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EXPLORING THE UNDERLYING IMPEDIMENTS TO TALENT RETENTION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE: EXPERIENCE FROM NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This paper explored the underlying impediments to talent retention in the Nigerian Federal Civil service. Despite 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, 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. Existing literature provided the basis for the conceptual and theoretical clarifications of the problem statement. The study adopted a mixed method technique for data collection. The study purposively selected 149 samples for the study. Factor analysis, ANOVA and content cum thematic analysis were deployed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data respectively with the aid of SPSSv25 and Nvivo 10. The study recommends that there should be strategic focus on talent retention in public service, as it is critical to the implementation of government policies. Further, the need for talent management policies that will provide a framework for managing talent in the Federal Service is more germane now than ever for the democratic rule sustainability. The study makes a theoretical contribution through the validation of the cost-benefit theory.

Keywords: Talent Retention, Federal Civil Service, Turnover and Nigeria

Introduction

One of the stark realities 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 with interest 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 talent is not just attracted but are also retained. As this solve

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

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

Hence, it behoves on managers public and private as well as not for profit to ensure that the critical factors essential to talent retention are not only immediately been taking into cognisance, but strategically implemented in the interest of the organisation (Alessia & Regina, 2008; Phillips & Roper 2009). Thus, a paradigm shift from the old order of doing things intuitively, as there is a need for talent retention systems and structures that ensure a template for succession is 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 talent requires a more proactive and deepen approach as it is rather a more difficult place to find talent 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 talent which explains the continuous decline of its image, especially in the 1980s and 1990s (Bagura & Larbi, 2007). 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 talent. There is the problem of the rising cost of employees’ turnover in the public service and the 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. Mostly those who are in the service consider it as steppingstones, are ready to take up the job and within the next few years of working are searching for “greener pasture” somewhere with mindset or willingness to discontinue, except if opportunity to change jobs do not arise. The private sector accounts for most of the innovative ideas, and the government are often forced to outsource several of its erstwhile core mandates through privatization (Darma, 2014).

Consequently, the federal civil service has undergone varying reforms initiative, aimed at attracting and retaining talent workforce for 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 series of the reforms, the situation is nothing much better in terms of compensation, work environment, strategic development to mention a few. Thus, the specific study problem is, despite the serial reforms attempt, there are still increased employees’ turnover and the lack of transfer of institutional knowledge in the service. The focus of most of the reforms had 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.

Some 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 identifying what had been the impediments to retaining talent at the Federal level, 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. This has become imperative owing to the high turnover cost experienced in the federal service, intermittent need to engage in recruitment of talent in the service and the high disparity between the varying levels of management in the Federal civil service. These research gaps serve as the motivation for which the study seeks to close. In order to achieve this, the following questions were asked to actualize the objectives.

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

Review of Literature

Theoretical foundation

The lens from which this study is viewed is the cost-benefit theory. The cost-benefit theory has been 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 has been used to assess the potential impact of employee's turnover in organisation and various studies have attempted to examine the possible negative cost-benefit of employee's turnover in an organisation and most importantly in 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 should be avoided in an organisation. 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 is subsumed into another public institution like the executive arm of government exists in any country and often time its cost of operations has been a critical factor in affairs of the state (Stanton, 2013) and the same applies to talent lost. The inability to carefully assess the cost implication of talent turnover current in the government agencies could lead to talent 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 talent retention in the service is given prompt and appropriate attention.

In application to this study, this theory of cost-benefit analysis provides support for the need to identify the factors that impede talent retention in the public service of Nigeria, an

emerging economy that is still struggling economically and financially despite the abundance of human and material resources (Eneanya,2013; Adegoroye,2015).

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 (Ross, 2013). The argument remains what constitutes talent and how best can it be defined (Tansley, 2011) most especially considering the type of organisation and what they do (Tansley, 2011). This informs the view of Stahl et al., (2012) that talent is both inclusive and exclusive. The inclusive view talent from the entire employees' capacity, while the exclusive feels talent should be viewed from a selected group of exceptional individuals (Stahl et al., 2012; McDonnell, 2011).

Whatever view is adopted in an organisation, it is widely accepted that talent management is pivotal to modern business growth and survival (Vermeulen, 2007). That is why, Davies and Davies (2010) argue 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 are geared towards the attraction, selection, and retention of organisation's best workforce in strategic positions. Thus, it is worthy to state that most scholars and human resources practitioners define talent management around the purview of identification, attraction, developing, retention, and or motivation (Putney & Sinkin, 2009; Stahl, et al, 2012; McDonnell, 2011; Vermeulen, 2007

Khalid and Nawab, (2018) indicate that talent retention is the approach that an organisation adopts towards ensuring the continued provision of the employees' 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 talent retention determinants in the organization are ensuring that there are career growth and development, appropriate reward and pay, recommendation, and conducive work environment that unleash job performance and satisfaction.

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 or advanced stage and have structured organized processes, unlike in the developing economies that are still in their infant or growth stage of developing which by implication may affect their talent retention capabilities. Further, talent retention in the private sector differs considerably to the public sector even in the emerging economies.). This paper equally joins to define talent management as a conscious strategy adopted for the recruitment, attraction, development, retention and compensation and utilization of outstanding performers as well as high potentials in an organization, be it public, private or not for profit small or complex. This form the basis from which I intend to identify how to improve public service through the lens of talent retention as a talent management dimension.

The Nigerian Public Service

The Nigerian public service has over the years been driven within the context of a premise that it is a government's institution responsible for the articulation, designing, formulation and implementation of policies and developmental programmes (Ogunrotifa, 2012; Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012; Eneanya, 2013). Consequently, there had been series of efforts for restructuring and redesigning the service to better function in the interest of the country and its socio-economic transformation.

Bearing this in mind, there has been efforts from the successive government of the country dating from the military era to present democratic dispensation at ensuring that the federal civil service, an arm of the executive government is repositioned for superior performance (Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012). This has led to the drive for varying variants of reforms. Despite, the reforms the federal civil service has not been able to significantly contribute effectively in meeting expectations, as the problems or challenges remain almost the same (Magbadelo, 2016).

Several among the challenges are lack of policy for talent management, lack of policy direction for succession planning, ineffective organisational structure with concentration of responsibilities and authority at 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 political liberalisation of Nigerians from their colonial masters (Izidor & Iheriohanma, 2012) since the service was colonial by formation, initially was expatriate dominated at the detriment of Nigerians.

The post-independent reforms most especially, Udoji Reform of 1974, the Babangida civil service re-organization of 1988 and 2007 Obasanjo civil service reforms, aimed among other things at the professionalism of the service. Even though not successfully implemented, the rest has been towards salary increase, staff rationalisation, restructuring the organization but little or nothing on talent management inform of identification, attraction, retaining and development (Adebayo, 2004; Anazodo 2012).

Talent management practices in the Nigerian public service is not actively considered in the service (Magbadelo, 2016). The fact remains that talent management is viewed from the perspective of skills that an individual possess, but the bureaucratic, hierarchal structure and fixed mindset pattern of the public service make it almost difficult for civil service to create or pave the ingenious ways for attracting, developing, and retaining talent in the organization.

Perspectives on Retaining Talent in the Public Service

Several studies have examined talent retention in the public sector though as employees' retention (Barnard & Simbhoo 2014; George, 2015; Lee & Jimenez, 2011). For simplicity, both concepts of talent and skilled employees are treated and perceived mostly equally in several works. In the study carried out by Ibrahim, Hashim, & Rahman, (2018) they assess employer branding and career growth on talent retention. The study carried out in the Malaysian Public Sector perceived the role of recruitment practices as a mediating variable. The study found that employers branding and career growth predict talent retention in the public service of Malaysia. Similarly, the study of Ibidunni et al., (2015) found pay and promotion to be significant to talent retention, as the study used a sample of 185 respondents analysed using a structural equation model.

Contrast to studies that focus on the private sector, the study of Cho & Lewis, (2012) found work environment and pay significantly to influence talent retention in the federal service. Similarly, Lee and Jimenez (2011) using survey data from 24 federal agencies examined performance-based management practices and employees' intentions to leave. The study found a significantly strong relationship between the variables. George, (2015) applying some specific factors to determine their influence in talent retention found that leadership, work environment, compensation, social support, work design and work-life balance among others to be specific determinants of retention. Further, the study discovered that perception of an organization is a determinant of talent retention.

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 differ significantly across generations. Similarly, the study of Tee (2013) examined talent retention pressures among SMEs in Malaysia. The study identifies that there is a great difference in the factors that motivate, most especially the generation Y employees who are in a haste to realize their objectives and would demand a defined career growth (Tee, 2013; Haggag, 2010).

These review had so far shown that there exist the need for additional studies to be carried out on talent retention most especially in the public sector, with a view to closing the knowledge gap owing to the apparent lack of enough studies on talent management in the organization, with emphasis to Nigerian public service as 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 the main drivers for performance and results yardstick in the two institutions significantly differ considerably.

Methodology

The design of this study was a triangulated mixed-method approach. The choice was aimed at avoiding method bias and providing a pragmatic understanding of the research problem and with the objective of enriching findings in the research context. The qualitative phenomenology with a face-to-face interviews and focus group discussion were adopted for qualitative data collection. The population of the study constitutes management staff of the Office of Head of the service of the federation in FCT Abuja from grade levels 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 deployed in selecting respondents of the study. Quantitative data was obtained from primary source by using a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was designed using 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 validity of internal consistency at 70% and above. Those that did not meet the score were rejected and excluded in the instrument.

Further, reliability analysis using Cronbach alpha was used to determine the suitability of the research instrument. Specifically, five face-to-face interviews were conducted within two weeks, but four found to be more suitable for analysis in the study. The face-to-face interviews lasted 50 minutes each. Several scholars provide support that four (4) participants in a face-to-face interview were 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 office of the head of the service of the federation to carry out the study, and it was duly granted before the survey was carried out. 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 aid of SPSSv25 for quantitative data deployed.

Result and Discussion

Quantitative Result

The primary objective was to explore the underlying factors that impede talent retention in the Federal civil service. Exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis was used to identify the factors. Out of the 248 instruments distributed, 56 representing 23% were not retrieved within the period of two weeks. From the 192 collected questionnaires which represents 77%, 149 of the instruments were adjudged suitable for analysis. This accounts for 60% of the whole questionnaires and is considered appropriate by scholars (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 are retained was based on eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser criterion), scree plot and Horn parallel analysis (Matsunaga, 2010). A minimum threshold for rotated components of 0.50 as suggested by Hair, Babin, & Anderson, (2010) was adopted. 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 indicated from the correlation matrix.

Table 1: 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 2: Factor loadings of Talent retention challenges in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service

Rotated Component Matrix							
Items	Component						
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
Timely low payment	.876						
Talented feeling of valued and compensated	.799						
Economic and living conditions improved by pay packages	.742						
Adequate provisions for special incentives	.513						
National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)	.705						

Job security, not service delivery.		.718					
Civil Service does not generally encourage high performance		.558					
Lack of Training and development		.793					
The crazy quest for personal material gains overwhelm service excellence		.655					
Lack of approved policy for talent management.		.652					
The civil service is high-handedness to potentials		.672					
Work stress to work-social life balance		.771					
Work environment		.552					
Removal of a tenure appointment		.512					
There is a general lack of commitment and sincerity				.732			
General lack of patriotism and discipline				.665			
The civil service is no longer what it used to be a reorientation needed				.580			
Lack of equal employment opportunity into the civil service					.834		
Frequent hiring of external consultants without due regards to staff capacity					.536		
The civil servants generally lack knowledge, competency						.719	
Civil Service Rules are outdated for modern people management.						.626	
The educational system of the country is the leading cause for lack of talent						.508	
Loans, scholarship and study benefits lacking							.687
Contributory Pension Scheme retains talent							.652
Cronbach alpha (α)	0.82	0.74	0.81	0.71	0.78	0.84	0.70
% of variance	13.944	12.640	8.642	8.343	8.089	7.780	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: Author's Calculations (SPSSv25)

The result above is a factor analysis that was conducted to explore the impediments to talent retention in public service of Nigeria. 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 indicate that all variables selected were above the acceptable level of 0.5 (Matsunaga, 2010).

The result shows seven factors had eigenvalues above 1 and they are: Poor remuneration with five items (3.486); Lack of policies for talent management with five items (3.160). Unconducive working environment with four items (2.161); Lack of patriotism with three items (2.086); Poor Civil rules and guides with two items (2.022); Poor Leadership with three items (1.945) and Poor Fringe benefits with two items (1.706).

These seven factors explain a total of 66.263% of the variance. The factors had a variance of Poor remuneration (13.944); Lack of policies for talent management (12.640). 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). Thus, the factors account significantly for talent retention challenges in the Nigerian Federal public service.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference of perception on the factors that impede talent retention between the varying levels of management staff in the federal service of Nigeria.

Table 2: 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: Author's Calculations (SPSSv25)

The result above is a group analysis of variance conducted to explore the significant difference of perceptions of management staff on factors that impede retention of talent 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 large 0.11. 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) as earlier indicated in the review literature.

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 approval from the Head of the service of the federation. The interview average run time was for 50 minutes with a Director. Four out of the five interviewed were found very

suitable for analysis in the study. The data were transcribed within four days. Themes identification were done manually. The findings are presented as suggested by scholars such as Bhattacharjee, (2012) and King and Horrocks, (2010).

Major 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 talent. The responses from the interviews and the analysis provided a vivid illustration of the pattern of the public service approach to talent management practices most especially in Nigeria.

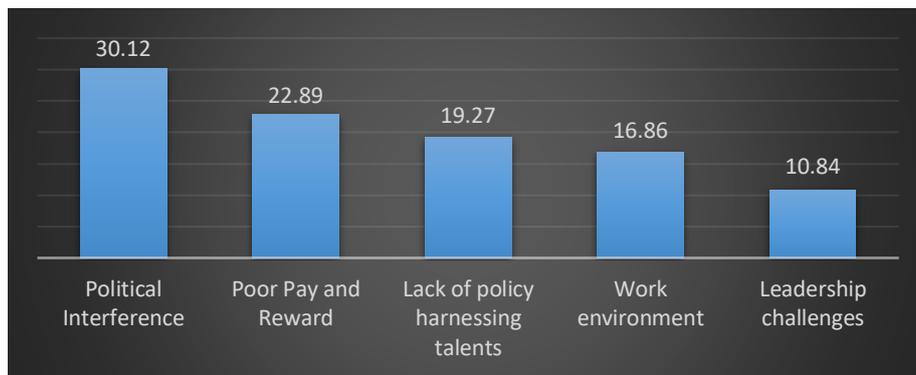


Fig 1. Nvivo 11 Analysis of Interviews

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 regard for talent in the public service. Their approach to public service is more from a political perspective, thereby making the key functionaries not to effectively be in control.

“Well, there are many talent 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, 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 8 years tenure for directors was done for the ministry to return to its senses. When it was done, it 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 talent. The new government came and suspended it and we are back to square one (Respondent 4).

The quantitative results also identified political interference as a factor that predicts lack of talent retention in federal public service of Nigeria. The study found that political interference

is a strong contributory factor to increased cost associated in talent attraction, most especially during the recruitment process. The idea of merit seems to be low 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 that affects most emerging economies is as a result of its political interference including talent management in its activities.

The study found that there is low pay, and reward are critical to why talents are refusing to stay in the public service. The findings indicate that the public service pay structure is quite low and forms the reason why organized private sector managers can quickly attract the best of talent 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 very poor 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 findings embellish the quantitative data result. It found that the current public service policy does have a template for talent attraction, development, and retention. Even where talent are identified there is little to make the talent stay as for long as there exists no documented or approved policy at present for talent in the service.

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 the rules to be updated because as of now I can say authoritatively there is nothing documented for talent management in the service, quote me anywhere because as a director with 32 years in service I say this on good 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 physical workplace 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 talent and improve themselves.

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 talent 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 talent in the service with a good work environment. The necessary working environment tools particularly the modern ones should be provided. There are many offices without a staff bus, allowances (Respondent, 1).

The study further found that leadership challenges in the service have not helped in the retaining of talent in the public service in Nigeria. This study found that the leadership approach or style that leaders or line managers display towards talent in the service has not contributed favourably to their effective retention in the service. The view that leaders are supposed to provide support for talent to develop through is not yet practiced 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. You develop their capacity 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

Are there significant differences in perceptions on the factors that impede talent retention between the varying levels of management staff in the federal service?

The investigation if there was a significant difference in the factors that impede talent retention among the varying levels of management in the public service found that the middle-level managers seem to leave the service more than the other level of management, which is followed by the lower and then the senior level managers. The attraction to leave remains the same for all levels of managers but 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 finding of Alessia and Regina, (2008) earlier reveal in this study.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the impediments to talent retention in Public service of Nigeria as an emerging economy and democracy after several years of Military rules. The study adopted a mixed method approach to carry out the investigation with the use of Factor Analysis to identify the underlying factors that explain talent retention impediments. The study, quantitatively found seven factors as significantly impeding talent retention in the federal civil service of Nigeria. They are; poor remuneration (13.944); Lack of policies for talent management (12.640), 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). The findings agree with George, (2015) and Lee and Jimenez, (2011) 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 organization. Conversely, the study of Barnard and Simbhoo,

(2014) did support the finding that lack of policies for talent management is enough to negatively influence talent retention. The study of Ibidunni, et al., (2015) provided support for the findings that poor fringe benefits contribute significantly to lack of capacity to retain talent in the federal civil service of Nigeria.

The study confirmed differences in perceptions among the management staff on the factors impeding or influencing the talent retention or management in public service. This is a novelty, as the researcher has not come across any paper that seeks to assess whether there may be any difference in perception on the factors that impede talent retention in public service among the varying levels of management staff. This finding provides support to the fact that what motivates others may not be the same with another group, especially the workforce demographic settings or shifts. The talent turnover in the system is significantly witnessed among the middle and lower management than the top level. The top level mostly leave the service only through the normal curve of retirement. The frequency of attrition within lower and middle levels of management create costly knowledge and experiential gaps to be filled. Thus, the cost-benefit theory as a theoretical framework for this study contributed and has been validated in the study of talent management within the context of the federal civil service of Nigeria.

The qualitative results further provided support to the quantitative findings obtained from the primary data analysed. The responses from the interviews that were transcribed formed the basis for analysis using Nvivo. The quantitative result supports the qualitative findings that political interference is critical to impeding talent retention and provide further justification of interrogation. 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 efficiency and effectiveness. This finding confirms that views of George (2015) that political interference is detrimental to talent retention. Further, pay and remuneration were found to impede talent retention in the service, and the study of Goodsell, (2003) found similar result, as the author opined that offering a good salary has been a major motivating factor that has attracted talent into the private sector from the public service, while job security and career path tend to pool talent from the private sector into the public 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 talent are first attracted and sustained. Also, the study of George, (2015) empirically support that the work environment is vital to talent retention. Similarly, the view expressed by Ibidunni et al., (2015) indicate that the work environment has direct cost implication on the organisation performance. They stated that the basis for quality work output is adequately been defined by the work environment. This has provided excellent support to the findings of this study that the work environment is a critical factor to talent retention. Hence, providing a theoretical contribution that validates the cost-benefit theory.

This paper concludes that talent retention in public service is majorly impeded by poor remuneration, lack of policies for talent management and unconducive working environment. Further, lack of patriotism; poor civil rules and guides; poor leadership, poor fringe benefits and political interference have significant influence on impeding talent retention in the organization. The paper recommends that there should be a decisive policy framework to focus on managing talent in the Federal Service being the critical organization for the formulation and implementation of government policies and programs. This will be excellently beneficial to the service. The incidence of political interference into the deeper operations of the civil service is a matter of grave concern. Though it would not be completely eradicated now due to the diversity nature of the country, but the principle of

federal character should be amended to give merit its proper place. The work environment pays and compensation differentials within the civil service and between the workforce demand urgent correction. The disproportionate pay package between the top management position, that is Director and the political class, the Permanent Secretary is really dissatisfying. Rewards and recognition of talent must be entrenched for the culture of 21st century civil service to thrive. Leadership is a serious matter across the civil service. Often the leadership styles of line managers in the service serve as push factor in managing talent. The inquiry confirms that inaptitude, lack of transparency as well as accountability severely impede talent attraction, retention and development.

This study was unable carry out investigation in the ministries, departments and several agencies of the federal government hence, limiting generalization of outcome. The federal civil service in Nigeria is a huge research avenues that need more than a PhD work period. The Heads of Service of the Federation and the states need to continuously commit resources for research and development in the service. Other interested scholars could add to the findings brought to the fore by this study by interrogating some organisations in the civil service. The tediousness experienced and resources committed in pursuance of data collection by adopting mixed method technique may be avoided by applying either survey or interviews techniques.

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