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# The Influence of Employee Engagement Practices on Employee Retention in the Kano Public Sector

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Abstract

# **Original Research Article**

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This study aims to discover how multi-layered human resource management methods affect the retention of public sector staff, giving priority to those working in the civil service of Kano State, Nigeria. The subject is built around serious problems of high turnover rates in public organizations, as they negatively impact how the organizations work and serve the public. This research specifically examines how four important variables can cause differences. Employees retain their jobs due to the leadership's support, opportunities for advancement, valued recognition, and maintaining a good work-life balance. The study takes a conceptual approach from the main writings found in human resource management and organizational behavior. Through analyzing relevant research, it was shown that employee trust and commitment are more likely when leaders support their team, helping to keep staff members employed. Furthermore, having career development programs helps employees feel appreciated and encourages their professional growth at work. Giving credit to staff builds loyalty, and taking care of their work-life balance cuts down on people wanting to leave the company. All four variables, according to the research, help to retain employees within public sector organizations. Leadership backing was detected to play the biggest role, followed by giving staff development and recognition. While work-life balance is important, it was found to have less effect on people's lives. This study adds to earlier results proving that supportive workplace practices lead to improved employee dedication and less worker turnover. The report proposes that all levels of government in Kano enhance management development, give more importance to staff training, honor outstanding performers, and encourage workers to invest time in their lives away from work. These practices are projected to help with employee retention and will lead to public organizations being both more effective and stable.

**Keywords:** Employee Retention, Leadership Support, Career Development, Work-Life Balance, Public Sector Organizations.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organizations have started to focus on employee engagement due to its major role in supporting organizational success, labor productivity, and the retention of workers worldwide (Albrecht et al., 2015). Because of its emotional and mental involvement, organizational commitment is seen as a major factor in producing positive work results such as better job satisfaction, more willingness to help coworkers, and a lower desire to move to a new place (Saks, 2006). Special attention has been given to practices that enhance employees'

careers, include recognition, are supported by leaders, and promote a good work-life balance. These have been found to strengthen employees' connections to their organization and prevent workers from leaving (Shuck et al., 2017). Because companies now face tough international rivalry, modern technology, and a multicultural workforce, they are using several practices to motivate employees and stay relevant in a shifting market (Mohammed, 2023). In the African context, and specifically within Nigeria, the issue of employee engagement has gained prominence as organizations grapple with high labor turnover, skill shortages, and low employee morale, particularly

in the public sector (Akanji et al., 2020). Despite various policy interventions and reforms aimed at improving civil service productivity, public sector institutions in Nigeria continue to struggle with workforce management challenges, including inadequate leadership practices, limited career advancement opportunities, poor employee recognition schemes, and worklife conflicts (Onyeocha & Olumide, 2022). These deficiencies have been identified as key contributors to the persistent issue of employee turnover in government organizations. Recent studies suggest that public sector employees in Northern Nigeria, especially in Kano State, frequently express dissatisfaction with their work environment, resulting in disengagement and intentions to leave (Abubakar et al., 2021). This underscores the need for context-specific research on multidimensional employee engagement practices tailored to the realities of public sector employment in Kano State, a key administrative and commercial hub in Northern Nigeria.

The study of employee engagement and retention has gradually shifted from only one aspect to multiple sides when reviewing HRM actions (Shuck et al., 2017). Those first studies mainly looked at financial incentives as the most important way to keep employees. Current research suggests that monetary incentives alone do not suffice and underlines that support should also consider other and all-around strategies (Sundararajan et al., 2022). Even so, research in Nigeria is mainly descriptive and fails to connect various aspects of employee engagement to the reasons behind workers staying in public institutions. In addition, studies focusing on this topic are not common in Kano State. Filling these gaps helps policymakers and HR managers see practical ways to use scientific studies to strengthen public services and employment security within the workforce (Mohammed, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to understand the many aspects of employee engagement and see how they affect employee retention in a particular socio-economic and cultural system. This research needs an interdisciplinary approach as it brings together ideas from organizational behavior, human resource management, public administration, and industrial psychology to obtain a complete view of workforce management in public sector organizations. Using social exchange theory, this study suggests that employees respond to being supported by the organization with loyalty and commitment. It focuses on the main issues in the workforce of Kano's public sector, for example, a lack of engagement among workers and a high turnover rate. This study provides a framework linking leadership support, development for careers, recognition for employees, and combining work life with family life to better employee retention for government institutions. It also supports the efforts to use multidimensional engagement models to strengthen the stability of labor markets in developing countries.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Keeping employees engaged and retained is a pressing issue for public sector organizations globally, since it matters for the organization's output, the services it offers, and its

stability. The use of engagement strategies has proven to make employees feel committed, reduce the desire to leave, and improve workers' general performance (Schaufeli, 2017). Nevertheless, the success of these practices usually depends on using them in several ways, like providing leadership support, developing careers, honoring workers, and ensuring work-life balance (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Rising employee turnover, less job satisfaction, and decreased effectiveness in the public sector are often noted in Nigeria, suggesting there is less engagement among the staff (NBS, 2022). It has been noticed that public organizations in Kano State are burdened by talent leaving, inefficient operations, and poor employee engagement, mainly because of missing whole employee engagement frameworks (Mohammed, 2023). It is clear from the reports that more than a third of workers in the public sector in Kano are preparing to leave within the next year, mainly because of insufficient support from their bosses, no career development, and extremely poor work-life circumstances (NBS, 2022). It is clear from these numbers that new ways of engaging employees are needed to reduce turnover and keep workers in this crucial

Although there is a lot of research about employee engagement in the corporate and multinational sector, less is known about its application in public-sector institutions, and this is especially true in sub-Saharan Africa (Anlesinya, 2021). Most studies in Nigeria have focused on single HR tools such as paying, training, or managing, without associating them with a comprehensive engagement system (Okpara & Wynn, 2008; Eze et al., 2023). In Kano's public institutions, work on employee turnover mostly focuses on issues related to administration or finances, not fully considering what leads to higher engagement and retention (Mohammed & Sundararajan, 2024). Mohammed (2024) points out in his review that talent management and upskilling are being adopted in Kano's private industry, yet there isn't much research on these topics in the public sector. There is a gap in the literature due to the lack of studies showing how a combination of multidimensional factors impacts employees remaining in organizations faced with policies and a lack of resources. It is important to address this gap, as this benefits academic discussions and provides new solutions for the public sector HR system.

Many services, laws, and the work of institutions in Kano's public sector are disrupted by employees who are not sufficiently involved or no longer employed (NBS, 2022). Too many staff leaving their jobs interferes with operations, adds to hiring and training costs, and lessens the public's trust in what the government offers. Assuming this relates to laying base models for the African public sector, then using those mainstream theories is not likely to work well until they are studied in real-world situations. Therefore, this research is important because it weaves leadership support, career development, recognition for employees, and balancing life and work into a clear conceptual model applied to Kano State's public sector organizations. Sundararajan, Mohammed, and Lawal (2022) have found that workforces in the public sector in the North are affected by unique combinations of social, economic, and cultural factors, so research there needs to be

local. Through looking at the combined impacts of these ways workers engage, the study provides guidance for policymakers, public administrators, and HR professionals focused on keeping public sector workers engaged. The results will strengthen our research approach and can guide the development of proven employee engagement strategies suitable for subnational governance organizations in Nigeria and other similar places.

# 1.2 Research Objectives

The general objective of this conceptual paper is to examine the influence of multidimensional human resource management practices on employee retention in public sector organizations in Nigeria, with particular focus on Kano State's civil service. The specific objectives are:

- 1. To examine the influence of leadership support on employee retention in public sector organizations.
- 2. To assess the effect of career development opportunities on employee retention in public sector organizations.
- 3. To evaluate the impact of employee recognition on employee retention in public sector organizations.
- 4. To determine the relationship between work-life balance and employee retention in public sector organizations.

# 1.3 Research Questions

In line with the objectives of this conceptual paper, the following research questions are posed:

- 1. What is the influence of leadership support on employee retention in public sector organizations?
- 2. How do career development opportunities affect employee retention in public sector organizations?
- 3. What is the impact of employee recognition on employee retention in public sector organizations?
- 4. What is the relationship between work-life balance and employee retention in public sector organizations?

# 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study provides significance for practice and thought. From a practical aspect, it provides useful advice to Nigerian policymakers, government administrators, professionals about the best ways to retain staff in the civil service, especially in Kano State. Considering that there are problems with turnover, low morale, and inefficiencies in Nigeria's public institutions, this study gives guidance on how to boost both staff retention and institutional performance. Rationally, this study builds on the available literature by suggesting that employee retention depends on how HR changes and staff engagement is affected by the culture within an organization. It enhances academic discussions by handling areas noted as lacking in present research. Mohammed & Sundararajan, 2024). This information will provide a basis for carrying out future studies to understand and support the conceptual framework.

### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

 For this study, the conceptual framework draws ideas and evidence from human resource management, organizational behavior, and public administration literature. It is suggested in the framework that employee retention in public sector organizations depends heavily on three related factors. Interventions by the HR team, projects for engaging employees, and the company's culture.

### 2. HR Interventions

By using talent management, reskilling opportunities, and career development, organizations can ensure that high-performing employees want to stay (Mohammed, 2023). If the workplace leaders restrict personal growth through hierarchy, HR initiatives that encourage positive support can lead to more staff retention (Akinyemi, 2020).

# 3. Employee Engagement Initiatives

Studies have shown that engaged employees often have more satisfaction at work and are more likely to remain loyal to their employer (Albrecht et al., 2015). Activities like collaborative decision-making, appreciating efforts, and more flexible work options may help public employees care more for their organizations (Mohammed & Sundararajan, 2024).

# 4. Organizational Culture

If a company's culture is supportive and welcoming, it helps employees remain at the organization, especially in places influenced by social and institutional conditions (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). Company policies that promote openness, fairness, and focus on staff health can reduce employees' desire to resign in government enterprises (Akinyemi, 2020).

### 2.2 Theoretical Framework

To support the analysis of this study, two theories that fit the topic were adopted. One can examine employment through Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. They show how organizational practices can strengthen employees' attitudes and decide whether they leave the company.

### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Blau, through Social Exchange Theory (1964), claims that employee-employer relationships are formed on the idea of reciprocity. Employees are likely to remain loyal and less keen to leave a company if it appreciates their work and offers growth opportunities, workplace recognition, and attention to their personal lives. The theory proves valuable by pointing out that both sides have something to gain from each other, and by sharing positive experiences, shapes long-lasting relationships and keeps employees at the company.

### **Key Premise**

Employees stay at the organization when they feel that leadership helps them, acknowledges them, guides their careers, and supports their home lives. Herzberg's Two-Factor

Theory. Herzberg believed that job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is explained by two sets of factors in 1959. For example, intrinsic factors (such as achievement and recognition) are called motivators, whereas things such as the working space, wages, and company rules are called hygiene factors. Feeling dissatisfied is the result of poor hygiene in a work area, but strong motivators help people enjoy their job and

stay with the company. The theory supports the study by dividing things into types: Leading teams, aiding workers' careers, recognizing achievements, and balancing jobs and personal lives are leading motivators and hygiene factors at any organization. It makes it clear how these things affect whether or not employees are happy, committed, and willing to remain where they are in public sector organizations.

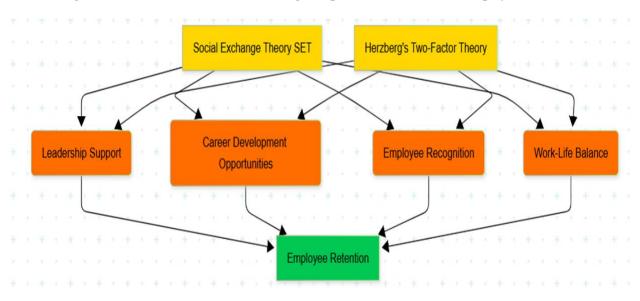


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework Linking Independent Variables and Employee Retention

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2025)

Both Social Exchange Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory explain why some employees decide to remain or leave their job. Even though SET mentions the connection between relationships and support, Herzberg's model organizes and explains what truly affects employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction. All of these help confirm that Leadership Support, Career Development Opportunities, Employee Recognition, and Work-Life Balance are main predictors of employees remaining in public sector organizations.

# 2.3 Empirical Review

Both the public and the private sectors all over the world have continued to focus on keeping their employees, and researchers have extensively studied the key factors that contribute to their decisions. It has been shown recently that stronger support systems, chances to learn and grow, and better workplaces help companies keep their staff (Aliyu, 2023). Mohammed, 2023). Leadership Support and Employee

### Retention

Having leadership support has widely been shown to support employee loyalty and make them less likely to leave. The findings of Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2022) reveal that being fair, communicative, and empathetic encourages workers and makes them less likely to look for other jobs. In addition, Aliyu (2023) stressed that supporting employees, regularly sharing feedback, and valuing each person's efforts in civil service in Nigeria boost workers' commitment to their organization.

# **Career Development Opportunities and Employee Retention**

Access to clear paths for advancing in a job is a major factor in whether employees remain in the company. An investigation by Mohammed (2024) highlighted that interventions such as career training, mentoring, and promotion chances result in more employees staying at their jobs in the public sector of Kano State. Mohammed et al. (2022) pointed out that employees usually remain with organizations that help them grow professionally, since it proves their worth in the company.

# **Employee Recognition and Employee Retention**

In many cases, recognition programs help companies increase employee joy and keep their staff for longer. A new study reported by Obisi et al. (2022) states that those who get thanked or rewarded regularly in their jobs tend to remain more attached to their organization. Mohammed and Sundararajan

(2024) also attested to this, updating that employee recognition helps boost morale and motivates employees to keep working, especially in setups where there are resource issues and lots of bureaucracy.

# **Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention**

Encouraging people to get balanced lives is vital for their overall happiness and less likely departure. The study carried out by Mohammed (2023) concludes that flexible schedules, leave policies, and employee wellness programs are related to increased employee retention in Nigerian public organizations. When a company shows appreciation for employees' personal and family life, their chances of continuing their employment with the company become much higher (Aliyu, 2023).

### **Summary of Empirical Gaps**

Even though these reviews highlight important influencers of staff retention, the majority deal with one aspect or an individual workplace at a time, missing an overall picture of many HR practices impacting staff retention in the Nigerian public sector. In addition, many researchers have not addressed if organizational culture can affect employee-manager relationships. This paper suggests a framework to explain these issues by connecting leadership backing, career advancement, employee recognition, and work-life balance with retaining staff, considering how the culture in a company may influence

these.

# 2.4 Model of the Study

It breaks down the conceptual framework by showing, visually, the relationships between all the key components of the study. It gathers knowledge from the Social Exchange Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and research facts from current publications to understand how HR measures and employee involvement initiatives impact employees staying with the public sector in Nigeria. The model highlights four main independent factors — Leadership Support, Career Development, Recognition for Efforts, and Work-Life Balance—as direct influencers on Employee Retention. Organizational Culture is considered as something that may boost or reduce the influence of these factors on how long employees stay in their jobs. This model aims to fill in the missing knowledge from previous research by studying various aspects that influence employees' decisions to remain in the Kano public sector.

# Figure 2: Conceptual Model of the Study

The diagram highlights the main factors (four IVs) that affect employee retention (DV) in Kano civil service, following the chosen concepts. It is believed that Leadership Support, Career Development, Employee Recognition, and Work-Life Balance have an impact on employee retention.

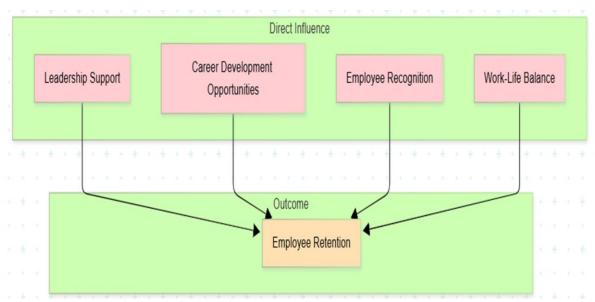


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Influence of HR Interventions on Employee Retention in Public Sector Organizations

The diagram in fig 1 displays the direct effect that the independent variables have on employee retention. It proves that when leadership backs its people, offers them opportunities for career advancement, notices their work, and creates a good work-life balance, staff stay in their positions much longer.

Because these factors affect employee retention, they are crucial for raising the company's rate of employee. This model underlines that the main goal of the research is to look at how HR actions can improve retention among employees, and it fits with the study's aim to identify public sector retention factors.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

A conceptual design was used, whereby existing knowledge and theories were reviewed to put together a model for employee retention in the Nigeria's Kano State civil service.

### 3.2 Data Sources

The study depended mostly on published data, including scholarly articles, books, and reports from official sources, to investigate theories and best practices for HR actions, engagement of staff, and keeping them with the organization.

## 3.3 Conceptual Framework Development

Based on what is described in existing literature on human resource management, organizational behavior, and public administration, the study created a conceptual framework. The main point was to study how support from leaders, chances for career advancement, valuing employees, and a good work-life balance affected whether an employee decides to stay.

# 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis in such a study often includes gathering and merging main points from the literature and calling these the most important ones for the research. It helped to demonstrate the link between the variables (HR interventions and employee engagement) and employee retention.

### 3.5 Limitations

This study used only secondary data and theoretical analysis, so it didn't include collection of any empirical data. Even so, it offered useful tips for creating HR strategies to improve employee retention in public sector organizations.

### 4.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

According to the study and existing sources of information, these are the most important findings about HR practices and employee retention in public sector organizations.

- **1. Leadership Support:** When leaders give ample support, retention of employees increases. Leaders who are empathetic, fair, and offer helpful feedback usually lead to workers being more satisfied and loyal at work (Aliyu, 2023). Chinyio & Olomolaiye, 2022).
- **2. Career Development Opportunities:** Those who notice a chance for career advancement and learning new skills are often eager to stick with their company. There was a positive link between career development and retention among public servants, especially when the chances of promotion were few (Mohammed, 2024). Mohammed et al., 2022).
- **3. Employee Recognition:** Having recognition programs had a positive impact on employees' mood and involvement.

Recognizing employees, either with rewards or words, leads to them being more committed and can bring down the number of employees leaving the company (Mohammed & Sundararajan, 2024). Obisi et al., 2022).

**4. Work-Life Balance:** Making work-life balance possible, with flexible hours, opportunities for leave, and wellness support, was proven to help workers remain with the organization for longer. People who sense that their job helps their personal lives are usually happier with their jobs and less likely to change jobs (Mohammed, 2023). Aliyu, 2023).

### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance employee retention in public sector organizations in Nigeria, particularly within Kano State's civil service:

- Enhancing Leadership Support: Public sector organizations should prioritize training for leaders to ensure they provide effective support to their employees. This includes promoting fairness, communication, and feedback mechanisms that foster trust and a sense of belonging.
- Improving Career Development Opportunities:
   Organizations should establish clear career development
   pathways that include training, mentoring, and promotional
   opportunities. Public sector agencies should invest in
   employee development programs that align with
   organizational goals and employee aspirations.
- 3. **Implementing Effective Recognition Programs**: Regular and meaningful employee recognition programs should be implemented. Recognition can be both formal (awards, certificates) and informal (acknowledgment in meetings or personal messages), ensuring that employees feel valued for their contributions.
- 4. **Promoting Work-Life Balance Initiatives**: Public sector organizations should adopt policies that promote work-life balance. Flexible work hours, telecommuting options, and wellness programs should be made available to employees to improve their well-being and job satisfaction, thereby increasing retention rates.

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