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## Article

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## TALENT RETENTION STRATEGIES AND EMPLOYEES' BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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**Abstract.** To enhance the extant literature of talent retention and proffering solution to the negative employees' behavioural outcomes of high performers in hospitality industry, this study investigates the influence of talent retention strategies (training and development, and job security) on employees' behavioural outcomes (employee job performance and employee job commitment) in Nigeria's hospitality industry. Pen and paper questionnaire was used for gathering quantitative data among 312 frontline employees working in the selected 5-star hotels in Nigeria. Descriptive statistics, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Path analysis were used to establish the mean, standard deviation, measuring instrument reliability, convergent, divergent and test of hypotheses respectively. The outcomes showed significant role of these retention strategies on employees' behavioural outcomes. This implies that, management should show consistent support for the career development and economic stability of their workforce, and most especially the professionals. This is highly important for gaining their full attention and positive workplace behaviour. This will create positive employer's branding, generate knowledge transfer, strengthen succession plan and retain top talents.

**Keywords:** training and development, job security, job commitment, job performance.

**JEL Classification:** M1, M5, M52.

### Introduction

Talent is an inherent attribute possessed by individuals that have the required know-how and skills for continuous growth, quality production etc., that is needed to improve organisational performance. According to Twum (2015), talent could be described as proficiencies of individual or group of individuals necessary for gaining long-term competitive advantage in any organisation. These attributes that serve as sources of competitive advantage for any firm, cannot be easily benchmarked or replicated. Therefore, attracting and retaining individuals that possess these attributes should be a major task for organisations that intend to achieve set goals and objectives.

Retention of talented employees has become a major priority among organisations around the globe. In both the emerged and emerging economies, the issue of retaining good and talented employees poses a critical challenge towards the activities of organisations in all industries (Adeniji et al., 2019). Scullion, Collings, and Caligiuri (2010); Schuler (2011) in their studies submitted that the

major challenge confronting global business environment of many organisations, is retention of talented employees. Retaining talented employees is thus a major priority for organisations, especially in the service producing industry such as hospitality sector, where there is always one-on-one interaction between the employees and the customers (Ohunakin et al., 2018a). It is thus very imperative for employers to protect skilled and capable employees from quitting their organisations, and consequently preventing its negative effects on employees' workplace behaviour and organisational productivity.

The need and importance of highly skilled and knowledgeable employees make the phrase "war for talent" a continuous concern among industries both in the developed and emerging nations (Martins, 2015). In any context, organisation that intends to achieve set goals and objectives should not only map out strategies for retaining those individuals that possess the required skills and expertise, but also be acquainted with the behaviour of those individuals as employees (Tiwari, 2012). Ohunakin et al. (2018b) argued that effective execution of

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any strategy depends largely on people; hence, employee behaviour is essential for the successful execution of any retention strategy. Employees’ behavioural outcomes are described as employees work outcomes. In other words, it is the aftermath of employees’ engagement in one activity or the other in an organisation e.g. job satisfaction, job commitment, among others (Ologbo & Saudah, 2012). All organisational activities should be consistent with the strategies for retention, as these will determine the attitude of individual employee.

Based on the aforementioned reports, studies have been carried out to a very large extent on the concept of talent management and retention in hospitality sector in the developed nations, while very few exist in the developing nations, especially in the emerging economies like Nigeria. Little attention had been paid to this sector by both researchers and practitioners. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of talent retention strategies (training and development, and job security) on employees’ behavioural outcomes (employees’ commitment and employees’ performance) in Nigeria’s hospitality industry. The hypotheses are as shown in Figure 1.

### 1. Literature review

#### 1.1. Training and development

Training and development can be described as approaches used to teach workers in order to give room for improvements in their organisational activities. Guðlaugsdóttir (2016) defined training and development as any reasonable investment where employees are taught immediate improvements that will benefit both the employees and the employer in the long run. The author further stated that training boosts the employees’ ability to learn new skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviours in the workplace. According to Memon et al. (2014), training and development can help organisations to reduce the rate of employee turnover. Alnaqbi (2011) in his study on public sector in the United Arab Emirate (UAE), acknowledged

the development of human capital in workplace as one of the organisational strategies being embraced by global successful companies, for attracting, retaining and adding values to their good and talented employees. Moshin et al. (2015) advocated for training and development in India luxury hotels. Current gap between demand and supply of trained professionals in human resources in luxury hotels was identified to be about 8.64%.

#### 1.2. Job security

Alavi et al. (2013) argued that security of job is one of the major things that occupies human’s mind, and which has been described as a desire of man to be capable of meeting and maintaining the current needs and confidence of the ability to manage and stabilize events as they unfold. Lucky, Minai, and Rahman (2013) reported that the concept of job security started gaining attention of researchers, due to the economic pressure that is generally confronting organisations. In the opinion of Abdullah and Ramay (2012), every employee desires a job with adequate security for a reasonable length of time. Job security is now on top of the list of preference for both the employer and the employees (Adebayo & Lucky, 2012). For instance, Schappel (2012) in his study that considered ten (10) job factors that attract and retain good workers, identified job security as first on the list, based on his findings. Similarly, employees are more concerned about job security than benefit and pay, as established in the study carried out on University employees (KPMG, 2010).

#### 1.3. Job performance

Employee performance can be defined as whether an individual executes a given task accordingly or as expected. It can be described as measuring actual output of an individual employee with the intended output (Jiang et al., 2012). Employee performance varies depending on the nature of the organisation in which the employee belongs to (Ohunakin et al., 2019). Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap

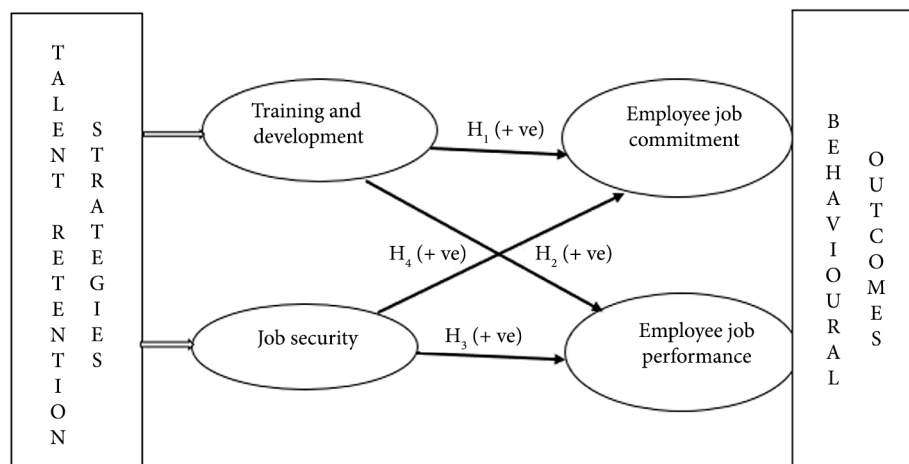


Figure 1. Schematic model

(2014) opined that employees' performance can be valued based on the factors that surround their level of productivity according to the organisational goals and objectives.

#### 1.4. Employee commitment

Generally, organisations desire employees that will be loyal, ready to remain with the organisation, willing to put forth extra effort over and above what is expected of him or her, with utmost interests of the firm at heart, and will be able to persevere. Organisational commitment is a kind of attachment that forms between individual employee and the organisation. Dixit and Bhati (2012) defined employee commitment as an expression revealing an individual willingness to exert his or her energy with loyalty in social relationship. In the opinion of Meyer and Allen (1997), employee commitment was defined as a psychological state that illustrates the relationship between an employee and the organisation, which informs the employee's decision to continue as a member of such organisation.

## 2. Formulation of hypotheses

In Aguenza and Som (2012), training and development skills provided by employers to their employees often make such employees to be more committed to their current employer, because good and talented employees are looking for organisation that will make available to them, the requisite skills, training and development that will boost their career advancement. Similarly, human capital development constitutes one of the essential ways to assist employee gain new skills and knowledge needed to out-perform their competitors (Tsai & Tai, 2003). Commitment of the employees and appropriate strategic moves such as training and development programs that are based on current needs can be used to retain good talent in an organisation (Anvari, Amin, & Seliman, 2010). Conversely, in the opinion of Benson, Finegold, and Mohrman (2004), development of employee (especially with training and development on general skills) have tendency to increase his or her market value, and which might result in such employee looking elsewhere for better opportunities and thereby increase turnover. However, Useem (1993) suggested that organisations should embark on training and developing their workforce based on the skill required for the current assignment or task only. In other words, training should be done on firm specific needs. Nevertheless, it is therefore imperative for organisations to make human capital development a thing of priority for gaining employee commitment and retention, and for successful and continuous organisational growth.

Moreover, Moshin et al. (2015) identified the current rate of employee turnover in luxury hotels to be between 11 and 20%, and as high as 20% across the entire hotels due to little or no retention strategies, including training and development which is affecting the commitment of employees. Also, Anyim, Ikemefuna, and Mbah (2011)

suggested continuous training and development as one of the strategies for managing human resources in Nigerian workplace, but this is yet to be established in the hospitality industry in Nigeria. Hence, this study investigated the influence of training and development on employees' commitment in the hospitality industry in Nigeria. Similarly, Hewagama et al. (2019) argued that empowering frontline human capital in hotel industry will not only give the employees autonomy, but also enhance their performances.

The study conducted by Towers Watson (2014) on Global Workforce, covered 26 nations around the world with 32,000 employees as the sample. The study showed how to retain high performers in organisation, to combat the problem of high rate of employee turnover, globally. The work found job security as the major determinant of employees' performance and booster of their intention to stay in an organisation. In the opinion of Markos and Sridevi (2010) on their study on employee engagement, it was found that appropriate means of boosting organisational success, adequate resources, and employee inclusion will encourage employees to improve on their performances and commitments.

Das and Baruah (2013) stated that job performance is significantly related to job security among employees, in their reviewed work on employee retention. In other words, for employee to perform at optimal level as required by the employer, job security plays a major role. Similarly, Lucky et al. (2013) argued that the higher the level of job security for an employee, the better the performance of such employee and which will consequently improve the organisational performance.

Furthermore, the work of Subramanian and Shin (2013) opined that decrease in employee performance in hospitality sector is because of inadequate job security, which will negatively impact on their job commitment as well as other workplace behaviour. It has thus become necessary to boost the performances, retain talented employees and propel their job commitment in this industry. Hence, this study has established the importance of job security on employees' job performance as well as job commitment in Nigeria's hospitality industry, coupled with the fact that little has been known on these concepts in Nigerian workplace. Based on the literature reviewed, the hypotheses proposed are as indicated in Figure 1.

## 3. Research methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and used for this study. Quantitative data were gathered from the frontline employees working in the selected five-star hotels in Nigeria. A total of 455 copies of questionnaire were administered among the employees working in the selected hotels, which was drawn with total enumeration method of sampling technique (Ohunakin et al., 2019). A total number of 352 copies of these questionnaire were retrieved, and 312 copies were adequately filled and found usable. The response rate was 68.57% (312/455).

### 3.1. Measuring instrument

For the independent variables, ten (10) items questionnaire on training and development was adapted from Asfaw et al. (2015). Job security was measured using five (5) items adapted from Pienaar et al. (2013). For the dependent variables, organisational commitment was measured using eleven (11) items questionnaire adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990), while in Nassazi (2013), ten (10) item questionnaire on employee job performance was adapted.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	N	Percentage	Valid Percentage
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	187	60	60
Female	125	40	40
Total	312	100	100
<b>Age</b>			
19–23	25	8	8
24–28	90	29	29
29–33	106	34	34
34–39	47	15	15
40–44	28	9	9
45 and above	16	5	5
Total	312	100	100
<b>Highest Educational Level</b>			
B.Sc/BA	225	72	72
M.Sc/MA/MBA	62	20	20
Ph.D	25	8	8
Total	312	100	100
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	166	53	53
Married	137	44	44
Divorced	9	3	3
Total	312	100	100

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, correlation and reliability indicators among variable (N = 312)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Standard Deviation
Training and Development	<b>0.748</b>					4.07	1.06
Job Security	0.580	0.714				3.63	1.13
Employee Job Commitment	0.329	0.522	0.707			3.99	1.03
Employee Job Performance	0.236	0.423	0.419	0.714		3.89	1.11

Note: The values bold in the diagonal indicate the square root values of the AVEs of the variables.

### 4. Results

As shown in Table 1, the demographic profile of the frontline employees revealed that 60% were male, while the remaining 40% were female. The age range with the highest number of respondents was 29–33 (34%), followed by 24–28 (29%), 34–39 (15%), 40–44 (9%), 19–23 (8%), and the remaining 5% were ages 45 and above. Most of the respondents were University first degree holders i.e. B.Sc/B.A (72%), 20% were Masters’ degree holders and the remaining 8% were PhD holders. Highest percentage (53%) of the respondents were single, 44% were married, and 3% were divorced.

At the initial stage, six items and two items with factor loading lower than 0.6 were removed from training and development, and job security respectively, while seven items and five items with factor loading lower than 0.6 were also removed from job commitment and job performance respectively (Arifin & Yusoff, 2016). The validity of the constructs was evaluated by the outputs of the discriminant and convergent validity. The discriminant validity was established as shown in Table 2; all the values of the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE), were higher than the inter-factor correlations, which showed

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity

Variable	Item	Standardized factor loading	Z statistics	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Training and Development				0.862	0.56	0.828
	qs27	0.65	14.55			
	qs29	0.84	27.13			
	qs30	0.77	22.15			
	qs31	0.74	19.74			
Job Security				0.803	0.51	0.762
	qs36	0.71	18.52			
	qs37	0.72	19.21			
	qs39	0.72	19.16			
Job Commitment				0.793	0.50	0.757
	qs66	0.69	14.40			
	qs74	0.74	17.01			
Job Performance				0.886	0.51	0.849
	qs76	0.78	26.46			
	qs77	0.70	21.92			
	qs79	0.69	17.84			
	qs80	0.68	17.94			
qs81	0.71	20.67				

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

that discriminant validity was supported in this study. The parameters for determining the reliability and convergent validity are as shown in Table 3. Each of the item's standardized factor loading was measured and the values ranged from 0.65 to 0.84. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were calculated, and the values were higher than 0.70, and which is consistent with assertion in the work of Hair et al. (2006). Hence, in this study, measurement model reliability was satisfactory. As indicated in Table 3, the AVE values were above 0.5 threshold according to Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Also, in this study, convergent validity was supported.

**4.1. Test of hypothesis and discussion**

According to Table 4 and as depicted in Figure 2, the results of path analysis revealed that, training and development had a positive association with both employee job commitment ( $\beta = 0.36$ ) and employee job performance ( $\beta = 0.72$ ). This outcome agreed with findings of some previous works. For instance, studies carried out by Younas et al. (2018), Alnaqbi (2011), Markos and Sridevi (2010), and Saeed and Shabir (2013) found that training and development was one of the major boosters of employees' job commitment. Similarly, Aguenza and Som (2012) and Anvari, Amin and Seliman (2010) revealed that training and development often influence employees' job commitment in the workplace. Nevertheless, in the earlier work of Benson et al. (2004), it was found that training and development reduced employees' job commitment to their current employer; this can lead to the search for a better workplace by employees, after a

Table 4. Path coefficient for hypotheses testing

Hypothesized Path	$\beta$ Value	S.E	Z	Outcome
H1: Training and Development $\rightarrow$ Job Commitment	0.361	0.074	4.91	Accepted
H2: Training and Development $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.718	0.046	15.70	Accepted
H3: Job Security $\rightarrow$ Job Performance	0.535	0.055	9.66	Accepted
H4: Job Security $\rightarrow$ Job Commitment	0.655	0.061	10.65	Accepted

Note: S.E = Standard Error, Z = Z Value.

while. The outcome of Benson et al. (2004), could be because of the involvement of highly skilled Information Technology (IT) professionals in their study; it may also be attributed to the kind of training being given to their respondents (IT professionals), whether a general or firm specific training. The implication of this outcome is that, training and development are paramount and highly important for employees' job commitment. It is also pivotal and beneficial to both the employers and the employees. However, in line with the opinion of Costen and Salazar (2011), skilled workers require continuous relevant training and development to boost their innovative capabilities, and proactiveness, so as to give their best back

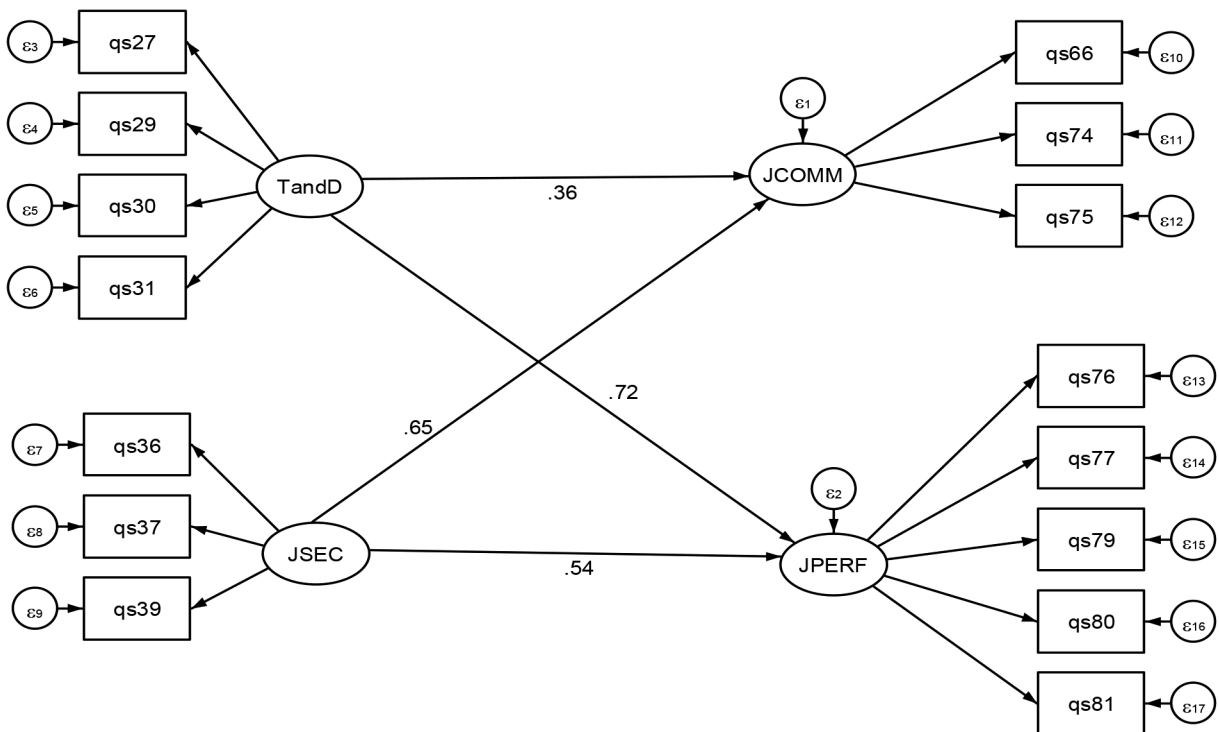


Figure 2. Hypothesised model for training and development, job security, job commitment and job performance

to the organisation, through full commitment to their given task.

In the same vein, the result also showed positive interaction between job security and employee job performance ( $\beta = 0.54$ ) as well as employee job commitment ( $\beta = 0.66$ ). These, however, suggest support for our predicted hypotheses. This outcome agrees with findings in the work conducted by Markos and Sridevi (2010), Alavi, Alaghemandan, and Jannatifard (2013) and Das and Baruah (2013), where there were conclusions that job security has significant effect on employees' job performance. In the same vein, the work of Lucky et al. (2013) on multi-ethnic environment, concluded that the higher the level of job security the higher the level of employees' job performance. This finding also supports the outcome of the study conducted by Towers Watson (2014), across twenty-six (26) nations around the world with thirty-two thousand (32,000) employees as the respondent. This outcome has implications for hospitality management in Nigeria. It has been revealed that, frontline employees' job performance can be increased by the provision of adequate job security. This will not only boost employees' job performance, but also influence many other organisational outcomes that relate to productivity.

### Summary, conclusions, implications and limitation of study

Training and development have positive, direct and significant effect on employees' job commitment and job performance. Therefore, management of Nigeria's hospitality industry should pay adequate attention to the development and growth of their frontline employees' skill, in other to get their total commitment to their given tasks. We also found that job security has positive, direct and significant effect on employees' job performance and commitment. The reflection from this, is that job security is pivotal for increasing employees' job performance and commitment.

In conclusion, there should be continuous studies on policies and practices regarding human resource management in every sector of the economy, both locally and globally. This study is in response to a call in the Nigeria's hospitality industry to develop measures for retaining their good and talented employees, and to overcome the challenges the industry is facing in its current practices. This work has contributed to knowledge on talent management, concept of talent retention and employee behavioural outcomes. This study will also enable leadership in other service providing organisations, to identify the forms of talent retention procedures that will enhance their service-oriented culture.

The outcomes of this study have two main theoretical implications. First, this research extends training and development by establishing that it enhances employees' job commitment and performance. This implies that, management should show consistent support for the career development of their workforce, and most especially the professionals. This is highly important for gaining their

full attention and positive workplace behaviour. This will create positive employer's branding, generate knowledge transfer, strengthening succession plan and retention of top talents. Second, this study examines the role of job security on employees' job performance and commitment. It shifts forward the frontiers of knowledge needed to increase employees' job and economic security. It implies that management should adequately document and communicate conditions of employment and should not be unfairly discriminated.

In terms of managerial implication, management in hospitality industry should be concerned about the development, growth and well-being of their workforce. The hospitality industry is labour intensive; therefore, effective workload and hours of work distribution should be considered in order to achieve optimal level of employees' productivity and commitment. Furthermore, a well-documented retention policy is recommended, not only for the management of hospitality industry, but also for the various policy makers. Such policy should be subjected to amendment from time to time.

There are limitations to this study. First, selected parameters of retention strategies (training and development and job security) were considered, other possible retention strategies such as leadership style, career growth opportunities, performance appraisal, performance management, leaders' emotional intelligence and so on were not included. Hence, all these parameters are signals for further studies. Second, quantitative data were gathered through cross-sectional research design; future research can give consideration to longitudinal research design. Third, 5-star hotels in Nigeria were considered, alongside sample of only the frontline employees in the selected 5-star hotels. Future study could consider other sections within the 5-star hotels, rated hotels, non-rated hotels, restaurant and so on. Therefore, outcomes of this work may not be a generalized and fully conclusive findings across the hospitality industry.

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