



Impact of public sector talent retention on brain drain in selected north-central states in Nigeria

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Abstract. There is paucity of studies that examined whether Public Sector Talent Retention has effect on the problem of Brain Drain in North-Central States in Nigeria. This study bridges that gap by asking whether Public Sector Talent Retention has effect on brain drain in Nigeria. It also asks pertinent questions with a view to digging deep into the possible causes of labour mobility. This study examines the relationship between public sector talent retention strategies and brain-drain issues in North-Central states through a quantitative empirical analysis. Brain drain has emerged as a significant threat to Nigeria's socio-economic development, with approximately half of licensed medical doctors and substantial numbers of academic professionals migrating to developed countries. This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design. This study collected data from 705 public sector employees across the North-Central States and employed structural equation modeling (SEM) and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between talent retention practices and brain drain mitigation. Findings reveal that career development opportunities emerged as the strongest predictor of brain drain intentions ($\beta = -0.298, p < 0.001$), followed by compensation satisfaction ($\beta = -0.271, p < 0.001$). Poor working conditions, limited career advancement opportunities, and insufficient professional development programs significantly contribute to brain drain intentions among public sector professionals. The Federal, States, Local Government and private employers of labour need to start implementing competitive remuneration packages, improving workplace infrastructure, creating clear career progression pathways and establishing robust professional development programs to enhance talent retention in Nigeria's public sector. Among the few studies that examined the effect of Public Sector Talent Retention on Brain Drain, basically, none covers North-Central States of Nigeria except this which gives the study its originality. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship among talent retention and brain drain in Northern Nigeria. The theoretical framework is anchored on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of motivation and Human Capital Theory.

Keywords: talent retention, brain-drain, public sector, human capital.

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with over 220 million people, faces a paradoxical challenge of abundant human resources coupled with significant brain drain that threatens its development trajectory (Phillips, 2023). Nigeria's brain drain crisis represents a quantifiable challenge that undermines the country's human capital development and socio-economic progress through measurable pathways (Chioma & Nnamdi, 2024). The problem manifests in several empirically observable dimensions that require systematic quantitative analysis to understand their scope, causes, and potential solutions. The country is witnessing a mass emigration of its active labour force to more advanced economies, with approximately half of licensed medical doctors having emigrated, contributing to a widening doctors-to-patients ratio of 1:5,000, which is far below the World Health Organization's recommended 1:600 (Obinna & Chinelo, 2024). This phenomenon extends beyond healthcare to encompass critical sectors including education, engineering, information technology and other knowledge-intensive fields, creating what scholars have termed a comprehensive human capital crisis (Ahmed, Hassan & Yusuf, 2023).

Brain drain, broadly defined as the emigration of skilled professionals from developing to developed countries in search of superior opportunities, has become a critical policy concern for Nigeria (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2020). At the institutional level, the Nigerian public sector bears particular responsibility for this crisis: as the largest employer and a key driver of national development, it plays a

pivotal role in either exacerbating or mitigating this outflow through its talent management practices. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that the Federal civil service lags behind in providing adequate incentives to retain its workforce relative to private sector standards, with compensation disparities of up to 60% documented between comparable public and private sector positions (Mohammed & Suleiman, 2020; Onyeaka & Romanus, 2010). This structural disparity creates powerful push factors that drive skilled professionals to seek opportunities elsewhere. The three North-Central states selected for this study, Benue, Kogi, and Niger, are particularly instructive because they represent diverse institutional landscapes spanning federal and state civil service, healthcare, academia, and local government, thereby enabling a rigorous examination of how retention deficits operate across different public sector contexts.

Empirical evidence from multiple sectors underscores the severity and breadth of this crisis. Tijani and Bashir (2024) found that 85.8% of early-career psychiatrists had considered migration, 69.2% were actively planning to leave, and 52.9% had already taken concrete steps toward emigration. The academic sector mirrors this pattern: Nigerian universities have experienced sustained staff attrition over the past decade, with many departments now headed by senior lecturers owing to the departure of experienced faculty (Uche & Adaora, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these trends, precipitating a documented mass exodus of healthcare workers driven by inadequate personal protective equipment, inconsistent hazard allowance payments, and deteriorating security conditions (Nwachukwu & Okechukwu, 2022). This crisis laid bare the structural fragility of Nigeria's human resource base and the urgent necessity of evidence-based talent retention strategies.

The consequences of inadequate retention mechanisms are measurable and far-reaching. Compensation disparities of up to 60% have been documented between comparable public and private sector positions, representing the most immediate structural driver of emigration (Mohammed & Suleiman, 2020). These deficits translate directly into critical workforce shortages: with only one doctor per 5,000 people, Nigeria falls dramatically short of the WHO-recommended ratio of 1:600, with attendant impacts on mortality rates and disease management outcomes (Ibrahim, Usman & Abdullahi, 2024). The economic losses compound the problem further, with estimates suggesting that up to 70% of training investments in critical sectors are effectively forfeited through brain drain (Afroza, Rahman & Islam, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2023). Despite growing awareness of the crisis, policy responses have remained largely inadequate: the recent legislative attempt to withhold doctors's licenses for five years to prevent emigration drew sharp criticism for failing to address the empirically documented root causes, underscoring the need for evidence-based retention frameworks (Obinna & Chinelo, 2024).

Research Questions: To guide the study, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What is the relationship between compensation and benefits packages in Nigeria's public sector and brain drain intentions among professionals?
2. To what extent do career development opportunities in the public sector statistically predict talent retention and reduced emigration intentions?
3. How do working conditions and organizational factors influence professionals' brain drain intentions?
4. What is the impact of professional development and training on talent retention in Nigeria's public sector?

Purpose of the Study

1. To determine the relationship between compensation and benefits packages in public sector and brain-drain intentions among professionals.
2. To assess the extent to which career development opportunities in the public sector predict talent retention and reduced emigration intentions.

3. To examine how working conditions and organizational factors influence professionals' brain drain intentions.
4. To evaluate the impact of professional development and training programs on talent retention in Nigeria's public sector.

Literature Review

Definition of Key Concepts

Talent Retention refers to the measurable capacity of public sector organizations to sustain skilled and experienced employees within their workforce over time. It is operationalized through indicators including staff retention rates, turnover statistics, job satisfaction scores, and organizational commitment scales (Eche, Eche & Aronowitz, 2022; Samuel & Grace, 2020).

Brain Drain is defined as the emigration of skilled public sector professionals from Nigeria to other countries in search of better living conditions or professional opportunities (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2020; Obinna & Chinelo, 2024). In this study, brain drain is assessed through a composite index encompassing intention to emigrate, active job search behaviour abroad, visa application activities, and actual departure rates.

Public Sector encompasses government-owned and operated institutions at federal, state, and local levels, including ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), public universities, and government hospitals. Private organizations and internationally-operated bodies are excluded from this definition (Mohammed & Suleiman, 2020).

The departure of skilled professionals from Africa has created statistically measurable workforce gaps across multiple industries, with quantitative research documenting particularly severe impacts in the healthcare and education sectors (Ibrahim et al., 2024). In Nigeria specifically, empirical evidence shows this trend has intensified over the past decade, driven by a combination of push and pull factors that can be quantified and modeled statistically. Research by Obinna and Chinelo (2024) provides comprehensive quantitative analysis of these factors, demonstrating how various economic, social, and political variables interact to influence migration decisions (Chioma & Nnamdi, 2024).

Public Sector Talent Retention Mechanisms

Talent retention in the public sector presents quantifiably different challenges compared to private sector organizations, with statistical studies documenting unique patterns of employee behaviour and organizational dynamics (Mohammed & Suleiman, 2020). Public organizations must navigate complex bureaucratic structures, political influences and resource constraints that can be measured through various organizational assessment instruments. Public sector talent retention requires multi-dimensional strategies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

Research by Ahmed et al. (2023) demonstrates that talent attraction, talent retention, compensation/reward systems and learning/development programs have statistically significant positive relationships with organizational performance in the public sector. Statistical analysis has shown that the public sector's role as a benchmark employer in many developing countries means that its talent retention practices have measurable spillover effects across the broader economy (Samuel & Grace, 2020). Effective public sector talent retention not only preserves critical capabilities within government but also sets standards that influence private sector practices and overall national competitiveness. This relationship can be modeled statistically to predict the broader economic impacts of public sector human resource policies.

COVID-19 Impact Studies

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided researchers with a natural experiment for quantifying brain-drain acceleration under crisis conditions. Empirical studies have documented statistically significant increases in emigration intentions and actual migration among healthcare workers during the pandemic, with quantitative analysis revealing percentage increases ranging from 34% to 67% across different professional categories (Nwachukwu & Okechukwu, 2022). This research employed longitudinal survey methods to track changes in migration intentions before, during, and after the pandemic peak.

Statistical analysis of COVID-19 impacts has identified specific push factors including inadequate personal protective equipment provision, inconsistent hazard allowance payments, and increased health risks, all of which can be quantified through survey instruments and correlation analysis (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Their empirical research demonstrates how crisis conditions accelerate existing brain drain trends through measurable pathways that can inform emergency retention strategies (Tijani & Bashir, 2024).

Research Metodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design. This design was selected as the most appropriate framework to rigorously examine the statistical relationships between public sector talent retention strategies and the pervasive issue of brain drain within the specific context of selected states in North Central Nigeria, namely Benue, Kogi, and Niger States.

Population for the Study

The target population for this research encompasses all public sector employees who are directly employed by government institutions at the federal, state, and local government levels within the selected states of Benue, Kogi, and Niger in North Central Nigeria. This population represents the core of the civil service machinery in these states, comprising the skilled professionals whose retention is critical for sustainable development and effective public service delivery.

A detailed breakdown of the population across the three states and key sectors includes:

Table 1. Estimated Workforce Distribution Across States and Sector Categories

Category	Estimated Workforce	% of Sample	Notes
Benue State	~95,000	37%	All MDAs and sector categories within Benue State
Kogi State	~80,000	31%	All MDAs and sector categories within Kogi State
Niger State	~80,000	31%	Largest state by landmass; all MDAs and sector categories within Niger State
Federal Civil Servants	Pooled across states	15%	Professionals in federal MDAs with state-level offices
State Government Employees	Pooled across states	35%	Largest segment; core civil service staff of all three states
Healthcare Professionals	Pooled across states	15%	Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lab scientists, and allied health staff in public hospitals

Category	Estimated Workforce	% of Sample	Notes
Academic Staff	Pooled across states	20%	Lecturers, professors, and academic staff in public universities and tertiary institutions
Local Government Employees	Pooled across states	15%	Staff employed in LGAs across Benue, Kogi, and Niger States
Total Population	~255,000	100%	Combined public sector workforce across all three states

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The determination of an appropriate sample size is a critical step that balances statistical precision with practical fieldwork constraints. The calculation must ensure the sample is large enough to provide reliable and generalizable results for the population of approximately 255,000 public servants across Benue, Kogi, and Niger States.

The initial baseline sample size was calculated using Cochran’s (1977) formula for finite populations:

$$n_0 = (Z^2 * p * q) / e^2$$

Where:

n_0 = required sample size

Z = Z-score for the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)

p = estimated proportion of the population (0.5, which provides the maximum sample size and is conservative)

$$q = 1 - p$$

e = margin of error (0.05)

$$\text{Plugging in the values: } n_0 = (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5) / 0.05^2 = 384.16$$

Therefore, the minimum sample size required for a population of this magnitude is 385 respondents.

Sources and Methods of Data Collection

Data for this study was drawn from both primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensiveness and triangulation. The primary data was collected through the administration of the validated structured questionnaire. Secondary data was gathered from: The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reports on public sector employment. Annual reports and budgets from the State Civil Service Commissions of Benue, Kogi, and Niger. Publications from the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria on workforce trends. Central Bank of Nigeria reports on economic indicators that might influence migration decisions.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, processed primarily with IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29).

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis were computed on 5-point Likert scales.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Job Satisfaction	2.97	1.23	1.00	5.00	0.12	-0.67
Compensation Satisfaction	2.34	1.41	1.00	5.00	0.89	-0.23
Career Development Opportunities	2.51	1.32	1.00	5.00	0.76	-0.31
Working Conditions	3.21	1.15	1.00	5.00	-0.18	-0.45
Organizational Culture	3.08	1.19	1.00	5.00	-0.09	-0.52
Professional Development Support	2.43	1.38	1.00	5.00	0.85	-0.18
Brain Drain Intentions	3.82	1.28	1.00	5.00	-0.71	-0.18

The descriptive results for the retention factors paint a picture of significant dissatisfaction and systemic deficits. Compensation Satisfaction has the lowest mean score (M=2.34), indicating profound and widespread discontent with pay, allowances, and benefits. This finding aligns perfectly with extensive literature documenting the stark disparity between public sector remuneration in Nigeria and comparable packages in the private sector, international organizations, and particularly in developed countries actively recruiting Nigerian talent.

Professional Development Support (M=2.43) and Career Development Opportunities (M=2.51) also scored well below the midpoint, suggesting that employees perceive a critical lack of structured pathways for vertical advancement, sponsorship for further training, and insufficient organizational support for continuous skills upgrading. This perception of stagnant career trajectories is a powerful push factor. Job Satisfaction, an overall measure, is also relatively low (M=2.97), hovering just below the neutral point, indicating a general state of discontent.

In contrast, perceptions of Working Conditions (M=3.21) and Organizational Culture (M=3.08) are marginally more positive, though still best described as neutral. This suggests that while the physical work environment and aspects of organizational values might not be the primary sources of grievance, they are also not strong enough to outweigh the dissatisfaction stemming from poor compensation and stunted growth. The standard deviations for all variables are sizeable (ranging from 1.15 to 1.41), indicating considerable variation in perceptions among respondents. This variation implies that experiences are not uniform across the sector, highlighting the potential for targeted interventions and the need for further subgroup analysis to identify pockets of best practice and acute crisis.

A deeper analysis by institutional sector reveals stark and alarming disparities in emigration intentions. Healthcare professionals reported the strongest intention to emigrate (Mean = 4.23), followed very closely by Academic staff (Mean = 3.98). This finding resonates powerfully with empirical evidence from other sources; for instance, the Nigerian Medical Association has estimated that over 6,770 Nigerian doctors were registered to practice in the United Kingdom alone between 2015 and 2022, a trend starkly mirrored in the academic sector with the relentless outflow of PhD holders and experienced lecturers to universities in Europe, North America, and other African nations. Federal Civil Servants reported a mean intention of 3.77, followed by State Government Employees at 3.68. Employees in Local Government areas reported the lowest, though still decidedly high, mean intention (M=3.55). This gradient may be linked to several factors, including lower international recognition of local government qualifications, reduced exposure to global opportunities, or stronger community and familial ties that reduce mobility.

Regression Analysis

To assess the collective and unique predictive power of the retention factors on brain drain intentions while controlling for the influence of key demographic variables, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. The results show that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The control variables in Model 1 alone explain 12.7% ($R^2 = .127$) of the variance in brain drain intentions. The introduction of the five retention factors in Model 2 explains a substantial additional 49.6% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .496$), resulting in a total explained variance (R^2) of 62.3%. This represents a large effect size, indicating that the combination of these five factors is an exceptionally powerful predictor of emigration intentions among public sector workers in North Central Nigeria.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

To test the comprehensive theoretical model that proposed direct effects of talent retention on brain-drain, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS software. The model specified the five retention factors as exogenous variables directly predicting Brain Drain Intentions, with Job Satisfaction tested as a key mediating variable that could explain the underlying psychological process through which retention strategies influence emigration plans.

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results (Predicting Brain Drain Intentions)

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	p
Model 1: Control Variables				
Age	-.187	.042	-.201	<.001
Education Level	.214	.051	.178	.001
R ² Model 1	.127			
Model 2: Retention Factors Added				
Career Development Opportunities	-.342	.048	-.298	<.001
Compensation Satisfaction	-.309	.051	-.271	<.001
Professional Development Support	-.241	.049	-.214	<.001
Working Conditions	-.198	.053	-.179	.001
Organizational Culture	-.163	.047	-.147	.008
Total R ² (Model 2)	.623 ($\Delta R^2 = .496$, $p < .001$)			

Note: B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

The hypothesized model demonstrated an excellent fit to the empirical data. All key fit indices surpassed their recommended thresholds: $\chi^2/df = 2.087$ (good if <3), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .967 (excellent if $>.95$), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = .978 (excellent if $>.95$), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .051 (excellent if $<.06$), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .048 (good if $<.08$). This indicates that the theoretical model is a plausible and accurate representation of the relationships existing within the collected data.

The SEM analysis allowed for the decomposition of effects into direct and indirect (mediated) paths. Furthermore, SEM reveal significant indirect effects, indicating that Job Satisfaction acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between each of the retention factors and brain drain intentions. For instance, the analysis shows that improved compensation reduces brain drain intentions directly ($\beta = -.234$) and also does so indirectly by boosting overall job satisfaction, which in turn reduces the desire to

leave ($\beta = -.089$). The total effect of Career Development on Brain Drain is the strongest ($\beta = -.298$ direct + $-.112$ indirect = $-.410$), underscoring its paramount importance. This mediation finding adds a layer of sophistication to the understanding of the mechanism at play: retention strategies work not just by directly altering cost-benefit calculations (as per Human Capital Theory) but also by fostering positive affective states (Job Satisfaction) that enhance commitment and reduce the urge to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Table 4. SEM Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects on Brain Drain Intentions

Retention Factor	Direct (β)	Indirect (β)	Total (β)	Mediation
Career Development Opportunities	-.298	-.112	-.410	Partial (via Job Satisfaction)
Compensation Satisfaction	-.234	-.089	-.323	Partial (via Job Satisfaction)
Professional Development Support	-.201	-.076	-.277	Partial (via Job Satisfaction)
Working Conditions	-.176	-.064	-.240	Partial (via Job Satisfaction)
Organizational Culture	-.143	-.052	-.195	Partial (via Job Satisfaction)

SEM Model Fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.087$; CFI = .967; TLI = .978; RMSEA = .051; SRMR = .048. All path coefficients significant at $p < .001$.

Discussion of Findings

The descriptive results, most notably the high mean score for brain-drain intentions ($M=3.82$), move the discourse beyond speculative commentary and anecdotal evidence. It provides empirical, quantitative proof of a severe and widespread retention crisis. The sectoral analysis further quantifies the disproportionate risk, confirming that the nation's most critical and human-capital-intensive sectors, healthcare and higher education, are at the greatest risk of losing their best and brightest talent. This poses an existential threat to the quality of public service delivery, the achievement of sustainable development goals, and national progress as a whole.

The most striking and perhaps most significant finding is the paramount importance of career development opportunities. It consistently emerged as the strongest correlate and the most powerful unique predictor of emigration intentions. This suggests a critical evolution in the motivation of public sector professionals. While fair and competitive compensation remains an essential foundational need.

The factor and regression analyses confirm that employee retention is not a single-issue problem with a silver-bullet solution. An effective strategy must be integrated and multifaceted, simultaneously addressing several key areas like: Foundation, which involves ensuring competitive and fair remuneration (Compensation & Benefits) to meet basic economic needs and provide a sense of valued contribution. Growth, which entails creating clear, transparent, and merit-based paths for promotion, sponsorship for further training and education, and opportunities to utilize newly acquired skills (Career & Professional Development). Environment, which requires providing the necessary tools, resources, and safety to work effectively while also fostering a supportive, fair, recognizing, and positive organizational culture (Working Conditions & Organizational Culture). Neglecting any of these pillars can weaken the entire retention structure.

The SEM results provide a more nuanced psychological understanding of how these retention strategies work. They demonstrate that these factors not only directly discourage emigration by altering rational calculations but also work indirectly by enhancing overall job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens emotional attachment and reduces the intention to leave. This finding aligns perfectly with established theories like Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and the Job Characteristics Model, suggesting that investments in retention strategies have a compound positive effect on employee morale and commitment. It positions job satisfaction as a crucial intervening variable that encapsulates the overall affective response to the employment experience.

The Influence of Demographics shows that younger, more highly educated employees are more likely to intend to emigrate are consistent with the predictions of Human Capital Theory. These individuals have made significant investments in their education and skills, which represent a form of capital. They are therefore more likely to seek the highest return on that investment, which they often perceive to be located in international labour markets. They also have longer career horizons over which to amortize the costs of migration (both financial and social).

Summary

This study was conceived to empirically investigate the critical relationship between public sector talent retention strategies and the brain drain phenomenon in North Central Nigeria. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, the research gathered data from 705 public sector professionals across Benue, Kogi, and Niger States, achieving an exceptional response rate of 94.0%. The data was subjected to a rigorous battery of statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, exploratory factor analysis, hierarchical multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). These advanced techniques were deployed to test the hypothesized relationships derived from an integrated theoretical framework combining Human Capital Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. The research was driven by the urgent need to address the escalating brain drain crisis, which has seen a significant exodus of skilled professionals from Nigeria's public sector, thereby crippling institutional capacity and hindering national development. The methodology was designed for maximum rigor, utilizing a stratified sampling technique to ensure representation across key institutional sectors—State Government, Academia, Local Government, Healthcare, and Federal Civil Service. The use of validated measurement instruments and robust analytical procedures ensured the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a solid evidence base for policy formulation.

Conclusion

Based on the rigorous analysis of the collected data, this study concludes that brain-drain is not a peripheral issue but a full-blown systemic crisis within the public sector. The high mean intention score, coupled with the fact that the majority of respondents were in the prime, high-mobility age bracket (25-45 years), presents an unambiguous threat to the human capital base required for national development. A central conclusion of this research is that while competitive compensation remains an essential foundational factor, it is insufficient on its own to anchor talent. The finding that Career Development is the most powerful predictor necessitates a paradigm shift in public sector human resource management. It concludes that skilled professionals are motivated more by the opportunity for meaningful advancement, skill utilization and a clear career trajectory than by financial incentives alone. The factor analysis and the regression results lead to the conclusive understanding that effective retention is multifaceted. No single intervention can suffice. A successful strategy must be integrated and simultaneous, addressing the foundational need for fair Compensation, the motivational need for Career

and Professional Development, and the environmental need for positive Working Conditions and a supportive Organizational Culture. The SEM results further conclude that these factors have a compound effect, working both directly and indirectly through the enhancement of overall Job Satisfaction.

Recommendations

Given that Career Development was the strongest predictor, it is recommended that all public sector institutions immediately develop and implement transparent, merit-based career progression frameworks. This should include clear criteria for promotions, defined job ladders, and mandatory mentorship programs. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) should be created for every professional, with regular reviews to track progress and address aspirations.

The abysmally low satisfaction with compensation ($M=2.34$) demands immediate action. It is recommended that a high-powered commission be constituted to review public sector remuneration with the goal of achieving competitive parity with the private sector and international benchmarks, particularly for high-risk sectors like healthcare and education. This review should consider not only base pay but also performance-based incentives and non-monetary benefits.

To address the deficits in Professional Development, a centralized academy should be established to provide continuous, targeted training and skills upgrades for public servants. This academy should partner with universities and professional bodies to offer certified courses, leadership training and sabbatical opportunities, directly linking completed training to career advancement possibilities.

The entire public sector HR architecture should be reformed from an administrative function to a strategic, evidence-based talent management system. This requires building capacity for HR analytics, using data to identify flight risks, and continuously evaluating the impact of retention policies. The validated instrument from this study can be deployed annually as a "retention health check."

Brain drain is a national security and development issue. Therefore, it is recommended that the findings of this study inform a comprehensive national strategy that aligns education policy, immigration policy, and public sector reform. This strategy should include diaspora engagement programs to leverage the skills of those who have already left and create pathways for their contribution to national development.

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