

# **Exploring the Underlying Impediments to Talent Retention in the Public Service: Experience from Nigeria**

**Aminu A. Anas**  
**Aberystwyth University**

**Ratnesvary Alahakone**  
**Aberystwyth University**

**Nicholas Perdikis**  
**Aberystwyth University**

*This paper explored the underlying impediments to talent retention in the Federal Civil service in Nigeria. The federal service faces challenges of retaining talents, thereby resulting in the inability to preserve and transfer knowledge, increased turnover cost and lack of talent succession in the service. Varying commissions of inquiry and fact-finding teams set up to attract and retain talents in the Federal Civil service as a measure of improving performance towards effective and efficient service delivery in nation-building. Existing literature provided the basis for the conceptual and theoretical clarifications of the problem statement. The study adopted a mixed-method approach. A sample of respondents of 149 purposively selected for the research. Factor analysis, ANOVA and content and thematic analysis deployed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data with the aid of SPSSv25 (for quantitative data) and Nvivo 10 (for the qualitative results). The study recommends that there should be an attempt to focus on talent retention in public service, as it is critical to the implementation of government policies. Further, the need for talent management policies and guidelines that will provide a framework for managing talent in the Federal Service is more pertinent now than ever for the sustainability of democratic rule. The study also makes a theoretical contribution through the validation of the cost-benefit theory.*

*Keywords: talent retention, federal civil service, turnover, Nigeria*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The stark reality of globalisation influence in modern society is the increased talent migration in most developing economies (Tansley, 2011; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). This phenomenon has remained a source of concern for human resource and management practitioners (Ross, 2013; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013). The growing market competitions and global challenges have made it necessary that the organisation seeks and foster a way to ensure that talents are not just attracted but also retained. It solves

succession and knowledge transfer challenges and repositions the organisation to face challenges in both its internal and external environment.

Consequently, managers are today adopting different strategies aimed at retaining talents and ensure that the organisation's performance is maintained and sustained. However, as Phillip and Roper, (2009) state, Talents are not so simple to come by; therefore, it demands some extent of a radical managerial approach be able to attract and retain talents. Finklestein, Costanza, & Goodwin, (2017) holds that the success of an organisation is dependent on how successful it can attract and retain skills considering the changing times and dynamic nature of the modern business environment.

Hence, it behoves on managers to ensure that critical factors that are essential to talent retention are immediately taking into cognisance and implemented in the interest of the organisation (Alessia & Regina, 2008; Phillips & Roper 2009). Thus, a paradigm shift from the old order of doing things, as there is a need for talent retention systems and structures that ensure a template for succession plan established in the organisation. It possibly informs the view of Cazkan (2005), that while the previous approach of motivational strategies was adopted to retain employees, it no longer enough as employees are today more mobile and have options that modern market offers them.

In the public sector, retaining talents requires a more proactive and deepen approach as it is rather a more difficult place to find talents willing to stay due to varying reasons (Crosby, 2014). The situation is somewhat more worrisome, as Cosby (2014) stated that since the 1960s, the public sector has not been able to retain talents, and it explains the continuous decline of its image. The general perspective that the public sector is a talent killer and offers little to talent development has further made retention a difficult task (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Goodsell, 2003).

In the views of Grissom, (2012), leaders in the public sector are rather finding it more challenging to retain talents. There is the problem of the rising cost of employees' turnover in the public service. Also, there is a lack of transfer of institutional knowledge for the growth and development of the service. In Nigeria, the case is similar and if not worst, as most talents are not even willing to work with the public service. The ones who are ready to take up the job do so and within the next few years of working are not willing to continue, except if the opportunity to change jobs do not arise. The private sector accounts for most of the innovative ideas, and the government often forced to outsource several of its erstwhile core mandates through privatisation (Darma, 2014).

Consequently, the federal civil service has undergone varying reforms initiative, all aimed at improving the performance of the federal service (Magbadelo, 2016; Ogunrotifa, 2012; Fatile, & Adejuwon, 2010). The post-independent reforms (1960-Date) are many and varied in scope (Cornelius & Sunday, 2016). However, despite a series of reforms, the situation is nothing much better in terms of compensation, work environment and strategic development of the human resource. The specific study problem is, despite the reforms attempt, there are increased employees' turnover and the lack of transfer of institutional knowledge in the service. The focus of most of the reforms has been drawn from a fixed mindset that has rather been restrictive, thereby denying the government the privilege of having reliable information of the challenges of talent retention in the Federal Service.

Several studies have made a concise effort at exploring talent management practices in the Nigeria Federal Service (Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012; Nwankwo, 2010; Oweh, 2013). However, the overbearing focus has been to identify the determinants of talent retention, without recourse to identify what has been the impediments to retaining talents in the Federal even though the service offers the best form of job security in the country.

Further, there is minimal or no attempt currently at exploring whether there exist differences in the factors that impede talent retention between the varying levels of management. They are often of different generations, and the factors that influence their retention to work may not be the same. It has become imperative owing to the high turnover cost experienced in the federal service, intermittent need to engage in recruitment of talents in the service and the high disparity between the varying levels of management in the Federal civil service. This research gap is what this study seeks to close. In other to achieve this, the following questions will serve as a cursory to achieve this objective.

- (i) What are the underlying factors that impede talent retention in the federal civil service of Nigeria?
- (ii) Is there a significant difference in the factors that impede talent retention among the varying levels of management in the federal service of Nigeria?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The lens from which this study viewed is the cost-benefit theory. The cost-benefit theory applied in explaining the basis of cost impact and potential benefit of actions that are undertaking in an organisation (Hansen, Byrne, & Kiersh, 2013). The theory used to assess the potential impact of employee's turnover in the organisation and various studies have attempted to examine the possible negative cost-benefit of employee's turnover in an organisation and most importantly in the public sector, which is the area of focus of this study (Le Blanc, & González-Romá, 2012; Park & Shaw, 2013). The theory hinges on the belief that turnover is costly, and organisations should possibly avoid it. It provides a measurable approach to assess the impact of turnover on the organisation, most especially if not managed properly, thus, requiring that it be monitored frequently for time to time (Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, & Collins, 2015).

The tendency that public service subsumes into another public institution exists in any country, and often time cost has been a critical factor stated, and the same applies to talent (Stanton, 2013). The inability to carefully assess the cost implication of talent turnover current in the government agencies could lead to talents been underdeveloped and possibly consumed in the activities of the service. Hence, when managers know the cost impact of turnover, they would act appropriately in ensuring that talents remain in the service.

In application to this study, this theory provides support for the need to identify the factors that impede talent retention in the public service most especially in an emerging economy like Nigeria that is still struggling economically and financially despite the abundance of human and material resources (Eneanya, 2013; Adegoroye, 2015). Hence, this paper focuses on identifying the cost and benefit, most especially from the positive angle on why these factors need to be identified and used in the interest of the Nigerian Public service.

### **Talent Retention**

Talent as a concept remains a topic of debate by several authors, and it explains up till this moment the absence of a generally accepted definition of talent (Ross, 2013). The argument remains what constitutes talent and how best can it be defined (Tansley, 2011) most notably considering the type of organisation and what they do (Tansley, 2011). This argument is what informs the view of Stahl et al. (2012) that talent is both inclusive and exclusive. The Inclusive view talent from the entire employee's capacity while the Exclusive theory feels talented should be something attributed to a selected group of exceptional individuals (Stahl et al., 2012; McDonnell, 2011).

Whatever view adopted in an organisation, it widely accepted that talent management is pivotal to new business growth and survival (Vermeulen, 2007). That is why, Davies and Davies (2010) argued that talent management is a procedural process that aims at attracting, identifying, developing, retaining and deploying of employee's that are critical to the operation of the organisation. However, in a rather general perspective, Scullion and Collings (2011) expressed that talent management involves the entirety of organisational activities that geared towards the attraction, selection, and retention of organisations best in a strategic position on a global dimension.

Thus, it is worthy to state that most scholars and human resources practitioners just like Davies and Davies (2010) and Scullion and Collings (2011) define talent management around the purview of identification, attraction, developing, retention, and some selection or motivation (Putney & Sinkin, 2009; Stahl et al., 2012; McDonnell, 2011; Vermeulen, 2007). However, this paper is more concerned with

identifying how to improve public service through the lens of talent retention as a talent management dimension.

Khalid and Nawab (2018) indicate that talent retention is the approach that an organisation adopts towards ensuring the continued provision of the employee's superior service in the organisation. Similarly, Finklestein et al., (2017) opine that talent retention is a deliberate attempt at ensuring the best pool of employees are part of the functional process of the organisation most especially the core employees.

In the view of Putney and Sinkin (2009) the determinants of talent retention are providing direction for work and potential benefit, articulated change process, and ensuring there is smooth communication that flows across the lines of managers. Ma and Trigo (2008) found that the determinants are ensuring there are career growth and development, appropriate reward and pay, recommendation, and work environment.

However, it is worthy to state that talent retention practices and determinants from developed economies may not suffice from an emerging economy's perspective. Most public institutions in developed economies are already at their mature stage. They have a structured process in place, unlike developing economies that are still in their infant or growth stage of growing. Further, talent retention in the private sector differs considerably to the public sector.

### **The Nigerian Public Service**

Just like every other public service, the Nigerian civil service has over the years been driven within the context of a premise that it is the government's institution that is responsible for the articulation, designing, formulating and implementation of policies and developmental programmes (Ogunrotifa, 2012; Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012; Eneanya, 2013). Consequently, there had been attempts for restructuring and redesigning the service. The restructuring is to better the function in the interest of the country and its economy. With this in mind, there have been efforts from the successive government of the country dating from the military era to present at ensuring the federal civil service, an arm of the executive government repositioned for superior performance (Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012). This led to the drive for varying variants of reforms. Despite, the changes the federal civil service has not been able to contribute effectively more to meet expectations, as the problem remains almost the same (Magbadelo, 2016).

Several among the challenges are lack of policy for talent management, lack of policy direction for succession planning, and ineffective organisational structure with the concentration of responsibilities and authority at the top, an ageing workforce and poor leadership among others. The pre-independent reforms were mainly towards welfares and integrating Nigerians into the public service, and a means for self-determination and liberalisation of Nigerians from their colonial masters (Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012). The service initially was expatriate dominated at the detriment of Nigerians.

The post-independent reforms most notably, the Udoji, Babangida and the Obasanjo reforms aimed at the professionalism of the service, even though not successfully implemented, the rest has been towards salary, rationalisation, restructuring and nothing on talent identification, attraction, retaining and development (Adebayo, 2004; Anazodo 2012).

Talent management practices in the Nigerian public service is yet to actively considered in the service (Magbadelo, 2016). The fact remains that talent management viewed only from the perspective of skill that an individual possesses, and the bureaucratic, hierarchal structure and fixed mindset pattern of the public service make it almost impossible for attracting, developing, and retaining talents in the service.

### **Perspectives on Retaining Talents in the Public Service**

Several studies have examined talent retention in the public sector though as employee retention (Barnard & Simbhoo 2014; George, 2015; Lee & Jimenez, 2011), however, for simplicity both concepts are treated and perceived equally. In the study carried out by Ibrahim, Hashim, & Rahman, (2018), assessed employer branding and career growth on talent retention. Another exciting research carried out was in the Malaysian Public Sector had the perceived role of recruitment practices as a mediating

variable. The study found that employers branding and career growth predicts talents retention in public service in Malaysia. Similarly, the study of Ibidunni et al. (2015) found pay and promotion to be significant to talent retention. Cho & Lewis (2012) found the work environment and pay significantly to influence talent retention in the federal service. Similarly, Lee and Jimenez (2011) using survey data from 24 federal government agencies, examined performance-based management practices and employees' intentions to leave. These studies found a significant strong relationship between the variables mentioned.

A more specific approach to talent retention and found some factors that influence retention was the study of George, (2015). The survey identified leadership, work environment, compensation, social support, work design and work-life balance among others to be determinants of retention. Further, the study triggers a result indicating that promotion perception is a determinant of talent retention. When a skilled employee is aware that his contribution would be recognised towards his promotion, there is a strong tendency for remaining in the organisation.

Alessia and Regina, (2008) study on learning orientation, organisational commitment and talent retention across generations was an attempt to assess different generations differences in retention. The study found that learning orientation and commitment differs significantly across generations. Similarly, the study of Tee (2013) examined talent retention pressures among SMEs in Malaysia, and the study identifies that there is the difference in the factors that motivate, most notably the generation Y as they are fast and would demand a defined career growth (Tee, 2013; Haggag, 2010).

The reviews have shown that there exists the need for additional studies to be carried out on talent retention especially in the public sector, owing to the apparent lack of enough studies carried out using the public sector as a research entity. The dimensions of the public sector and private may be similar, but most often, there is a possibility for varying differences among the employees' experience (Barnard & Simbhoo 2014). Therefore, one must be careful with an attempt to fit in the private sector studies into the public sector, because at the end of the day, the drivers for both institutions significantly differ considerably.

The reviews have shown studies that address talent retention from a quantitative perspective, while a few have been through a qualitative paradigm — thus indicating an apparent lack of enough paper that addresses talent retention in the public sector from a mixed triangulated approach.

## **Methodology**

The design of this study was a concurrent mixed-method approach. This choice aimed at avoiding method bias and providing a pragmatic understanding of the research problem. The method and to enrich the findings of this study. The qualitative (phenomenology) with a face-to-face interview and focus group discussion adopted for qualitative research. The population of the survey constitutes management staff of the Office of Head of the service of the federation in FCT Abuja from grade level 13 and above, which is 648. The study sample is 248 and was determined by Taro Yamane formula and selecting participants' purposive and convenient sampling technique was adopted. Quantitative data obtained from primary sources. The questionnaire designed used a funnel approach with two major sections using the Likert scale format and subjected to content validity with an expert on human resources and public administration making inputs and observations on the instrument. All the selected items meet the efficacy of internal consistency at 70% and above for reliability analysis using Chronbach alpha used to determine the suitability of the research instrument. Those that did not achieve the high score were rejected and not included in the tool. The data collection method is using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedules

Further, specifically, four face-to-face interviews conducted within two weeks. The face-to-face engagements lasted 50 minutes each. Several scholars provide the support that four (4) participants in a single study considered enough to reach data saturation (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saunders & Townsend, 2016; Wali & Nwokah, 2017). For ethical consideration, the researcher obtained written permission from the gatekeeper in The Office of the Head of the Service of the Federation to carry out the study. The respondents were assured of confidential and that the purpose of the data was for academic

purpose. Data were analysed using content and thematic analyses with the aid of Nvivo11; while Factor analysis and ANOVA with the assistance of SPSSv25 for quantitative data deployed.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	85	57
Female	64	43
<b>Total</b>	149	100
<b>Education:</b>		
OND/NCE	6	4.1
HND	31	20.8
Degrees	82	55
Masters	21	14.8
PhD	8	5.4
<b>Total</b>	149	100
<b>Level of Management</b>		
Lower level	41	27.51
Middle level	90	60.40
Top level	18	12
<b>Total</b>	149	100
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Single	9	6
Married	130	87
Others	10	7
<b>Total</b>	149	100
<b>Number of Years in Service</b>		
8-14 Years in Service	22	15
15-21 Years in Service	47	32
22-28 Years in Service	51	34
29-35 Years in Service	29	19
<b>Total</b>	149	100

Source: Author's Computation, 2019

The distribution of the respondents across their gender is displayed above. The table indicates that 85(57%) are males and 64(43%) are females that participated in the study. The gender spread is moderately to balance in terms of participants sex. Thus, indicating a balance in this aspect of the findings. The level of education showed that only 6 (4.1%) participants have lower than university degree or its equivalent (OND/NCE), Degrees are 82(55%) while masters and PhD are 21(14.1%) and 8(5.4%) participants respectively. The level of managers as shown indicates that lower is 41(27.51%), the middle is 90(60.4%), and the top is 18(12%). The marital spread shows that those that are singles is 9(6%), married is 130(87%) while others are 10(7%). The number of years in service as shown indicates that participants that have spent within 8-14years are 22(15%), 15-21years are 47(32%), while 22-28 years and 29-35years are 51(34%) and 29(19%), respectively. The data further reveals that those that have over 15 years working experience constitute the majority of respondents with over85%. This group strengthens the researcher's findings would be from those who have almost seen it all in the service.

### Quantitative Result

The primary objective was to explore the underlying factors that impede talent retention in the Federal civil service. The study deployed Exploratory Factor Analysis by using the principal component analysis to identify the main factors. However, of the 248 instruments distributed, 149 questionnaires obtained and adjudged suitable for this study. This retrieved quality accounts for 60% of the data set and is considered ideal by scholars analysis and discussion (Mugenda, & Mugenda, 2003; Creswell, 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The paper adopted principal component with varimax rotation, having observed no difference in other results. The number of factors that the article retained was on Eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser criterion), scree plot and Horn parallel analysis (Matsunaga, 2010). The study adopted a minimum threshold for rotating components of 0.50 as suggested by Hair, Babin, & Anderson, (2010). The preliminary evaluation justified the use of exploratory factor analysis. The multicollinearity test indicates that the determinant score was different from zero. The test of variables linearity indicates curvilinear relationship absence. There were no patterned relationships, as shown from the correlation matrix.

**TABLE 2**  
**KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.761
Approx. Chi-Square	1531.968
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Df	300
Sig.	.000

**TABLE 3**  
**FACTOR LOADINGS OF TALENT RETENTION CHALLENGES IN THE NIGERIAN FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE**

<b>Rotated Component Matrix</b>							
Items	Component						
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
Timely low payment	<b>.876</b>						
The talented feeling of valued and compensated	<b>.799</b>						
Economic and living conditions improved by pay packages	<b>.742</b>						
Adequate provisions for special incentives	<b>.513</b>						
National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)	<b>.705</b>						
Job security, not service delivery, is the attraction.		<b>.718</b>					
Civil service does not generally encourage high performance		<b>.558</b>					
Lack of Training and development		<b>.793</b>					

The crazy quest for personal material gains overwhelm service excellence		<b>.655</b>					
Lack of approved policy for talent management is the chief bane.		<b>.652</b>					
The civil service is high-handedness to potentials			<b>.672</b>				
Work stress to work-social life balance			<b>.771</b>				
Work environment			<b>.552</b>				
Removal of a tenure appointment			<b>.512</b>				
There is a general lack of commitment and sincerity				<b>.732</b>			
General lack of patriotism and discipline				<b>.665</b>			
The civil service is no longer what it used to be a reorientation needed				<b>.580</b>			
Lack of equal employment opportunity into the civil service					<b>.834</b>		
Frequent hiring of external consultants without due regards to staff capacity					<b>.536</b>		
The civil servants generally lack knowledge, competency						<b>.719</b>	
Civil Service Rules are outdated for modern people management.						<b>.626</b>	
The educational system of the country is the leading cause for lack of talent						<b>.508</b>	
Loans, scholarship and study benefits lacking							<b>.687</b>
Contributory Pension Scheme retains talent							<b>.652</b>
<b>Cronbach alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.70</b>
<b>% of variance</b>	13.94 4	12.6 40	8.642	8.343	8.089	7.78 0	6.825
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							
a. Rotation converged in 17 iterations.							
b. Factor Labels: F1 = Low pay and incentives, F2= Lack of policy for talent management, F3 = Unconducive working environment, F4 = Lack of patriotism, F5 = Civil rules and guides, F6 = Leadership and F7 = Lack of Fringe benefits							

Source: (SPSSv25) Author's Calculations



The result above is a factor analysis conducted to explore the impediments to talent retention in public service. The Bartlett's test indicates that it is significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .761 ( $\chi^2 = 1531.968$ ) is greater than the minimum threshold of 0.6 (Matsunaga, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The result justified the use of factor analysis from the data set gathered. Further, evidence of the Anti-image matrices table on variables appropriateness indicates that all variables selected were above the acceptable level of 0.5 (Matsunaga, 2010).

The above result shows seven factors had Eigenvalues over one (1) and they are: Poor remuneration with five items (3.486); Lack of policies for talent management with five elements (3.160). An unconducive working environment with four issues (2.161). Lack of patriotism with three items (2.086); Poor Civil rules and guides with two variables (2.022); Poor Leadership with three elements (1.945) and Poor Fringe benefits with two variables (1.706). These seven factors explain a total of 66.263% of the variance. These factors had a variation of Poor remuneration (13.944); Lack of policies for talent management (12.640). Others are unconducive working environment (8.642); Lack of patriotism (8.343); Poor Civil rules and guides (8.089); Poor Leadership (7.080) and Poor Fringe benefits (6.825). These factors account for talent retention challenges in the Nigerian Federal public service.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Is there a significant difference in the factors that impede talent retention among the varying levels of management in the federal service?*

**TABLE 4**  
**ANOVA TABLE ON THE DIFFERENCES IN THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDE TALENT RETENTION**

ANOVA					
Talent Retention					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.065	2	2.532	9.424	.000
Within Groups	39.232	146	.269		
Total	44.296	148			

Source: SPSSv25

The result above is a group analysis of variance conducted to explore the significant difference in factors that impede retention in the Nigerian Federal Service. The study has three groups, which comprised the three-level of management staff in the public service (lower, middle and top). The result indicates that a significant difference at  $p < 0.05$ . The effect size is 0.11; using Cohen (1988) suggestions that values 0.01 (small effect), 0.06 (medium effect) and 0.14 (large effect). Given the effect, size is 0.11; it indicates the effect size is large. The use of Tukey HSD indicated that the mean score was statistically significant across the three levels of management. This finding agrees with the views of Tee, (2013) and Haggag, (2010).

### Qualitative Result

The paper adopted Braun and Clarke (2006) content and thematic analysis template. The participants were selected based on their position in service, experience, age and most importantly, the Head of the Service of the Federation approved to carry out the study. It is part of ethical requirements to secure approval of gatekeepers for research to meeting credibility. The interview was for 50 minutes, and the data transcribed within two weeks. Themes identification done manually. The findings presented as suggested by scholars such as Bhattacharjee, (2012) and King and Horrocks, (2010).

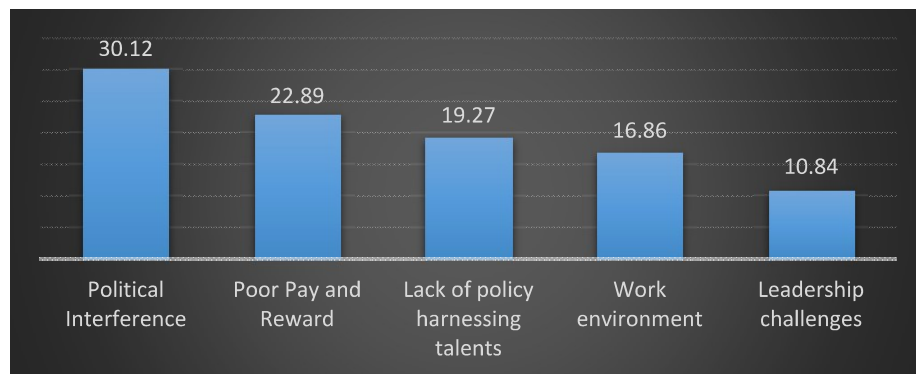
## Significant Findings and Emerging Themes

### Research Question and Objective One

What are the underlying factors that impede talent retention in the federal civil service of Nigeria?

The study found some factors that are responsible for the inability of the public service in Nigeria to be able to retain talents. The responses from the interviews and the analysis provided a vivid illustration of the pattern of the service approach to talent management practices in Nigeria.

**FIGURE 1**  
**NVIVO 11 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS**



Source: Nvivo 11 Output (2019)

The findings indicate that political interference was primary among the factors that impede against talent retention in public service. The study found that the political class do not seem to have full regard for talent in the service. Their approach to public service is more from a political perspective, thereby making them not able to demonstrate their skills effectively.

*“Well, there are many talents in the service. However, I believe it is highly politicised because it experiences a lot of political interferences and it is preventing many people from doing what is necessary as it is a case of whom you know and not what you know”* (Respondent 2).

*You will have to tell the politicians to stay away from the ministry, and that is not possible. The eight years tenure for directors was done for the service to return to its senses. The policy helped the service because it removed stalled directors. Some had spent 10 and 14 years as directors and still have more years, and as long they are in that place, they were not productive, and they were not ready to identify talents. The new government came and suspended it, and we back to square one* (Respondent 4).

The quantitative results also identified political interference as a factor that predicts lack of talent retention in public service in Nigeria. The study found that political interference is a strong contributory factor to the increased cost associated in talent attraction, most notably during the recruitment process. The idea of merit is below the expected standards as the focus is more on the lobby for political godfatherism. This theme supports the cost-benefit theory as the increased cost associated with governance affects most emerging economies; as a result of political interference in service management and its personnel activities in particular.

The study found that low pay and reward are critical to why talents are refusing to stay in public service. The findings indicate that the service pay structure is quite small and informs the reasons why organised private sector managers can quickly attract the best of talents even though public service offers job security. The view expressed by respondents 4 gives credence to this position.

*“The compensation is not there; remuneration is poor,”*

*“Low payment, as there is a need for a living wage. This salary paid to civil servants are meagre, what do you expect someone who has so much gift to be doing in the service, when they can earn more out there or even work for themselves” (Respondent 4).*

Further, the study found that critical to talent retention challenges is the inability to articulate a policy that helps in harnessing talent in the public service. The quantitative data findings succinctly expressed this situation. It found that the current civil service policy does not have a template for talent attraction, development, and retention. Even where talents identification made, there is little to make them stay since there exists no documented plan at present for proper talent management in the service, notably development.

*If any government want the civil service to succeed, they should allow them to be professional and work according to their own rules. However, there is a need for regulations to be updated. Because as of now I can say with authority there is nothing documented for talent management in the service, quote me anywhere. After all, as a director with 32 years in service, I say this on competent authority. (Respondent 4).*

Also, the study found a work environment as a theme to be vital as a factor that explains the lack of talent retention in public service. The study found that the work environment does not just mean the immediate environment but also the materials or modern working tools that are required for the work to be done by the employees. The study found that some senior officers use their money to buy specific office requirements. The office environment is not conducive and not challenging that could propel talents and improve them.

*When you do not have all the necessary things to work with, you will not be able to do many things. For example, the lift is not working, and you will have to climb to the tenth floor, after doing that the only thing that you will have to do next is to sleep when you reach your office because you will be tired (Respondent, 2).*

*The provision of the necessary working materials will help the talents meet their tasks need and be able to work at ease. The system will move, and assignments will be delivered on time as it goes a long way to developing the talents in the service with a pleasant work environment. The necessary working environment tools, particularly the modern ones, should be provided. There are many offices without a staff bus, transport allowances not provided (Respondent, 1).*

The study further found that leadership challenges in the service have not helped in retaining talents in the public service in Nigeria. This study found that the approach that leaders take towards required expertise skills in the service has not contributed favourably to talents retention in the service. The view that leaders are supposed to provide support for talents to develop through is not yet strategically practised in the public service as no succession plan gives the younger ones hope for a future on the job engagement. Critical of the theme identified in this study is the human capital theme. The theme supports the cost-benefit theory.

*It is the best way to make progress. The first way to go about it is, to attract the best and retain the best of them and those that you have within the service you educate them and build their capacity, and you will see they will perform, and the transformation will be there for all to see. If develop their abilities and put in place good pay and welfare packages such as transportation, medical etc. the officers will always give their best, and*

*that will translate in the development of the service and nation when there is no political interference (Respondent 4).*

### **Research Question and Objective Two**

Is there a significant perception difference in the factors that impede talent retention among the varying levels of management in the federal service?

The results of this investigation regarding the perception of the management staff if there was a significant difference in the factors that impede talent retention found that the middle-level managers seem to leave the service more than the other level of management. It followed by the lower and then the senior-level managers. The attraction to leave the organisation remains the same for all levels of managers. Still, the propensity to leave was higher among the middle-level managers despite committing a considerable number of years in the service. This finding agrees with the results of Alessia and Regina (2008)

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study explored the impediments to talent retention in Public service of Nigeria as an emerging economy and democracy after a series of Military rules. The study adopted a mixed-method approach to investigate using factor analysis to identify the underlying factors that explain talent retention impediments. The study found seven factors, which are poor remuneration (13.944); Lack of policies for talent management (12.640); unconducive working environment (8.642); Lack of patriotism (8.343); weak civil rules and guides (8.089); poor leadership (7.080) and fringe benefits (6.825). The results agree with earlier findings of Lee and Jimenez (2011), George, (2015) that identified an unconducive working environment as a factor that affects talent retention.

Similarly, the study of Ibidunni et al., (2015) held that poor pay and remuneration is critical to lack of talent retention in the organisation. On policies for talent management, the study of Barnard and Simbhoo, (2014) differs from this study finding that lack of systems for talent management affects talent retention. The survey of Ibidunni, et al., (2015) provided support for the findings that poor or inexistence of fringe benefits contribute to lack of talent retention.

The study found differences in the factors that influence the varying levels of management staff with regards to retention of talents in public service. This perception difference is a novelty, as the author has not come across any paper that seeks to assess whether there may be the difference in perception on the factors that impede talent retention in public service among the varying levels of management. This finding provides support to the fact that what motivates others may not be what motivates another group. Thus, this paper validates the cost-benefit theory as a theoretical contribution to the study of talent management within the context of the civil service of Nigeria.

The qualitative result further provided support to the quantitative result obtained from the primary data conducted. The transcribed responses from the interviews formed the basis for analysis using Nvivo. The quantitative result supports the finding that political interference is critical to impeding talent retention and justify further research. Cornelius and Sunday, (2016) feel that since it is a public service, there will always be interference, but it ought not to be to the detriment of the service. This finding confirms that views of George (2015) that political interference is detrimental talent retention.

Furthermore, the study found pay and remuneration to impede talent retention in the service. This result is similar to the study of Goodsell, (2003) which found that offering an excellent salary has been a major motivating factor that has attracted talent into the service. The study of Lee and Jimenez (2011), Osborne and Gaebler, (1992) provided similar support and made mention that the remuneration is the grounds on which most talents first attracted and sustained.

Also, the study of George (2015) provided empirical support that the work environment is vital to talent retention. Similarly, the view expressed by Ibidunni et al., (2015) indicated that the work environment has direct cost implication on the organisation performance. They stated that the basis for quality work output adequately defined in the work environment. It thus provided support to the findings

of this study that the work environment is a critical talent retention study found. Hence, providing a theoretical contribution that validates the cost-benefit theory.

Consequently, this paper concludes that talent retention in public service majorly impeded by poor remuneration, lack of policies for talent management and uncondusive working environment. Further, lack of patriotism; weak civil rules and guides; poor leadership, inadequate fringe benefits and political interference have a significant influence on impeding talent retention in the organisation. Hence, this paper recommends that to improve on talent retention there is need for emphasis on remuneration, create a policy for talent management; provide conducive working environment; effective civil rules and guides; excellent leadership and enhanced fringe benefits.

There is need to take note of the fact that what influence a person may not influence another, as such the policies should be in such a way that it takes into cognisance the varying levels of management in the service. There should be a decisive policy framework to focus on managing talent in the Federal Service as the critical organisation to the implementation of government policies, and programmes will be excellently beneficial.

The study is limited to small sample size staff of the federal service, at the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation in Nigeria. Thus, making it necessary for further research to carried out by using a comparative approach to the problem statement.

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