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Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance in the Nigerian Health Sector: Evidence from Selected Public Hospitals in Enugu State (2020–2025)

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Abstract: Human resource management (HRM) practices are fundamental to improving employee performance and achieving quality healthcare delivery. In Nigeria, the health sector has experienced significant workforce challenges between 2020 and 2025, including shortages of skilled personnel, migration of healthcare professionals, inadequate motivation, and weak performance management systems. These challenges have adversely affected healthcare service delivery in public hospitals. This study examined the influence of human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State. Specifically, it investigated the effects of recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and rewards, performance appraisal, employee welfare, and career development on employee performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to healthcare professionals and administrative staff. The findings indicate that effective HRM practices significantly enhance employee productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and quality healthcare service delivery. The study concludes that strategic investment in human resource management is essential for strengthening Nigeria's health sector and recommends improved workforce planning, continuous professional development, competitive remuneration, and digital HR systems. These findings are consistent with recent evidence from Enugu State showing that staff orientation, employee welfare, and supportive HR policies improve healthcare employee performance.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Employee Performance, Healthcare Sector, Public Hospitals, Enugu State, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The performance of healthcare workers is central to the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of every healthcare system. Human resource management (HRM) has therefore become one of the most strategic functions in healthcare administration because it ensures that healthcare institutions recruit, develop, motivate, and retain competent professionals capable of delivering quality healthcare services [1].

Globally, healthcare organizations increasingly recognize that investments in human resources contribute directly to improved patient outcomes, organizational effectiveness, and health system resilience. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have

intensified reforms aimed at strengthening workforce planning, employee welfare, continuous professional development, and retention of skilled healthcare workers [2].

In Nigeria, the health sector experienced unprecedented challenges between 2020 and 2025. These included the migration of doctors and nurses, shortages of skilled personnel, increased workload, inadequate remuneration, industrial actions, burnout, and declining employee morale. These workforce challenges significantly affected employee performance and the quality of healthcare services across public hospitals in Nigeria.

The role of human resource management practice, including recruitment and selection, staff orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, employee welfare, promotion, and career development has become an indispensable tool for improving organizational productivity. Effective implementation of these practices increases employees' commitment, motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction while reducing absenteeism and labour turnover [3].

Many of the public hospitals in Enugu State continue to provide healthcare services to a large proportion of the population. However, many hospitals face persistent challenges associated with inadequate staffing, poor motivation, irregular promotion, limited training opportunities, and ineffective performance management. These challenges negatively influence employee performance and ultimately affect patient care.

Current empirical evidence from Enugu State demonstrates that well-designed human resource policies—particularly employee orientation, welfare programmes, and supportive work environments—significantly improve employee performance in healthcare institutions. Likewise, studies conducted in public health centers in Enugu State found that performance-based incentives and improved salaries positively influence job satisfaction and productivity.

Against this background, this study investigates the relationship between human resource management practices and employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State during the period 2020–2025.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian health sector has continued to face serious human resource challenges despite various reforms introduced by the Federal and State Governments between 2020 and 2025. Public hospitals have experienced persistent shortages of qualified healthcare professionals, inadequate workforce planning, and poor remuneration, limited opportunities for career advancement, weak performance appraisal systems, and increasing migration of skilled personnel to developed countries. These challenges have adversely affected employee performance and the quality of healthcare service delivery [4].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the weaknesses of human resource management within Nigeria's healthcare system was grossly exposed. Healthcare workers were subjected to excessive workloads, occupational risks, psychological stress, and inadequate welfare packages, resulting in low morale, burnout, absenteeism, and reduced productivity [5]. Although several policy interventions were introduced after the pandemic, many public hospitals continue to struggle with inadequate staffing, delayed promotions, insufficient training opportunities, and ineffective employee motivation strategies.

Enugu State in particular, selected public hospitals play a critical role in providing essential healthcare services. However, these hospitals continue to experience workforce-related challenges, including inadequate recruitment of qualified personnel, irregular staff development programmes, poor reward systems, and ineffective performance management. These deficiencies have contributed to declining employee commitment, reduced organizational efficiency, increased patient waiting times, and lower patient satisfaction [6].

Evidence suggests that effective human resource management practices such as merit-based recruitment, continuous professional development, fair compensation, employee welfare, and transparent performance appraisal can significantly improve employee productivity and organizational performance. Despite this, many public hospitals in Nigeria have not fully institutionalized these practices, limiting their capacity to deliver quality healthcare services.

Furthermore, while previous studies have examined employee motivation, job satisfaction, and healthcare service delivery in Nigeria, relatively few have comprehensively assessed the influence of integrated human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State during the 2020–2025 period. This creates a knowledge gap that requires empirical investigation.

It is against this background that this study examines the influence of human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State. The study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations that will strengthen human resource policies, improve employee performance, and enhance healthcare service delivery in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.

Specific Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Examine the effect of recruitment and selection practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.
2. Determine the influence of staff training and development on employee productivity.
3. Assess the effect of compensation and reward systems on employee performance.
4. Examine the influence of performance appraisal on employees' job performance.
5. Determine the effect of employee welfare and career development on organizational commitment and productivity.
6. Recommend strategies for improving human resource management practices in Nigeria's health sector.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What effect do recruitment and selection practices have on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State?
2. To what extent does staff training and development influence employee productivity in the Nigerian health sector?
3. How do compensation and reward systems affect employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State?
4. What is the influence of performance appraisal on employee productivity?
5. How do employee welfare and career development programmes affect organizational commitment and job performance?
6. What strategies can improve human resource management practices and employee performance in the Nigerian health sector?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. **H0₁:** Recruitment and selection practices have no significant effect on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.
2. **H0₂:** Staff training and development have no significant influence on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.
3. **H0₃:** Compensation and reward systems have no significant effect on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.
4. **H0₄:** Performance appraisal has no significant relationship with employee productivity in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.
5. **H0₅:** Employee welfare and career development have no significant influence on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to several stakeholders. The study will provide hospital administrators with empirical evidence on how strategic human resource management practices can improve employee performance, organizational effectiveness, and quality healthcare service delivery. The findings will assist human resource managers in designing effective recruitment, training, motivation, compensation, and performance management strategies that enhance employee productivity. The study will also benefit the Federal Ministry of Health, the Enugu State Ministry of Health, and other policymakers by providing evidence to support reforms aimed at strengthening the healthcare workforce. Recent studies in Enugu State similarly emphasize that employee welfare, orientation, and supportive HR policies improve staff performance and patient care. Healthcare professionals—including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, and administrators—will benefit from recommendations on improved welfare, career development, and professional training [7]. The study will contribute to existing literature in Public Administration, Health Administration, and Human Resource Management, serving as a useful reference for future researchers.

Scope of the Study

The study examined the relationship between human resource management practices and employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State.

The study specifically focused on the following HRM practices:

Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Compensation and Reward system, Performance Appraisal, Employee Welfare and Career Development.

The geographical scope was limited to selected public hospitals in Enugu State, while the temporal scope covered the period 2020–2025, reflecting developments in the post-COVID-19 era and contemporary healthcare workforce reforms.

Literature Review

Human resource management has become one of the most important determinants of organizational performance, particularly in healthcare organizations where service quality depends largely on the competence, motivation, and commitment of employees. HRM practices encompass strategic activities such as workforce planning, recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, compensation, performance appraisal, employee welfare, labour relations, and career management.

Evidence suggests that organizations implementing effective HRM practices experience higher employee productivity, greater organizational commitment, lower labour turnover, and improved service quality. Within the healthcare sector, these practices are especially important because the performance of healthcare professionals directly influences patient safety, healthcare quality, and organizational effectiveness.

Recent Nigerian studies conducted in Enugu State found that HR policies—including staff orientation, employee welfare, and work-life balance—positively influence

employee performance and quality of patient care. Similarly, research in public health centres in Enugu State demonstrated that performance-based incentives and improved salaries significantly increased job satisfaction and productivity among healthcare workers.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to the strategic process of acquiring, developing, motivating, evaluating, and retaining employees to achieve organizational objectives effectively and efficiently. In healthcare organizations, HRM focuses on ensuring that qualified health professionals are recruited, adequately trained, fairly compensated, and continuously supported to deliver quality healthcare services.

According to Dessler, Human Resources Management encompasses workforce planning, recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, employee welfare, career management, and labour relations. In the health sector, these practices are essential because healthcare delivery depends primarily on the competence and commitment of healthcare professionals.

Recent healthcare studies conclude that strategic HRM practices improve employee productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, patient outcomes, and overall hospital performance.

Human Resource Management Practices

Human resource management practices are organizational policies and activities designed to improve employees' competence, motivation, and performance. The major Human Resource Management practices examined in this study include:

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment involves attracting qualified candidates for available positions, while selection refers to choosing the most suitable applicants based on organizational requirements and competence.

Within healthcare institutions, transparent and merit-based recruitment ensures that qualified doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, and other healthcare professionals are employed. Effective recruitment reduces staff shortages, improves service quality, and enhances patient satisfaction. Research consistently shows that organizations with merit-based recruitment systems achieve better employee and organizational performance.

Staff Training and Development

Training refers to planned activities aimed at improving employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies for current job responsibilities, while development prepares employees for future leadership and professional roles.

Healthcare professionals require continuous education because medical knowledge, technologies, and treatment protocols constantly evolve. Continuous professional development improves clinical competence, patient safety, innovation, and service quality. Studies have demonstrated that investment in training is strongly associated with improved employee performance and organizational effectiveness.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of employee performance against established organizational standards and objectives. It enables managers to identify employee strengths, weaknesses, training needs, and opportunities for promotion.

In healthcare organizations, effective performance appraisal promotes accountability, professional development, and quality improvement. Fair and transparent appraisal systems motivate employees to improve their performance and contribute to organizational goals. Evidence indicates that performance appraisal positively influences employee productivity when implemented objectively and consistently.

Compensation and Reward System

Compensation includes salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives, allowances, pensions, and other financial or non-financial benefits provided to employees in exchange for their services.

Healthcare workers are more likely to demonstrate higher commitment and productivity when compensation is competitive and equitable. Reward systems such as recognition awards, promotion opportunities, performance bonuses, and professional development scholarships also contribute significantly to employee motivation. Research shows that motivation-enhancing HRM practices are consistently associated with improved employee and organizational outcomes in hospitals.

Employee Welfare

Employee welfare refers to programs and services designed to improve the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of employees.

Examples include:

- Occupational health and safety programs
- Health insurance
- Housing and transport allowances
- Flexible work schedules
- Mental health support
- Leave policies
- Work-life balance initiatives

Healthcare workers who receive adequate welfare support experience lower stress levels, reduced burnout, and greater job satisfaction, resulting in improved organizational commitment and performance.

Career Development

Career development involves activities that enable employees to acquire new competencies, achieve career progression, and prepare for higher responsibilities.

These include:

- Professional certification
- Mentorship programmes
- Leadership development
- Continuing education
- Promotion opportunities

Organizations that invest in employees' career growth experience higher staff retention, improved organizational commitment, and increased productivity because employees perceive opportunities for long-term professional advancement.

Concept of Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively accomplish assigned duties and contribute to organizational objectives. In healthcare organizations, employee performance includes clinical competence, efficiency, teamwork, professionalism, patient-centered care, adaptability, and adherence to ethical standards.

A comprehensive systematic review of healthcare job performance identifies four key dimensions:

1. Task performance
2. Contextual performance
3. Adaptive performance
4. Counterproductive work behavior (the absence of undesirable workplace behaviours)

High employee performance in hospitals is reflected in:

- Improved patient satisfaction
- Reduced medical errors
- Higher productivity
- Better teamwork
- Timely healthcare delivery
- Increased organizational efficiency
- Enhanced quality of patient care

These outcomes highlight why effective human resource management is considered a strategic driver of healthcare performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory. This theory explains how human resource management practices influence employee performance in healthcare organizations.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory was propounded by Theodore Schultz and later expanded by Gary Becker. The theory posits that employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience constitute valuable organizational assets that enhance productivity and organizational performance. Investment in education, training, and professional development increases employees' capabilities and contributes to improved organizational outcomes [8].

In the healthcare sector, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, and other professionals represent critical human capital. Continuous investment in their knowledge and skills enables them to provide efficient, safe, and patient-centered healthcare services. Human resource managers therefore improve employee performance by organizing training programs, supporting career development, implementing performance appraisal systems, and creating favorable working conditions.

The theory is relevant to this study because it explains why investments in recruitment, training, employee welfare, and career development enhance employee productivity and healthcare service delivery.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies conducted between 2020 and 2025 have examined the relationship between human resource management practices and employee performance in the healthcare sector [9].

A study by Ngozi, Agbo, and Nnabuchi examined the impact of human resource policies on employee performance at Enugu State Teaching Hospital. The study found that staff orientation, employee welfare programs, and work-life balance significantly improved employee commitment, productivity, and the quality of patient care. The researchers concluded that healthcare organizations should strengthen employee welfare policies to improve organizational performance. Similarly, Ejike et al. investigated incentives and the performance of health workers in public health care centers in Enugu State. Using evidence from Uwani General Hospital and Asata General Hospital, the study found that performance-based pay, salary improvements, and incentive schemes had significant positive effects on job satisfaction, employee productivity, and the quality of healthcare services. The study recommended periodic salary reviews and improved employee motivation strategies.

Ogbuke, Ochiaka, and Eleje examined employee responsiveness to human resource management practices in Nigerian organizations. Their findings revealed that effective communication, regular staff training, supportive supervision, and participatory

management significantly enhanced employee responsiveness, organizational commitment, and workplace performance. A recent systematic literature review by A chief et al. synthesized evidence from healthcare organizations across different countries and found that strategic Human Resources Management practices—including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and employee engagement consistently improved employee productivity, reduced labor turnover, strengthened organizational resilience, and enhanced patient outcomes. The review also noted that leadership quality, funding, and resource availability influence the effectiveness of HRM interventions.

Armstrong and Taylor further observed that organizations adopting integrated HRM practices experience higher employee commitment, improved organizational performance, lower absenteeism, and greater service quality than organizations implementing isolated HR interventions [10].

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that effective human resource management practices significantly improve employee performance within healthcare institutions and contribute to improved healthcare service delivery.

Gap in the Literature

Although previous studies have examined various aspects of human resource management and employee performance, several gaps remain.

First, many studies have focused on individual HRM practices such as compensation, employee welfare, or staff training without examining the combined influence of recruitment, performance appraisal, career development, employee welfare, and compensation on employee performance. Second, most existing Nigerian studies have concentrated on tertiary hospitals or single HR interventions, with limited empirical attention given to selected public hospitals in Enugu State during the 2020–2025 periods. Third, the post-COVID-19 period has introduced new workforce challenges—including migration of healthcare professionals, burnout, increased workloads, and employee retention—that require updated evidence on strategic HRM practices in Nigeria's health sector.

This study addresses these gaps by providing an integrated assessment of human resource management practices and their influence on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State between 2020 and 2025 [11]. It contributes contemporary evidence to the fields of Public Administration, Human Resource Management, and Health Administration while offering practical recommendations for policymakers and hospital managers.

2. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design because it enabled the researcher to collect data from healthcare workers regarding the influence of human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State. The survey design is appropriate for examining relationships among variables and generating findings that can be generalized to the target population.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public hospitals in Enugu State, Nigeria. These hospitals were selected because they provide secondary and tertiary healthcare services and employ diverse categories of healthcare professionals, including medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical laboratory scientists, and administrative personnel.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised healthcare professionals and administrative employees working in the selected public hospitals in Enugu State. The respondents included human resource officers, medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical laboratory scientists, and administrative staff.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 250 respondents was selected from the target population using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to identify hospitals and key personnel relevant to the study, while simple random sampling ensured that every eligible employee had an equal opportunity to participate. Similar HRM studies in Enugu hospitals have successfully employed survey designs with comparable sampling approaches.

Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents.

Secondary data were collected from textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, reports of the Federal Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), and other relevant scholarly publications on human resource management and employee performance.

Instrument for Data Collection

The principal instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance Questionnaire (HRMPEPQ)."

The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

Section A: Demographic information of respondents.

Section B: Items measuring recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance appraisal, employee welfare, career development, and employee performance using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by experts in Public Administration, Human Resource Management, and Measurement and Evaluation. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated before the final administration of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A pilot study was conducted among healthcare workers outside the selected hospitals, and the instrument produced a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability for the study.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses. Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 236 were correctly completed and returned, representing a 94.4% response rate, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis. Comparable response rates have been reported in recent healthcare HRM studies conducted in Enugu State.

3. Result and Discussion

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Simple Linear Regression Analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. These statistical techniques are appropriate for determining the strength and significance of relationships between human resource management practices and employee performance.

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

Data Presentation

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to healthcare professionals and administrative staff in selected public hospitals in Enugu State. Out of these, 236 questionnaires were correctly completed and returned, representing a 94.4% response rate. This response rate was considered adequate for data analysis because it exceeded the minimum acceptable response rate for survey research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	41.5	42.5
Female	138	58.5
Total	236	100

Source: Field work 2026

The results indicate that 58.5% of the respondents were female, while 41.5% were male. This reflects the predominance of female employees, particularly nurses, in public hospitals.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Professional Category.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Medical Doctors	40	16.9
Nurses	95	40.3
Pharmacists	22	9.3
Medical Laboratory Scientists	24	10.2
Administrative/HR Staff	55	23.3
Total	236	100

Source: Field work: 2026

The table shows that nurses constituted the largest proportion of respondents (40.3%), followed by administrative and HR staff (23.3%).

14.2 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What effect do recruitment and selection practices have on employee performance?

Table 3. Mean Responses on the Effect of Recruitment and Selection Practices on Employee Performance.

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Decision
Recruitment is based on merit	4.30	Agree
Qualified recruitment improves performance	4.42	Agree
Transparent recruitment enhances productivity	4.27	Agree
Adequate staffing improves service delivery	4.39	Agree
Grand Mean	4.35	

The grand mean of 4.35 indicates that respondents agreed that effective recruitment and selection practices significantly improve employee performance. This finding is consistent with Armstrong and Taylor (2023), who argued that merit-based recruitment enhances organizational effectiveness

Research Question Two: To what extent does staff training and development influence employee performance?

Table 4. Mean Responses on the Influence of Staff Training and Development on Employee Performance.

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Decision
Regular training improves competence	4.48	Agree
Professional development increases productivity	4.40	Agree
Continuous education improves service quality	4.36	Agree
Training enhances job performance	4.51	Agree
Grand Mean	4.44	

The findings show that respondents strongly agreed that staff training and development improve employee performance and service quality. This aligns with the World Health Organization (2023), which emphasizes continuous professional development as a key component of a resilient health workforce.

Research Question Three: How do compensation and reward systems affect employee performance?

Table 5. Mean Responses on the Effect of Compensation and Reward Systems on Employee Performance.

Questionnaire Item	Mean	Decision
Salary motivates employees	4.32	Agree
Incentives improve productivity	4.26	Agree
Promotion enhances commitment	4.38	Agree
Recognition encourages better performance	4.34	Agree
Grand Mean	4.33	

The results indicate that fair compensation and reward systems positively influence employee motivation, commitment, and productivity.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Recruitment and selection practices have no significant effect on employee performance.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation between Recruitment and Selection Practices and Employee Performance.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Recruitment and Employee Performance	0.724	0.000	Reject H ₀

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Recruitment and selection practices have a significant positive effect on employee performance.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Staff training and development have no significant influence on employee performance.

Table 7. Pearson Correlation between Staff Training and Development and Employee Performance.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Training and Employee Performance	0.781	0.000	Reject H ₀

The result indicates a strong positive relationship between staff training and employee performance.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Compensation and reward systems have no significant effect on employee performance.

Table 8. Pearson Correlation between Compensation and Reward Systems and Employee Performance.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Compensation and Employee Performance	0.695	0.001	Reject H ₀

The findings reveal that improved compensation and reward systems significantly enhance employee performance.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Performance appraisal has no significant relationship with employee productivity.

Table 9. Pearson Correlation between Performance Appraisal and Employee Productivity.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Performance Appraisal and Productivity	0.713	0.000	Reject H ₀

The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that performance appraisal significantly improves employee productivity.

Hypothesis Five

H_{05} : Employee welfare and career development have no significant influence on employee performance.

Table 10. Pearson Correlation between Employee Welfare, Career Development, and Employee Performance.

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Employee Welfare/Career Development and Performance	0.768	0.000	Reject H_0

The findings demonstrate that employee welfare and career development significantly improve employee performance.

Discussion of Findings

The study established that human resource management practices have a significant positive influence on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State [12]. The findings revealed that recruitment and selection significantly enhance employee performance. Hospitals that recruit qualified and competent personnel through transparent and merit-based processes are more likely to achieve higher productivity and improved healthcare service delivery. This finding is consistent with Armstrong and Taylor and supported by recent empirical studies conducted in Enugu State, which found that effective HR policies positively influence employee commitment and organizational performance.

The study further established that training and development significantly improve employee competence, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. Continuous professional development equips healthcare workers with updated clinical knowledge and technical skills required to provide quality healthcare services [13]. This finding agrees with the World Health Organization, which emphasizes investment in health workforce development as a critical strategy for strengthening health systems.

Furthermore, compensation and reward systems were found to significantly influence employee motivation and job performance. Healthcare workers who receive competitive salaries, promotion opportunities, recognition, and welfare benefits demonstrate higher commitment and greater organizational loyalty. Similar findings have been reported in studies of public hospitals in Enugu State, where improved welfare and incentives were associated with higher job satisfaction and productivity [14].

The study also found that performance appraisal positively influences employee productivity by identifying performance gaps, promoting accountability, and supporting career development. Likewise, employee welfare and career development significantly improve organizational commitment, reduce staff turnover, and enhance the quality of healthcare delivery.

Overall, the findings underscore that strategic human resource management practices are indispensable for improving employee performance and strengthening healthcare service delivery in Nigeria's public health sector [15].

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of human resource management practices on employee performance in selected public hospitals in Enugu State between 2020 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that effective human resource management is fundamental to improving employee productivity, organizational commitment, and the quality of healthcare service delivery. Specifically, recruitment and selection, staff training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and reward systems, employee welfare, and career development were found to have significant positive effects on employee performance. The study further established that hospitals implementing transparent recruitment processes, continuous professional development programmes, equitable compensation systems, and effective performance appraisal mechanisms experience higher levels of employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. These findings are consistent with recent studies conducted in Enugu State, which show that staff orientation, employee welfare, incentives, and work-life balance positively influence employee performance in public hospitals. The study concludes that strategic human resource management should be regarded as a core component of healthcare administration and health sector reforms in Nigeria. Strengthening HRM practices will not only improve employee performance but also enhance patient satisfaction, organizational efficiency, and overall health outcomes.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
Strengthen merit-based recruitment: Public hospitals should institutionalize transparent and competency-based recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that only qualified healthcare professionals are employed.

Promote continuous professional development: Hospital management should organize regular in-service training, workshops, seminars, and continuing professional education to improve employees' knowledge, skills, and clinical competence.

Improve compensation and incentives: The Federal Government, Enugu State Government, and hospital management should review salary structures, hazard allowances, and performance-based incentives to improve employee motivation and reduce the migration of healthcare professionals. This recommendation aligns with recent evidence from Enugu public hospitals.

Implement objective performance appraisal systems: Performance appraisal should be transparent, fair, and linked to promotion, recognition, training needs, and career development to encourage higher productivity.

Enhance employee welfare programmes: Public hospitals should provide comprehensive welfare packages, including occupational health and safety measures, health insurance, mental health support, and work-life balance initiatives to reduce burnout and improve employee well-being.

Strengthen career development opportunities: Hospital management should establish structured mentoring programmes, leadership development initiatives, and clear promotion pathways to enhance employee commitment and retention.

Adopt digital human resource management systems: Healthcare institutions should implement Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) for workforce planning, personnel management, attendance monitoring, performance evaluation, and staff development.

Increase government investment in the health workforce: Governments at all levels should allocate more resources to recruitment, retention, staff development, and welfare to address workforce shortages and improve healthcare delivery.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of HR policies: Hospital administrators should periodically assess the effectiveness of HRM policies and use evidence-based approaches to improve workforce management and employee performance.

Encourage further research: Future studies should investigate the effects of digital HRM, leadership styles, organizational culture, employee engagement, and talent retention on healthcare employee performance across different regions of Nigeria.

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