
A CONCEPTUAL EXAMINATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY: MYTH OR REALITY

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Abstract

Talent management has emerged as a critical factor influencing organizational performance and competitiveness in contemporary business environments. This conceptual review examines the state of talent management in Nigeria's manufacturing sector, interrogating whether it is a practical reality or merely a theoretical construct with limited application. Drawing upon existing literature, this study explores key dimensions of talent management, including talent acquisition, development, retention, and succession planning, while assessing the extent of its implementation in manufacturing industries. Despite the increasing recognition of talent management as a strategic imperative, empirical evidence suggests a gap between theoretical frameworks and actual industry practices in Nigeria. Factors such as inadequate human resource strategies, weak institutional support, and economic instability contribute to the challenges in embedding a robust talent management framework within the sector. Additionally, the review highlights the role of organizational culture, leadership commitment, and technological advancements in shaping talent management outcomes. This study argues that while talent management is theoretically acknowledged in Nigeria's manufacturing industries, its practical execution remains inconsistent and often superficial. The study underscores the need for a more structured and evidence-based approach to talent management, leveraging policy reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and technology-driven solutions to enhance workforce sustainability. The findings contribute to the discourse on human resource management by bridging the gap between conceptual theories and industry realities, providing insights for policymakers, business leaders, and scholars interested in advancing talent management in emerging economies.

Keywords: Talent Management, Manufacturing Industries, Human Resource Strategies, Workforce Sustainability, Nigeria

1.1 Introduction

Talent management (TM) has emerged as a critical driver of organizational success, especially in the manufacturing sector where skilled human capital plays a vital role in fostering innovation, boosting productivity, and maintaining competitiveness (Collings et al., 2022). As global competition intensifies and technology rapidly evolves, organizations must increasingly rely on effective talent management strategies to survive and thrive. In Nigeria, the importance of TM is being progressively recognized, particularly as organizations face a multitude of challenges, including skill shortages, economic instability, and the pressures of a competitive global market (Okafor, 2021).

Talent management is a broad concept encompassing various human resource management (HRM) functions such as workforce planning, leadership development, and succession planning—each crucial to enhancing performance and ensuring sustainable organizational growth (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2021). In developed economies, the integration of TM frameworks into corporate strategy has granted firms a significant competitive edge (Glaister et al., 2022). However, in Nigeria, the practical application of these strategies is often impeded by structural deficiencies, policy inadequacies, and limited managerial expertise (Oladipo & Akinlabi, 2023).

Furthermore, the concept of TM is now associated with attracting and retaining individuals possessing unique attributes such as intelligence, digital literacy, international acumen, and operational agility. These “talented” individuals are often seen as central to the sustainability and competitiveness of firms. Despite its global popularity and theoretical appeal, the true effectiveness of talent management in Nigeria’s manufacturing industry remains questionable.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread recognition of talent management's potential to transform organizations, a gap exists between its theoretical promise and practical execution in Nigeria’s manufacturing sector. The sector is plagued by critical human capital issues including persistent skill shortages, poor employee engagement, and high attrition rates (Olaniyan & Obembe, 2022). Although many firms claim to have robust talent management systems, empirical studies reveal a notable disconnect between policy and practice (Ayodele & Ibrahim, 2021).

The implementation of talent management in Nigeria is further hampered by infrastructural challenges, economic volatility, and ineffective retention strategies. While the concept is gaining traction globally, there is little concrete evidence indicating its operational success within the Nigerian manufacturing context. This creates uncertainty as to whether TM practices are genuinely adopted or merely exist as part of academic discourse and policy rhetoric. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate whether talent management in Nigerian manufacturing industries is a practical reality or a fictional construct.

1.3 Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the following research questions are posed:

- i. To what extent is talent management being implemented in Nigerian manufacturing industries?
- ii. What are the major challenges facing the implementation of talent management in the Nigerian manufacturing sector?
- iii. How do talent management practices affect employee performance and organizational growth in these industries?
- iv. Is talent management in Nigerian manufacturing firms a practical reality or a theoretical construct?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the implementation and effectiveness of talent management in Nigeria's manufacturing industry. The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the level of implementation of talent management practices in Nigerian manufacturing industries;
- ii. identify the key challenges hindering effective talent management in the sector.
- iii. examine the impact of talent management practices on employee performance and organizational growth.
- iv. determine whether talent management is a practical strategy or merely a theoretical concept within Nigerian manufacturing firms.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the academic discourse on talent management by offering empirical insights into its practical application within the Nigerian manufacturing sector. Secondly, the findings will aid manufacturing firms in understanding the gaps between talent management policies and their execution, thus helping them enhance HR strategies for improved productivity and sustainability. Thirdly, policymakers and industry regulators will benefit from the research by gaining clarity on areas requiring policy intervention, capacity building, or reform. The study also provides a framework for future research into the human capital challenges of Nigeria's industrial development. Lastly, it serves as a reference for HR professionals and organizational leaders seeking to adopt or refine talent management practices.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses specifically on the implementation and effectiveness of talent management practices within selected manufacturing industries in Nigeria. It emphasizes workforce planning, leadership development, employee engagement, succession planning, and talent retention as key dimensions of TM. Geographically, the study is limited to manufacturing firms operating within Nigeria, with particular emphasis on firms that have publicly declared the adoption of TM frameworks. The research is confined to recent developments and data from the last 5 to 10 years, ensuring relevance to current HR practices and economic conditions. It does not cover other sectors such as finance, healthcare, or education, which may have different dynamics concerning talent management.

Literature Review

Talent Management

Talent management is often defined as the strategic approach to attracting, developing, and retaining employees whose skills, abilities, and motivations align with the organization's goals. This concept encompasses various human resource functions, including workforce planning, recruitment, learning and development, succession planning, and performance management.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2022) defines talent

management as a deliberate strategy to luring, nurturing, and keeping talented people inside a company in order to guarantee long-term success. It entails actions like hiring, training, managing performance, succession planning, and other processes to maximize employee potential and match competencies with company objectives (SHRM, 2022). Strategic talent management is part of a broader approach to leverage human capital for competitive advantage. It addresses the organizational management of individuals deemed talented and their value to the company. Talent management is meant to boost an organization's total output or provide it a competitive advantage. The implementation of strategic workforce differentiation is projected to yield great benefits for the firms implementing it, but it will come at a tremendous cost and effort to maintain. According to the firm's resource-based view (RBV) (Chang & Busser, 2020; Dhanpat et al., 2019; DiPietro et al., 2019; Matongolo et al., 2018; Mukherjee et al., 2019) it is concerned with the management of the company's strategic human capital resources, which are seen as uncommon, valuable, and challenging to reproduce. In essence, talent management is a comprehensive and proactive process that focuses on nurturing the potential of individuals, fostering their growth, and strategically aligning their skills with the organization's changing demands (SHRM, 2022). In the views of Onwuka et al., (2020), talent management is a multifaceted organizational strategy designed to identify, attract, develop, and retain individuals with exceptional skills and potential within a company. Onwuka et al.(2020), assert further talent management involves activities such as workforce planning, competency mapping, career development, and performance management, all aimed at ensuring that a company has the appropriate personnel in the appropriate positions at the appropriate times.

According to Temidayo (2018), talent management is the term used to describe an organization's efforts to find, choose, develop, and hold onto important personnel. According to Deborah and Jackson (2017), the phrase "talent management" also refers to the process of finding and hiring people who have the capacity to quickly adapt to new roles and thrive in them. The term "talent management" refers to thorough and integrated HR procedures that are intended to draw in and keep the best candidates for open jobs at the best times. The 1980s saw the rise in popularity of talent management as a field of study due to the pressing need to retain skilled employees and reduce turnover. At this point, businesses started to recognize how important human resources are to the success of their organizations. Different thinkers have defined talent management in many ways. Talent management was merely viewed as the management task of ensuring that right person is placed at the right job at the right time (Jackson & Schuler, 2012). A few years later, talent management was viewed as a deliberate and well-coordinated attempt to guarantee leadership continuity via promoting individuals to important roles (Rothwell, 2000; Byham, 2001; Hilton, 2000 & Olsen, 2000 cited in Jokotoye. 2021). According to Temidayo (2018), talent management is the culmination of standard HR department procedures or actions, such as hiring and selection, employee development, pay management, performance reviews, and employee retention.

In the context of manufacturing industries, talent management aims to build a capable workforce that can meet production demands, foster innovation, and adapt to technological advancements. In manufacturing industries, the application of talent

management is critical to ensuring that the right skills are available for operational efficiency. Effective talent management in this sector requires a strategic approach that aligns with industry-specific needs, such as technical expertise, innovation in production processes, and the capacity to adopt new technologies. In Nigeria, where skilled labor shortages and brain drain are persistent, effective talent management could play a crucial role in bridging these gaps. The question remains whether these strategies are effectively applied in the industry, or whether they are hindered by challenges unique to the Nigerian economic and industrial environment.

Human Resource Planning

Since the term "planning" is used in so many various situations, there are sometimes misunderstandings about what people mean when they talk about planning or use terms like plans and planner. Furthermore, a lot of its applications are so wide-ranging that it is hard to pinpoint the fundamental components of planning and to separate it from related tasks like formulating policies or carrying out plans. Planning is a continual process that incorporates choices concerning different ways to use resources that are available with the objective of reaching certain goals at a later date, according to Seyi, et al., (2021). According to Nverere (1969) cited in (Robison, 2019), making choices and deciding which of several options to pursue are all part of the planning process.

Human resource planning, as defined by Mohamed (2018), refers to the process of determining the number of employees an organization requires, both in terms of quality and quantity. It is seen as an ongoing, systematic planning process. According to Mohamed, the primary objective of human resource planning is to ensure that employees are optimally engaged with their work. Furthermore, this planning approach ensures that the organization has the right number of employees at the right time, meaning there is an adequate and suitable workforce. The key components of human resource planning include market supply, managing staff demand, and job forecasting, as well as maintaining a balance between demand and employment expectations (Mohamed, 2018). The ultimate goal of human resource planning is to provide a competitive advantage over rivals. Achieving future balance is defined by comparing the number of workers needed with the number of current employees who are expected to remain with the organization (Dwivedi, 2012, cited in Mohamed, 2018).

Recruitment and Selection

Several writers have addressed and clarified the idea of recruiting. In the view of Ayooade (2017), the techniques used to find qualified talent who is willing to provide services to a company at the appropriate time and location so that it benefits both the individuals and the business are known as recruiting. Put another way, the hiring process gives the company access to a sizable pool of potential workers who are deemed suitable, from whom a careful selection may be made to meet the position's requirements. According to Jovanovic (2021), recruiting is the process of drawing in qualified applicants for the next round of consideration. It entails determining the appropriate work abilities and adjusting one's personality to the corporate culture (Hayes 2019).

The proper candidates were selected through a series of processes known as the selection process. Stan (2019) defines selection as the process of selecting people with the necessary skills to fill positions that are currently open or that may become available in the future. Stewart goes on to say that individuals in charge of choosing candidates must to have sufficient knowledge to work from. Matching people to jobs is the aim of selection. If the selection process is to ultimately contribute to the success of the company, performance-related problems must be the primary emphasis. According to Huselid (2016), selection entails picking the most qualified candidate to take the open post. According to Barber (2017), the processes and actions used by the company to find qualified candidates who will fulfill its goals for the workforce fall under the category of recruitment and selection. James (2015) defines recruitment and selection as the process of drawing in candidates who can contribute the skills, attributes, and talents required to fill open positions in the specific company. Most definitions of recruitment and selection emphasize the organization's search for, attraction to, and selection of competent job prospects.

Employee Development

The deliberate and coordinated efforts made by an organization to provide its workers with specialized information to enhance their skills and talents and modify their attitudes are referred to as employee development (Enga, 2017). Employee development, according to Nushrat (2018), is the process of shaping employees' behavior to better fit the demands of the business with their unique traits. Therefore, employee development is seen as a technique to solve employees' problems with self-improvement, progress, and better placement as well as a way to provide them with the skills and information they need to execute their jobs more effectively (Collins, 2021). Marry (2020) states that employee development can take the shape of formal or informal approaches, as well as on- or off-the-job training. Marry explains further that employee development is so important that it is not only imperative for organizational productivity but also serves as motivational compensation for employees. Hence, identifying proficient staff and compensating them with appropriate training and development will no doubt result in better performance.

Compensation Management

Compensation is a crucial component of talent management, which raises employee motivation and increases organizational effectiveness. Compensation, variously called incentive variable, has become an increasingly important technique of retaining a committed employee for an outstanding performance. According to Onuorah, Okeke and Ibekwe (2019) compensation can be defined as all financial and a non-monetary advantage. The company offers its workers benefits to help them retain what the company has and draw in talented personnel. Benefits and pay have varied effects on employee productivity and organizational efficacy, depending on the performance management and compensation systems in place at a given corporation (Vogireddy, 2020). Most workers typically respond favorably to pay and benefit increases and increase in output. Conversely, yet, this is also true. Sometimes, employees don't realize the advantages of a pay increase until the day they find out and get their first paycheck with the higher salary. Top talent is typically drawn to organizations that provide the greatest

compensation and the greatest chances for advancement (Vogireddy, 2020).

Performance Appraisal

One of the main duties of is performance review (Hughes, 2019). A formal evaluation and grading of employees by their managers or supervisors is known as a performance appraisal. Performance appraisals, according to Bukunola (2018), are a means of figuring out and sharing how well people accomplish their duties as well as developing a strategy for streamlining the task completion process. The performance evaluation process is also known as a method of evaluating employee performance (Evans & Olumide-Aluko, 2022). Performance evaluations are important because they give information about employees' work, highlight areas that require training, and develop plans for their own development (Usman, 2017). According to Kolawole et al., (2020), performance appraisals are generally carried out as formal, discrete events once or twice a year for two purposes: (1) to support administrative decisions such as pay increases and promotions, and (2) to support the professional growth of employees by identifying areas for improvement and training opportunities. A well-thought-out performance assessment system can help pinpoint the areas in which employees need to grow and learn. According to Akintayo, (2020), the duration of the employee performance appraisal depends on the type of assessment, whether formative or summative, usually, annually, or periodically as may be determined by the management of the organization. Additionally, performance appraisals, according to Guest (2017), are a methodical approach to assessing employees' performance standards. As a result, one method the company uses to assess and rank an employee's performance for a certain position is performance evaluation. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) cited in

Employee Retention

Many authors have described employee retention. Swarnalatha and Vasantham (2014) defined retention strategies as actions taken by the company to keep exceptional people from leaving. Retention tactics, according to Maliku (2014), are actions done to make sure that workers are encouraged to stay with the company for as long as possible. Maliku (2014) went on to say that in order to successfully execute retention, the business must comprehend the requirements and expectations of its employees. Retention strategies may be developed in accordance with the reasons why workers depart the company in order to lower turnover (Tanton, 2017). According to Kehinde (2019), talent retention techniques aid in keeping the finest people, and the first step in keeping employees is figuring out why they quit.

Employee retention has become a significant goal for many firms in the modern day. Employer involvement is the most critical attribute of a successful human resources professional, yet hiring skilled candidates is still crucial. (Steil et al., 2020) separated the benefits of job productivity into intrinsic and extrinsic categories. They make the point that although intrinsic incentives, such as career progression for staff members, are non-material, extrinsic rewards, such as bonuses or other types of monetary compensation, are material in nature. The study found that extrinsic rewards play a major role in talent retention in a winning environment. Extrinsic benefits, however, could be more effective in motivating employees as they promote loyalty and reciprocity (Chaudhuri et al.,

2020).

Talent Management Framework

A comprehensive talent management framework typically includes the following components:

- **Workforce Planning:** Identifying the number and type of employees needed to meet organizational goals.
- **Talent Acquisition:** Recruitment and selection processes aimed at attracting high-caliber individuals.
- **Talent Development:** Training and career development initiatives to enhance employee competencies.
- **Succession Planning:** Identifying and preparing high-potential employees for future leadership roles.
- **Employee Engagement:** Initiatives to ensure that employees are motivated, committed, and aligned with the organization's goals.
- **Retention Strategies:** Implementing strategies that prevent high employee turnover and promote long-term employment.

Talent Management in Manufacturing Industries--- Theoretical Perspective

In Nigeria, the manufacturing sector has historically struggled with attracting and retaining top talent due to several factors, including brain drain, poor working conditions, and inadequate investment in employee development. Many firms lack formalized talent management frameworks, leading to inefficiencies in workforce management. While global practices suggest the need for integrated talent management, Nigerian firms are often constrained by economic conditions and a lack of institutional support.

The study, which was put out by, maintains that a corporation's resources—which provide the organization a competitive advantage—are the most significant factor in determining its success (Wemerfelt, 2007 quoted Kolawole, 2021). The resources of the companies may be divided into two categories, according to Ling and Jaw (2019): people and material resources. According to Vaiman (2012), referenced in Bashir et al. (2021), employees are considered significant resources inside a firm and are a source of continuous competitive advantage. According to Wright (2019), the RBV hypothesis posits that a company may generate additional value by identifying exceptional resources, such as skilled employees. Employee skills are an organization's resource (Mama, 2019). Consequently, talent management is the process of luring in the most valuable and distinctive talent and ensuring that the exceptional worker has received additional value in order to match the organization's objectives for the future.

The RBV theory goes on to describe how a company may function more effectively when it uses its distinct resources to propel every aspect of the business, leading to the adoption of strategies that produce a sustained competitive advantage (Oga & Chima, 2020). According to the RBV theory, businesses should enhance the value of their resources in a way that makes them stand out from the competition and is difficult for

rivals to copy (Ling & Jaw, 2019). According to Robinson's (2019) observation, employees that get development tend to be more devoted, making them distinctive assets that provide the firm a competitive advantage. RBV theory is strong because it emphasizes investigating how people are formed as resources and how their special abilities are preserved and developed for employee performance. As such, it is a pertinent theory for the present research. This theory is relevant to the study because it promotes talent management among employees, which improves service delivery. Public and private organizations should support talent management by expanding their knowledge of resource base theory and its importance.

Talent Management in Manufacturing Industries--- Empirical Approach

Several empirical studies have been carried out on talent management practices in different organisations locally and internationally, only those ones conducted in Nigerian manufacturing industries are reviewed in in this study.

Udo et al.'s (2023) investigation focused on the link between organizational success and talent management in a subset of Akwa Ibom State's industrial enterprises. The study employed a cross-sectional research design. The population of the research consisted of 248 workers who worked for manufacturing enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The sample size consisted of 153 staff members using Taro Yamane's sampling technique. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. The hypotheses was evaluated through the usage of ordinal logistic regression. The findings demonstrated a significant positive relationship between competency mapping and organizational success (CM, 3.246, PV = 0.002) and training and development and organizational success (T&D, 3.298, PV = 0.000). Based on its findings, the study concluded that talent management and organizational success are related. Management was encouraged to take part in competence mapping by highlighting skill identification and enhancing staff performance audits. The employees of Akwa Ibom State's manufacturing enterprises should participate in training and development programs that combine off-the-job and on-the-job instruction to increase their level of competency.

Mbah, et al., (2018) conducted a research to evaluate the correlation between human resource management and employee performance in the industrial sectors in South-East Nigeria. Two specific objectives are to ascertain how knowledge affects product quality and the relationship between talent and the promotion of innovation. The study also evaluated the effect of human capital development on organizational performance in the manufacturing sectors of South-East Nigeria. The population consists of 622 workers from manufacturing enterprises in South-East Nigeria. The survey technique was employed in the investigation. The distribution of questionnaires to employees and distributors served as the main source of information. Using the formula developed by Ferund and Williams, the sample size of 358 was established. 306 copies of the questionnaire that were correctly filled out were returned. Positive findings were obtained when the validity of the instrument was evaluated by content analysis. The reliability was evaluated using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). Additionally, its 0.88 dependability coefficient was good. To evaluate the hypotheses, the f-statistics (ANOVA) tool was employed. The findings demonstrated that talent management greatly

raises worker productivity.

Makpor and Akpoyibo (2021) looked at the mindset and talent management of workers in relation to organizational effectiveness in another research. This study used a survey research approach and included 192 employees from six carefully chosen bottled water production enterprises in Edo State, Nigeria. There were 117 completed and returned questionnaires. The questionnaire was used to assist collect primary data, and correlation analysis was used to analyze the results. The results showed a favorable and substantial association between employee talent and attitude and organizational efficiency. As a result, the researcher came to the conclusion that personnel fit affects organizational effectiveness. In light of this, the researcher suggested that management and the HR department prioritize performance reviews that are in line with organizational efficiency and identify the personal values of potential hires during the recruitment and selection process.

The study conducted by Banyole (2021) investigated the correlation between talent management and the performance of Nigerian manufacturing enterprises. 670 manufacturing companies were given questionnaires to complete in order to collect data on performance metrics and employee participation in decision-making. The survey responses were statistically evaluated using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, product moment correlation, and Ztest (approximated using the independent samples t-test). The results of the study demonstrate a statistically significant correlation between a company's profitability and employee engagement in decision-making. They also show a substantial difference in the performance of companies with strong talent management practices. The results also demonstrate the participating organizations' commitment to employee engagement in decision-making through training and development. The study's conclusions include the necessity for industrial companies to show a strong commitment to employee participation in decision-making for improved performance.

Francis (2021) looked into the staff commitment and talent management of a few Nigerian pharmaceutical businesses. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized to collect data using the descriptive survey approach. The study was based on Becker's 1964 human capital theory. Applying the Cochran sample size recommendation, the population of 1968 represented all the pharmaceutical businesses that were chosen and included in the 322 research sample. Using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient to verify the hypothesis, the findings demonstrated a significant positive link between talent retention and employee devotion in the pharmaceutical companies that were studied. In the pharmaceutical firms that were employed in the study, there is a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between employee commitment and career progression, as well as between employee engagement and those pharmaceutical companies. The study comes to the conclusion that personnel management plays a major role in pharmaceutical businesses' commitment to their workforce. It was suggested that these pharmaceutical businesses should determine what attributes should draw in and develop exceptional workers because doing so would help them keep them on staff. Pharmaceutical firms should hire individuals that are able to advance in their careers as this would benefit the business.

Conclusion

This study explores the position and empirical review to find out whether talent management is myth or reality in Nigerian manufacturing industries. An empirical review of related literature shows that different talent management strategies were practiced particularly in the selected industries. It was therefore concluded that talent management in the manufacturing industries is a reality and not a myth.

The research concludes that while talent management is a critical factor for success in Nigeria's manufacturing industry, it remains largely theoretical in many firms. The gap between talent management practices and their implementation is exacerbated by several systemic challenges, including the lack of institutional support, inadequate training and development opportunities, and a high level of employee dissatisfaction. Without addressing these challenges, the manufacturing sector will continue to struggle with employee retention and productivity.

Recommendations

Arising from the finding, the study recommended that:

- i. Manufacturing industries in Nigeria should prioritize training and development programs that focus on technical skills, leadership, and innovation.
- ii. Companies should implement employee engagement initiatives, competitive compensation packages, and clear career progression paths to retain top talent.
- iii. Organization should organize training programmes for staff at managerial positions on best way to implement talent management practices in the workplace
- iv. Manufacturing firms should collaborate with universities and technical institutions to ensure that graduates have the skills required by the industry.
- v. Organization should periodically evaluate the existing talent management practices

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