, 87.5% of the 320 respondents agreed that poor hospital funding is a challenge militating against employee retention strategies, 72.5% agreed that administrative corruption is also a challenge against employee retention strategies, 46.2% agreed that high staff turnover is a challenge against employee retention strategies, and 82.5% agreed on poor organisational structure. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that the poor funding of the hospital is one of the main challenges because, without adequate funding, Federal Teaching Hospitals would not be able to adopt good retention strategies. Another challenge is the poor structure of the organisation. About 88% of respondents agreed with the former, while 83% agreed with the latter. Furthermore, inadequate recruitment strategies and policies, the adoption of federal character policies accounted for 81% of respondents; poor innovative teamwork accounted for 78% of respondents. Conversely, the high turnover of staff has a low percentage of respondents considering it is difficult (46%), whereas 56% of all respondents who found it to be difficult do not consider it a challenge.

**Table 1: Challenges Against Employee Retention Strategies**

Item	Yes	No
Poor funding of the hospital	280 (87.5%)	40 (12.5%)
Administrative/Leadership corruption	232 (72.5%)	88 (27.5%)
High staff turnover	148 (46.2%)	172 (53.8%)
Poor Organisational structure	264 (82.5%)	56 (17.5%)
Poor innovative teamwork	248 (77.5%)	72 (22.5%)
Inadequate recruitment strategies/policies – the adoption of federal character policies	260 (81.2%)	60 (18.8%)

**Source:** Field survey

### Discussion of Findings

The results imply that poor funding of the hospital was the major challenge affecting employee retention in Federal Teaching Hospitals. Employee retention is also affected by organisational/administrative corruption. Most employers don't care about their employees' working circumstances. Therefore, it does not appear that the employers are concerned about whether the employees are working under bad conditions. As a result, there is a good chance that the working conditions for employees at this organisation are subpar. This is perhaps one of the reasons why most Federal Teaching Hospitals' personnel want to leave for greener pastures, as noted by Badru et al. (2024), that 80.1% of health workers have the intention to leave. This is consistent with several studies that demonstrate how employees feel as though their lives are in danger in workplaces when the employer fails to examine the working conditions and make improvements where necessary. (Hoel et al., 2001). As a result, most of these workers opt to leave the company rather than continue to put their lives in danger. This is in line with the 2015 publications of Raziq & Maulabakhsh's (2015) writings. According to them, the whole work environment that businesses provide to employees has a significant impact on the decrease in employee turnover. This is why management at Federal Teaching Hospitals should think about regularly meeting with employees to determine whether the workplace is pleasant for them.

The study also discovered that poor innovative teamwork inhibits most organisations, particularly Nigeria's Federal Teaching Hospitals. Lack of work-life balance has been highlighted in several studies as one of the causes contributing to employee turnover in many organisations. This is the case since such a setting prevents employees from having time for social reflection or even job advancement. (Kashyap et al., 2016). According to Raziq & Maulabakhsh, workers flourish in a setting that encourages them to realise their aspirations. Employees are likely to leave an organisation in pursuit of one where they feel appreciated if they believe that the culture does not assist them in accomplishing their goals. In the case of Federal Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria, this is what is taking place. Employees decide to leave because they feel the workplace is unwelcoming. This is the cause of the high rates of employee turnover.

The study also established that most of the time, the management at Federal Teaching Hospitals does not take employee retention strategies seriously because most employees believe that they are not always adopting federal character policies during recruitment. Because of this,

many personnel in Nigeria's Federal Teaching Hospitals do not feel like they belong to the organisation. Additionally, the majority of the organisation's employees believe they are undervalued by it. Most of them made the decision to leave the organisation for this reason. Nigeria's Federal Teaching Hospitals should be aware of the value of staff retention in lowering employee turnover and raising organisational productivity. Staff happiness rises because of staff retention. They contend that motivated employees are more likely to be happy with their work and, as a result, to be more committed and devoted to the company. Markos and Sridevi (2010), who support this claim, assert that contented workers are not only loyal to their employers but also serve an essential function as brand advocates. Such staff members are devoted to upholding the organisation's brand, strategy, and mission. The management of the Federal Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria does not effectively engage its personnel; therefore, their loyalty to the company is not guaranteed. Instead of being dedicated to making sure the organisation succeeds, these workers are always searching for workplaces where they may feel valued and appreciated. This suggests that if there are terrible working circumstances, poor management rules, a negative attitude of the supervisor, and low motivation, the employees are likely to leave the company even if it offers good compensation.

### **Conclusion**

Employee retention in Nigeria's tertiary hospitals is hindered by systemic issues, including underfunding, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and weak recruitment policies. Without deliberate and sustained efforts to tackle these challenges, the Federal Teaching Hospitals face the risk of continuous staff turnover and a decline in service delivery. To maintain a committed and high-performing healthcare workforce, it is essential to implement effective retention strategies that focus on employee motivation and equitable management practices.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Federal Teaching Hospitals should improve on the already existing retention strategies, such as succession planning, recognition, non-cash awards, and training and development that are shared with the entire department. These would demonstrate to employees how much the organisation values their presence and commitment to the business. Employees should be informed of the organisation's plans to maintain employee satisfaction.
- ii. Support should also be provided by ensuring that workers have adequate access to equipment and infrastructural facilities to carry out their tasks. These would boost employees' morale and lessen the feeling that they are overworked.
- iii. There should be sufficient financial funding from the government, groups and individuals. This can be promoted by the government through the provision of a conducive environment by rewarding individuals who donate to teaching hospitals, and also make public private partnership as another development option.

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