

Comparative Study On Talent Identification And Talent Retention: Nigeria As A Developing Country And The Western World

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the disparities in talent identification and retention practices between Nigeria, a developing country, and Western nations. Through a comprehensive literature review and qualitative analysis, it identifies significant challenges facing Nigerian businesses including informal identification processes, reliance on social network, brain drain, and insufficient career guidance programs. In contrast, Western countries benefit from systematic and institutional frameworks that integrate education with industry, promoting equitable access to opportunities and developmental program. The findings reveal that while Western strategies emphasis structured career progression and employee engagement, Nigeria approaches are often reactive, driven by economic instability and weak institutional support. The study outlines effective strategies for improving talent management in Nigeria, including fostering talent pipelines, enhancing workplace culture, and government-backed incentives for training. It calls for comprehensive reforms to align talent management practices with local economic and cultural realities, thereby fostering a more resilient workforce. The implications highlight the necessity of adopting global best practices to the unique context of Nigeria to mitigate challenges related to talent management and retain skilled professionals, ultimately driving economic growth and organizational success.

Keywords— Brain Drain, Nigeria, Talent, Talent Identification, Talent Retention.

I. Introduction

The identification and retention of talent are crucial factors in enhancing an organisation's performance, particularly in a global context where specialised workforces play a key role in maintaining a competitive edge in the market (Musakuro, 2022). According to Haziazi (2021) and Zhang and Stewart (2017), these processes involve selecting highly skilled individuals and implementing proactive measures to keep them motivated and committed to the organisation (Haziazi, 2021; Zhang & Stewart, 2017).

Amushila and Bussin (2021) describe talent identification as a systematic process through which an organisation evaluates the skills, knowledge, and strengths of its personnel to determine their potential for future advancement in both management and specialised roles (Amushila & Bussin, 2021). This requires the implementation of various organisational practices such as evaluating employee performance, managing workforce succession, and conducting skills assessments to ensure suitable employee placement within the organization (Adim et al., 2023). On the other hand, talent retention focuses on

the organisation's efforts to foster an environment that encourages individuals to stay, thereby enhancing stability and reducing employee turnover (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Although talent identification and retention processes are beneficial for organisations regardless of their economic context, significant differences exist in the management of these activities between developed countries, like those in the West, and emerging economies, such as Nigeria. Developed nations typically have advanced HR systems, effective economies, and well-structured career development programs that enhance talent management (Muriithi, 2017). In contrast, Nigeria faces challenges including high brain drain, economic instability, underdeveloped HR frameworks, and limited opportunities for professional growth, all of which hinder effective talent identification and retention (Ohunakin et al., 2020).

Talent identification and retention extend beyond traditional human resource management, significantly impacting organizational productivity, creativity, and overall development. According to Ardi et al. (2024) and Epebinu et al. (2023), effective strategies for talent management are essential for sustaining business operations amidst market complexities and innovations. Organisations that excel in identifying and retaining talent are better equipped to adapt to market changes and seize new opportunities while mitigating risks. Ogogo (2024) highlights that a robust talent pool ensures a consistent supply of personnel for critical roles, reducing turnover costs and enhancing operational efficiency. Aminu (2020) further notes that investing in employee skills and promoting favorable work conditions lead to higher engagement, commitment, and retention rates (Aminu, 2020). The study emphasises the relevance of talent management in both Nigeria and Western countries, albeit for different reasons; Nigeria faces challenges such as brain drain and inadequate investment in training, making talent management crucial for workforce development (Epebinu et al., 2023; Ogogo, 2024). In contrast, Western nations focus on innovative strategic advantages, often slow to respond to technological changes. This study aims to provide insights into policies and strategies that can improve talent retention and identification in Nigeria. The paper examines talent retention and identification practices in Nigeria compared to Western countries, analysing gaps, challenges, retention levels, and suggesting improvements for Nigerian businesses' talent management strategies. The study analyses secondary data from academic journals, industry reports, and case studies to examine Nigeria's talent management system compared to developed economies. Content analysis will assess talent retention models and HR policies, identifying economic factors affecting workforce stability, ultimately recommending enhancements for Nigeria's talent management practices, incorporating successful strategies from the West.

II. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

To quote from Abubakar, Oluwade, and Ibrahim's (2022) research, the human capital theory emphasises the importance of talent identification and sustaining employment relationships in organisations, as these factors allow companies to use their manpower as a source of competitive advantage, innovation, and growth. Arguably, in the Nigerian context, where organisations have myriad problems associated with the attraction and retention of skilled personnel, grappling with some theoretical issues and frameworks related to the management of talents is important. To achieve sustained competitive advantage in a firm, resource-based view (RBV) argues that employing strategically configured and valuable, rare, and costly-to-copy resources, including human capital, is fundamental (Barney, 2001; Shaw, 2021). This framework gives support to strategic leadership of the organisation from the perspective of internal resources; that is,

resources that are difficult to imitate give some firms an advantage in the market (Barney, 2001). More recent studies focused on human resource and talent management have embraced the RBV. As Shaw (2021) pointed out regarding strategic management of human resources, talents need to be managed from a strategic perspective. In the case of Nigeria, there is a need to approach the problem of talent management with respect to the culture, economy, and politics of the country (Aminu, 2020).

A. Theoretical Framework and Talent Management in Nigeria

The research argues Nigerian organisations need an integrated approach to talent management that combines local idiosyncrasies and global practices (Abubakar et al., 2022). Also, Lewis and Heckman (2006), in their talent management theory, argue that companies need to implement systematic procedures for scouting, developing, and retaining talent (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). This includes building future successors and ensuring business continuity by building a succession strategy that will positively impact the future of the organisation. This is of great importance in Nigeria, where limited opportunities for career growth accompanied by economic uncertainty present major difficulties to many businesses that are working to retain their staff (Aminu, 2020).

1. Differences Between Human Capital Strategies in Developed Economies and Developing Economies:

The talent management approaches of developing economies like Nigeria are uniquely unlike, compared to developed nations because of the underlying socio-political and infrastructural juggernauts (Adebogun et al., 2024). Studies focusing on the talent management strategies of Nigeria largely emphasise the dual-sided problem of underemployment and unemployment, especially in the healthcare, educational, and tech sectors (Adebogun et al., 2024). Analysts emphasise policies that improve occupational health, career progression pathways, and incentives to retain skilled professionals (Unity & Josiah, 2024). Despite that, most of the studies focus on the issue of brain drain without providing alternative solutions on how to adapt the prevailing global best practices into Nigeria's socio-economic environment (Aminu, 2020).

Organisations in Nigeria operate in environments with insufficient budgets, and these companies face escalating costs globally, making it difficult to offer market rate wages or career advancement opportunities (Unity & Josiah, 2024). These researchers point out how other countries offer extensive labour policies that fundamentally change the skills employees possess alongside robust talent management practices and policies that protect and retain the trained workforce along with advanced training facilities that enhance employee retention.

While other advanced countries implement policies aimed toward a specific workforce segmentation, Nigeria lacks measures effectively controlling weak labour policies, insufficient institutional assistance, and restricted budgets for employee training programs (Aminu, 2020). These factors leave developing professionals with little incentive to remain in Nigeria, resulting in emigration to developed countries seeking improved living and working conditions (Olowojebutu, 2023).

2. Review of Recent Literature on Nigeria's Talent Management Scene:

According to Adebogun et al. (2024), recent analysis on Nigeria's talent identification and retention landscape examines the country's problems with maintaining its professional pipeline, especially in areas such as the healthcare sector, academia, and the tech industry

(Adebogun et al. 2024). Also, studies as emphasised by Unity and Josiah (2024) have revealed the great importance of changing policies that will encourage career growth, improve positive working environments, and better encourage professionals to stay in the country (Unity & Josiah, 2024). Yet most papers talk about brain drain without comparing how Nigeria can use global best methods to improve its own social and economic situation (Aminu, 2020).

The recent studies conducted by Adebogun et al. (2024), Aminu (2020), and Unity & Josiah (2024) provide significant insights into talent management challenges in Nigeria, especially highlighting the implications of human capital issues, the impact of brain drain, and recommendations for better retention strategies. Adebogun et al. (2024) explore the impact of the brain drain on Nigeria's socio-economic development particularly in Lagos State, over the period from 2015 to 2023. Their findings indicate that the emigration of highly skilled professionals adversely affects productivity, innovation, and overall economic growth. The authors discuss how the brain drain syndrome contributes to a lack of qualified personnel in key sectors, leading to a diminished capacity for socio-economic development. They emphasize the need for effective talent retention strategies, such as improving working conditions, increasing salaries, and creating conducive environments for professional development. The authors assert that addressing brain drain is vital for harnessing human capital for national development and suggest that implementing robust policies can significantly mitigate the effects of this exodus.

Aminu (2020) examines the influence of talent management practices on organisational performance within Nigeria's public sector. The study reveals that effective talent management, that which encompasses recruitment, development, and retention practices, has a direct positive impact on organisational efficiency and outcomes. Aminu identifies several factors influencing talent management success in developing countries, such as inadequate resources, lack of training and development opportunities, and poor implementation of HR policies. The findings suggest that organizations that invest in their human capital through strategic talent management practices can achieve better performance results. Furthermore, Aminu highlights the importance of fostering a culture that values employee engagement and motivation, indicating that these elements are crucial for enhancing retention rates and improving overall organizational effectiveness. Unity and Josiah (2024) focus on brain drain in Nigerian universities, proposing strategies to retain top talents within the academic sector. Their research highlights the alarming rates at which faculty members emigrate in search of better opportunities abroad, particularly due to inadequate funding, poor research facilities, and low salaries. The authors recommend implementing competitive compensation packages, enhancing research funding, and providing professional development opportunities as key strategies to mitigate brain drain. They argue that creating an environment that supports academic freedom and encourages research can help retain talented educators and researchers, ultimately improving the quality of education and innovation in Nigerian universities (Unity & Josiah, 2024).

Collectively, these authors converge on the notion that addressing the multifaceted challenges of talent management in Nigeria, especially regarding brain drain, requires a comprehensive approach. This includes improving conditions that foster talent retention, investing in human capital, and adapting successful practices from more developed economies to enhance Nigeria's workforce stability and productivity.

3. *Insights from Western Countries:*

According to Aminu (2020), countries in the West like the US, Canada, and the UK have put in place strong systems to manage talent. These systems focus on getting employees involved, helping them grow in their careers, and offering pay that can compete with other companies (Aminu, 2020). Companies in these parts of the world put a lot of money into programs for ongoing learning, setting up mentoring, and letting people work in ways that fit their lives better. Additionally, the governments in these countries help keep workers around by giving tax breaks to companies that spend money to train and grow their employees (Adebogun et al. 2024).

4. *Implications for Nigeria:*

To enhance talent identification and retention, Nigerian companies can integrate global methodologies with local economic and cultural realities. One key strategy is to build stronger talent pools by collaborating with educational institutions (Arubayi, 2022). By developing job-relevant courses, companies can ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills for the workforce. Such partnerships can bridge the gap between education and career transitions, fulfilling industry demands and creating a reliable pool of trained workers. Incorporating vocational training focused on sustainable skills development is vital for addressing the skills gap in Africa's eco-friendly landscape (Arubayi, 2022).

Another important approach is to enhance the attractiveness of the workplace to skilled professionals. Crafting a unique employer value proposition can help companies foster a better work environment, providing opportunities for career advancement, competitive wages, and benefits. As noted by Arubayi (2022), strategies such as workplace identity management have a significant impact on employee retention.

Additionally, advocating for government-backed incentives for continuous skills development can stimulate workforce growth. Implementing regulations that offer tax benefits to businesses investing in staff training can reduce costs and minimize employee turnover (Udoudo & Obia, 2023). Finally, promoting private-sector collaboration through skill exchange initiatives enables Nigerian candidates to gain exposure to global standards while enhancing local professional development opportunities (Owolabi & Adeosun, 2021). This multifaceted approach can mitigate brain drain, boost employee engagement, and enhance overall productivity in Nigeria's workforce.

5. *Significance of this Study:*

Existing literature on talent identification and retention largely focuses on either Nigeria or Western countries in isolation with limited comparative research exploring the systemic, economic, and cultural factors influencing the talent dynamics across both regions. Most studies emphasise brain drain from Nigeria or Western talent retention policies but fail to provide a direct comparison. Additionally, global talent management frameworks are often based on Western models, with little discussion on their applicability to Nigeria's unique socio-economic and institutional challenges. While quantitative studies on Nigeria's talent landscape exist, there is a lack of qualitative research capturing subjective perspectives from professionals, policymakers, and business leaders. Another critical gap is the insufficient exploration of how different levels of economic development shape talent strategies, particularly in an era of globalisation and increased labor mobility. Lastly, few studies provide actionable insights on how Nigeria can adapt Western talent management strategies while considering local economic and cultural realities. By addressing these gaps, this paper offers a more

comprehensive understanding of global talent management and its implications for both developing and developed economies.

III. Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative analysis design to explore talent identification and retention techniques in Nigeria compared to Western countries. The qualitative method prioritises situational factors, enhancing understanding of strategies developed by entities to leverage human capital and improve business outcomes across different economic markets (Muzanenhama & Rankhumise, 2023). It aims to discern relationships, gaps, and solutions relevant to both the developed and developing nations. A contextual comparison framework facilitates focused analysis, examining talent identification and retention strategies in Nigeria against those in Western nations, while considering socioeconomic differences and educational structures (Adebayo & Oyeniyi, 2023). Data collection is based on secondary data from peer-reviewed journals and authoritative publications from 2020 to 2025 (Anas et al., 2020). Data examination employs pattern recognition to identify trends within qualitative datasets, categorised into five themes: talent pool development, retention methods, corporate culture, benefits structure, and public-private collaborations (Akaa & Adegbite, 2023). Each theme is analysed for best practices and contextual barriers, using resource-based view and human capital theory (Owolabi & Adeosun, 2021). Ethical concerns are minimized as no human participants were involved, and reliability and validity are upheld through Lincoln and Guba's principles (Arubayi, 2022).

A. Comparative Analysis: Talent Identification Strategies

1. How Talent is Identified in Nigeria vs. Western Countries:

Talent identification processes reveal significant disparities between Nigeria and Western countries, influenced by varying educational structures, cultural values, and policy frameworks. In Western nations, Faber et al. (2022) noted that talent identification is typically systematic and institutionalised, with educational institutions collaborating with industries to establish clear pathways for talent development. Franco et al. (2019) emphasised that universities often partner with businesses to provide internships and cooperative education programs, facilitating early talent recognition and aligning skills with market demands. According to Kehoe et al. (2023), standardised testing and merit-based assessments play an essential role in identifying high-potential individuals across diverse fields (Kehoe et al., 2023).

In contrast, talent identification in Nigeria is generally more informal and less structured (Abdullahi & Sotayo, 2021). Research by Okolie et al. (2020) indicates that many Nigerian higher education institutions lack effective career guidance and employability programs, leading students to depend heavily on personal networks and serendipitous opportunities for career advancement (Okolie et al., 2020). This reliance on informal networks may result in inconsistent and inequitable talent discovery (Dunn, 2019), where access to opportunities often hinges more on social connections than on actual merit or ability.

2. Role of Education, Training Programs, and Informal Networks:

Education and training programs play a crucial role in shaping talent development and retention (Shan & Wang, 2024). In Western countries, there is a strong focus on integrating career training with mentoring (CTM) programs within higher education (Nabi et al., 2024). Lau et al. (2021) indicate that these programs aim to enhance students' career clarity, while Helens-Hart (2019) emphasizes their inclusion of personal development and employability by offering structured guidance and industry exposure

(Okolie et al., 2020). Well-established vocational education and apprenticeship programs provide alternative pathways for skill acquisition and employment (Smith et al., 2021).

In contrast, Nigeria encounters significant challenges in effectively training individuals for their careers (Hassan & Varshney, 2019). The Industrial Training Fund (ITF), intended to facilitate skills acquisition and industrial training, has been criticized for its limited reach and effectiveness (Famiwole et al., 2020). As a result, many Nigerian students and professionals often resort to informal networks for career advancement (Idowu & Adeola, 2023), which can result in unequal opportunities and the underutilization of available talent. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the quality and relevance of educational curricula, highlighting gaps between the skills taught and those required by the labor market (Okolie et al., 2020).

3. Influence of Economic, Cultural, and Policy Factors:

Economic constraints significantly impact talent retention in Nigeria (Annas et al., 2020). Limited funding for education and professional development hampers the establishment of robust talent pipelines (Basabe & Galigao, 2024). The Nigerian government's allocation to education has historically been low (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2019). This is in comparison to developed countries like the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, and the United States. This underfunding affects the quality of education and the availability of training programs (Amadi & Nwosu, 2023), thereby influencing talent development and retention negatively.

Culturally, Olwoyin & Isuku (2019) notes that there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement in Nigeria, which often at the expense of vocational and technical skills development, which are crucial for a diversified economy (Okolie et al., 2020). This cultural bias can lead to an oversupply of graduates in certain fields while neglecting others that are vital for economic growth.

Policy-wise, while initiatives like the ITF exist, their implementation has been inconsistent (Davwet et al., 2019). In contrast, Western countries often have well-defined policies that support continuous professional development and lifelong learning, Molnar et al. (2024) pointed that it facilitates more effective talent retention strategies. For example, Focacci & Perez (2022) presents that Germany has invested in targeted infrastructure and education reforms to address labor shortages and enhance economic competitiveness.

4. Challenges Faced by Nigeria in Comparison to Western Models:

In Nigeria, the lack of structured career development programs within educational institutions limits students' exposure to potential career paths and diminishes their employability (Okolie et al., 2020). Not only this, but economic instability and high inflation rates have led to dissatisfaction with compensation among professionals (Idris et al., 2024), further sponsoring talent retention issues. A survey conducted by Lasebikan et al. (2020) found that more than 20% of finance professionals in Nigeria expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with their current compensation, identifying economic instability and the prospect of migration as major threats to talent retention. The phenomenon of brain drain is also particularly pronounced in Nigeria (Nnoruga & Osigwe, 2023). In recent decades, Onah et al. (2022) have observed a significant surge in the emigration of professionals from Nigeria, particularly in sectors such as medicine, engineering, information technology, and academia. The World Bank reports that Nigeria ranks among

the leading countries in Africa facing this talent exodus, with over 50,000 Nigerian doctors practicing overseas as of 2023 (Oludayo, 2023). This outflow results in a depletion of essential human capital crucial for the nation's economic growth and development.

Western countries on the other hand, benefit from established systems that integrate education, industry, and policy to create conducive environments for talent development and retention. These systems are characterised by effective career guidance programs, substantial investment in education and training, and policies that promote workforce development (Mc Donald & Hite, 2023). For instance, Portugal has implemented tax incentives aimed at retaining young professionals and curbing brain drain (Kryzhevich, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly worsened employment challenges in Nigeria. A report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that 20% of the full-time workforce in Nigeria lost their jobs during the pandemic in 2020 (UNDP, 2021).

While both Nigeria and Western countries recognise the importance of talent identification and retention, the effectiveness of their approaches vary greatly due to differences in educational structures (Heck & Thomas, 2020). Addressing these challenges in Nigeria requires comprehensive reforms in education funding and cultural perceptions of vocational training to build a more resilient and capable workforce.

B. Comparative Analysis: Talent Retention Strategies

1. Retention Mechanisms in Nigeria vs the Western World:

Talent retention is a vital focus within human resource management, especially as organisations navigate the complexities of globalisation (Urme, 2023). The strategies employed for retention differ markedly between Nigeria and Western countries due to varying institutional and economic contexts (Akinteye et al., 2023). In Western nations, organisations emphasise data-driven approaches, such as psychological contracts and performance-based rewards (Neumann et al., 2021). For example, in Canada and the UK, formal mentorship programs play a crucial role in supporting talent retention, along with offering flexible work arrangements and structured career development opportunities (Gannon et al., 2020; Saedin et al., 2024).

Conversely, retention strategies in Nigeria tend to be more reactive than proactive, often hindered by unstable institutional environments that are misaligned with human resource policies and characterized by weak employer branding (Akinteye et al., 2023). While Western economies leverage strategic HRM frameworks like the Resource-Based View (RBV) to ensure that employee development is in sync with organisational objectives (Gerhart & Feng, 2021), Nigerian organisations frequently depend on informal methods such as personal connections, spontaneous promotions, and paternalistic management styles (Omeihe et al., 2021).

A comparative analysis by Edeh et al. (2022) indicates that although multinational companies in Nigeria adopt global retention strategies, local businesses face challenges due to financial limitations and ineffective governance. This contrast highlights the importance of institutional maturity in the successful implementation of long-term retention strategies (Liang & Carney, 2020). Consequently, while Western approaches prioritise employee engagement and commitment to the organisation, retention practices

in Nigeria often reflect a more short-term, survival-oriented perspective lacking sustainability and a vision for the future.

2. *Salary, Work Environment, Career Progression, and Mobility Factors:*

Salary and compensation are undoubtedly crucial factors in employee retention, as highlighted by Sorn et al. (2023). However, their impact is often influenced by additional elements like the work environment and opportunities for career advancement (Shinwari et al., 2025). In Western countries, a different dynamic prevails where competitive salary structures are typically compared against industry standards, making aspects like variable pay, equity participation, and benefits important components (Gartenberg & Wulf, 2020). Matei and Veith (2023) observe that these financial incentives are often incorporated into larger psychosocial frameworks that promote workplace autonomy, inclusivity, and a culture of learning. Research in Germany and the Netherlands indicates that both vertical and lateral career mobility play a significant role in employee retention (Albert et al., 2023), with Kupper and Dauth (2024) further stressing the importance of transparent promotion criteria and professional development opportunities.

In contrast, the situation in Nigeria is markedly different. As noted by John-Eke and Zeb-Obipi (2023), salary is often viewed as the primary factor influencing retention due to challenges like inflation, job security concerns, and pay inequities. Adekoya et al. (2023) note that work environments in Nigeria are generally hindered by resource constraints, and where resources do exist, poor management practices often prevail, exacerbated by infrastructural deficiencies. Career advancement pathways in Nigerian organizations are often vague and poorly defined, with promotion decisions frequently swayed by nepotism and ethnic biases (Abga et al., 2023). Consequently, Marzec (2020) highlights that limited internal mobility and insufficient investment in professional growth can lead to decreased job satisfaction.

Importantly, Sousa et al. (2024) suggest that Western companies typically incorporate mobility strategies into their talent development initiatives, such as through international assignments or remote work options. In Nigeria, however, the focus is more externally oriented, with employees actively seeking opportunities abroad. As a result, while the Western context emphasizes retention through value-driven work ecosystems, the Nigerian environment remains predominantly transactional, contributing to increased employee turnover intentions (Oludayo et al., 2022).

3. *The Role of Government Policies, Private Sector Engagement, and Migration:*

Government involvement in talent retention is a significant differentiator between developing and developed economies. In Western countries, public policies usually support workforce development through incentives for training, tax breaks for innovation, and education-industry partnerships (Becker & Blossfield, 2022). The EU's Horizon Europe program encourages the movement of research talent and helps keep it in different countries by providing organized grants and partnerships between public and private sectors (Kobella-Zvir et al., 2024). These efforts show how well policies can work together in education, industry, and job markets.

In Nigeria however, government policies on talent retention are fragmented and poorly implemented (Barkhuizen & Masale, 2020). While initiatives such as the National Youth Investment Fund and N-Power aim to address youth employment, they lack strategic depth and long-term sustainability (Osimen et al., 2025). Bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and inadequate funding further diminish their impact. The private sector,

although vibrant in sectors like ICT and banking, is mostly under-regulated leading labour practices that are exploitative, including high turnover (Onah et al., 2022). Unlike Western economies, Nigeria's migration policies are quite opposite as they do not integrate talent retention frameworks (Osobajo et al., 2025), inadvertently facilitating a steady outflow of skilled workers.

In the West there is an active management of migration through skilled-worker visa regimes and talent attraction programs. Bozheva (2024) sheds light on this as relates to Canada's Express Entry and Germany's Blue Card system (OECD, 2021). These systems serve dual purposes—filling domestic labor gaps while retaining international talent. Thus, where the West leverages migration for economic gain, Nigeria experiences a debilitating loss of intellectual capital due to uncoordinated policy frameworks and weak institutional support for skilled labour.

4. How Brain Drain Affects Nigeria Differently:

The brain drain phenomenon is not unique to Nigeria, but its impact in Nigeria is quite disproportionate and severe due to Nigeria's fragile socio-economic and political landscape. While brain drain in the West is typically cyclical and balances out by brain gain through immigration and knowledge transfer (Gains, 2024), Nigeria's experience is marked by a chronic, one-directional talent outflow (John-Eke & Zeb-Obupi, 2023). According to the World Bank (2022) data, over 40% of Nigerian-trained doctors now work abroad, and a significant number of IT professionals emigrate yearly (Hassan, 2024), especially to the UK, Canada, and the United States. Western countries benefit from this trend by absorbing high-skilled workers into their economies, enhancing productivity and innovation (Ollinyk et al., 2021). They also invest heavily in systems that facilitate the integration and upskilling of foreign professionals (Ollinyk et al., 2021).

IV. Discussion

The comparative analysis of talent identification and retention in Nigeria and the Western world reveals several salient themes: institutional support systems, policy coherence, employer value proposition, and employee mobility. These factors delineate the effectiveness of talent strategies in different contexts as well as highlight areas of potential adaptation for Nigeria.

First, institutional robustness in the West drives the shaping of coherent, data-driven talent retention practices. Western economies invest heavily in labour market data analytics, national skills frameworks, and inter-sectoral linkages, allowing for agile human capital management (Becker & Blossfeld 2022). Nigeria's talent systems are fragmented lacking reliable data, real-time evaluation tools, and proactive workforce planning strategies (Adeshina et al., 2024). This disparity suggests the need for Nigeria to establish centralised labour information systems that can inform both government and private sector strategies.

Second, the employer value proposition (EVP) differs between both climes. Western organisations consistently offer competitive EVP packages encompassing benefits, flexibility, purpose-driven work, and career trajectories (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019). Nigerian organisations, especially in the public sector are compensation-centric, with limited investment in non-monetary incentives or employee engagement structures (Akinshola et al., 2024). This limits their capacity to build strong employee-employer bonds, which are foundational for long-term retention.

Third, the policy environment and governance structures influence migration patterns and talent flow. Ewers et al. (2022) notes that western nations have proactively developed skilled migration policies to attract and retain global talent, aligning immigration with economic and innovation goals. Conversely, Nigeria's inability to stem or manage outbound migration due to weak policy coordination has worsened its brain drain (Lamido, 2024).

C. Lessons Nigeria Can Learn from Western Approaches (Contextualised for Local Realities)

While direct replication of Western models would be counterproductive due to socio-economic and political disparities, Nigeria can adopt a hybridised approach rooted in local realities. For instance, Nigeria can emulate the skills-mapping approach used in Canada and Germany, which connects educational outcomes with labour demands (Yong & Liu, 2024), but apply it within local industries such as agriculture, digital technology, and renewable energy. Nigeria can adapt the "learning organization" model championed in the West, where continuous professional development and knowledge transfer are institutionalised (Osobajo et al., 2025). This model could be implemented through partnerships between Nigerian universities and private-sector employers to design modular, industry-specific training programs that bridge the gap between education and employability.

A critical lesson lies in the promotion of employee voice and inclusion. Western firms increasingly embed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in retention strategies, linking it to corporate performance and innovation (Guttermann, 2023). Nigeria's corporate environment, often hierarchical and exclusionary can benefit from implementing more inclusive practices (Nwakanma, 2024) that promote fairness in promotions, reward systems, and internal communications, particularly in public institutions where perceived inequities fuel attrition.

1. *Potential Strategies to Improve Talent Retention in Nigeria:*

A comprehensive strategy is essential for effective talent retention. First, reforming institutions and digitising HR systems in both public and private sectors can lay a solid groundwork for sustainable retention (Bajraliu & Qorraj, 2023). Platforms for electronic human resource management, as used in the UK and Netherlands, have proven to minimize inefficiencies and boost employee engagement (Thanh & Quang, 2022). Nigeria could implement these technologies in key sectors like healthcare and education.

Second, developing localized career advancement frameworks that reflect the needs of regional industries would make job opportunities more relevant. For example, state governments might create talent retention initiatives focused on leading sectors such as agro processing in Kaduna or fintech in Lagos, with backing from local business groups.

Third, a strategy for reintegrating professionals from the diaspora could be created to utilize their expertise for knowledge sharing and temporary roles, inspired by India's "brain gain" model (George, 2023). This initiative would need structured incentives, including tax breaks, research grants, and support for professionals returning to Nigeria.

Fourth, performance-based reward systems, common in Western companies, should be adopted here (Prince et al., 2020). However, these systems must be managed transparently and adapted to the local culture to avoid perceptions of elitism and bias.

Incentives should extend beyond financial rewards to include benefits like sabbaticals, health plans, and homeownership support.

Lastly, according to Obasa & Oluyomi (2024), formalizing public-private partnerships (PPPs) can tie retention to national development objectives. Retention strategies could be integrated into infrastructure projects, with companies committing to employee development in exchange for tax incentives or prioritized access to government contracts.

For policymakers, it is crucial to shift from scattered initiatives to a cohesive national talent retention strategy (Urme, 2023). This strategy should integrate educational, employment, and innovation policies under a single governing body. As demonstrated in the EU and Canada, coordinated policies across different sectors create more robust talent ecosystems (Neely et al., 2021). Additionally, the Nigerian government needs to engage in labour market forecasting to anticipate skill shortages effectively.

In the business arena, employers must understand that retaining talent is not merely a cost but a strategic investment. Companies in Nigeria should transition from reactive to evidence-based, employee-focused retention strategies. Research from the West shows that organizations that involve employees in creating career paths experience a 40% decrease in turnover; this approach remains underused in Nigeria and offers significant potential for improvement (Iwara & Kilonzo, 2022).

For educators and academic institutions, it is vital to create curricula that align with industry needs while incorporating career development skills. Additionally, Nigerian universities could partner with diaspora academics and institutions in the West to offer dual-degree programs, internships, and collaborative research opportunities. These approaches can help reduce student outmigration by providing valuable educational experiences within the country. While recent studies (Idris et al., 2024; Hassan & Varshney, 2019) have highlighted Nigeria's talent retention issues, they often describe problems rather than propose actionable solutions. Many existing analyses overlook the critical intersections of technology, governance, and employee input, which are essential in today's talent landscape.

V. Conclusion

The comparative study on talent identification and retention practices between Nigeria and Western countries reveal significant disparities driven by distinct socio-economic and cultural contexts. While Western nations benefit from systematic, data-driven approaches and robust institutional support that foster talent management and retention, Nigeria grapples with numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness in these areas. The informal and reactive nature of talent identification processes in Nigeria, coupled with economic instability and a lack of structured career progression, leads to a concerning brain drain phenomenon that depletes the nation's skilled workforce.

Findings reveal that the integration of global best practices within Nigeria's unique economic and cultural realities is essential for addressing its talent management issues. Effective strategies must focus on building strong partnerships between educational institutions and industries, enhancing vocational training, and developing robust career guidance programs. Such initiatives can help create a reliable pipeline of talent that aligns with the needs of Nigerian businesses.

The ongoing challenges of brain drain must be tackled with a commitment to improving living and working conditions, thus creating an environment where professionals feel valued and invested in their homeland. A culture of innovation and entrepreneurship can harness the potential of Nigeria's youth and skilled workforce, significantly curbing emigration. Collaborative efforts between government, businesses, and educational bodies are paramount in shaping a more dynamic and effective talent management framework. Such concerted actions can transform Nigeria into a competitive player on the global stage, ensuring sustainable economic growth through enhanced talent retention and development.

Fostering a conducive work environment that prioritises employee engagement, competitive compensation, and professional development opportunities is crucial for retaining skilled professionals. The government has a vital role to play in implementing supportive policies, offering incentives for employee training, and facilitating public-private collaborations to drive talent retention and mitigate brain drain.

Summarily, the success of talent management in Nigeria hinges on comprehensive reforms that address systemic challenges while adapting successful strategies from the West. By doing so, Nigeria can cultivate a resilient workforce capable of driving economic growth and organizational success. This paper highlights the necessity of a multifaceted approach that not only seeks to retain talent but also to develop local capabilities that can thrive in a globalised economy. As Nigeria strives to align its talent management practices with global standards, it must remain cognizant of its unique context to effectively harness its human capital for sustainable development.

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