

Effects of Current Talent Management Strategies on Organisational Sustainability of the Free State Department of Health

Teboho Mkhuma¹, Wilfred Isioma Ukpere²

^{1,2}Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management,
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the effects of talent management strategies on organisational sustainability of the Free State Department of Health, using Tokollo and Mafube hospitals as cases. The study reveals that current talent management strategies have negatively impacted employment relations, leading to unfair labour practices, job dissatisfaction, and workplace conflicts. Furthermore, ineffective talent management strategies have compromised organisational sustainability, resulting in poor service delivery, poor working conditions, and skills shortages. The study recommends consistent application of talent management strategies, enhanced employee retention policies, prioritizing employee well-being, and ensuring just and open recruitment and selection processes.

Keywords: Talent management, Organisational sustainability, employment relations.

1. Introduction

Due to the scarcity of competent personnel, talent management has emerged as a crucial aspect for organisational performance and a top priority for many businesses (Anlesinya et al., 2019). However, implementing and evaluating talent management strategies within organisational contexts remains poorly understood (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Research on talent management's effectiveness in the public sector is limited, with most studies focusing on the private sector or relying on reports (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). Skills shortages and complex dynamics, influenced by national and regional factors, hinder talent management in the health sector (Khilji et al., 2015; King & Vaiman, 2019). Public sector research in Bahrain demonstrates that effective talent management is

often undeveloped, poorly administered, ad hoc, fragmented, and reactive, underlining the essential role and the obstacles that supervisors face when implementing talent management (Culié et al., 2014; Kravariti et al., 2022). Additionally, various variables such as the level of demand, skills shortages, geographical migration of health specialists, the diversity of health care service providers, and unfavourable external forces, all impede talent management in the health sector (Al Mannai et al., 2018). Moreover, Gomathy et al. (2022) emphasise that effective talent employment requires businesses to identify, develop, and retain top performers.

Talent management strategies should be developed and integrated into the organisation's overall strategy, as competitive advantage is imperative (Muthuku, 2020). Sepahvand and Khodashahri (2021) state that attraction and retention of skilled, committed, and motivated employees is the sole responsibility of human resource management. Most organisations face challenges of attraction and retention owing to skills shortages, reduced economic activity and high employee turnover, which have so far presented human resource departments with an opportunity to take centre stage in organisational competitiveness (Mefi & Asoba, 2020; Sepahvand & Khodashahri, 2021). As a key pillar of societal well-being and economic sustainability, the healthcare sector's stability is paramount, and its potential collapse could unleash profound, detrimental impacts on the broader economic and social landscape. Therefore, this article aimed to address these gaps by establishing how the department's talent management strategies affect organisational sustainability.

1.1 Problem Statement

The 2021 Public Service Commission provides a disturbing picture of the state of the South African public health sector in relation to talent retention. According to the report, the provincial health department in the Free State has the following challenges: a shortage of professionals; nurses are inundated with work, which impacts the quality of service- delivery; and the labour turnover rate of young professionals is high at Tokollo and Mafube Hospitals. The problem statement prompted the formulation of the following research question.

Research Question

- How have the talent management strategies in the department affected organisational sustainability?

Research Objective

- To establish how the department's talent management strategies affect organisational sustainability.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Human Resource Policies

Chapter 2, Section 5 of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, highlights that “every employer must take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice” (Department of Labour, 1998: 14). The ability to deliver and implement effective human resource management policies rests with an organisation’s human resource departments (Saeed et al., 2019). Supervisors play a critical role to ensure that HRM policies are implemented effectively (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020; Kravariti et al., 2022). However, in their study, Kravariti et al. (2022) found that organisations that fully support talent management initiatives with well-established human resource policies, render the contributions of supervisors less significant. Similarly, Noranee et al. (2021) discovered that a negative, significant and moderate relationship exists between supervisory support and talent retention.

However, more studies on talent management policies should be conducted in every sector to ensure organisational sustainability (Ohunakin et al., 2020). Lockwood (2003) argues that employees around the world seek work-life balance. Effective implementation of work-life balance policies can result in a mutually beneficial situation for both employees and the organisation, because it will increase the organisation’s productivity overall, whilst reducing absenteeism, and employees will be more committed and motivated (Lockwood, 2003; Nasir & Mahmood, 2018).

2.2. Recruitment and selection

A recruitment process involves a series of actions intended to entice possible employees who may possess the skills and talents that are required for duties to be performed, and who are possibly eager to help the organisation accomplish its objectives (Kumar & Gupta, 2014). Selection encompasses identifying people who, in the context of an organisation, are most suited for certain occupations while taking into consideration individual variations, job needs, and the internal and external surroundings of the organisation (Yaseen, 2015). According to the Public Service Commission (2009), the process of recruitment and selection involves many stages and actions for which certain key individuals should assume responsibility and, which must be completed within specific timeframes. Section 11 of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994, as amended, mandates that employee appointments, transfers, and promotions of employees should be assessed based on skills, training, competence, and knowledge (Republic of South Africa, 1994). According to Nguyen (2020), recruitment practices should be more focused if organisations want to

attract the best talents. Cloutier et al. (2015) agree that employing best talent, based on knowledge and competence, is critical for talent retention.

Furthermore, the Public Service Commission also acknowledges that recruitment and selection is an important aspect of the talent management process. Hence, when organisations hire best talent, as well as train them properly and treat them fairly, they tend to be more productive and committed (Public Service Commission, 2015). Ismail and Warrak (2019) claim that recruitment and selection impacts talent retention positively and significantly. Transformational leadership, according to Mangisa et al. (2015), plays a crucial role in facilitating the connection between talent acquisition and retention. According to the Public Service Commission (2015), the key to organisational sustainability is placing the right personnel in the right positions at the right time. Botha (2017) emphasises that, given that values are the primary motivators of human behaviour, recruitment and selection procedures must be managed in a way that ensures that the individuals selected to fill open jobs share the same values with the organisation. Additionally, an important policy within human resource departments is a recruitment and selection policy. According to Erasmus et al. (2019), this policy must be clear. Furthermore, Botha et al. (2017) advise that a recruitment and selection policy must include legal guidelines to ensure fair treatment of employees, and specify vacancy filling timelines, recruitment methods, and department responsibility for recruitment and selection.

2.3 Training and development

Talent development is key for the development of human capital needed for organisational sustainability (Al Mannai et al., 2018). Organisations that can create training and development opportunities for their employees tend to successfully attract, motivate, and retain their best talents. Nguyen (2020) re-emphasises this view, stating that it is every employee's desire to improve and develop themselves. The author further asserts that organisations that offer training and development opportunities can retain their best talents simply because employees feel recognised and are able to gain knowledge, skills and abilities, which can improve organisational sustainability. However, Noranee et al. (2021) found in their study that training and development affects employee retention negatively and maintained that their study is strongly supported by Chris-madu's (2020) study, which revealed that without good compensation, investing in training and development may not be effective to attain high retention rates amongst employees. Similarly, Omoikhodu (2017) discovered that training and development impacted talent retention insignificantly.

However, training and development remains an effective intervention aimed at enhancing teamwork and performance (Ansari & Bijalwan, 2017). This talent management strategy motivates employees to remain devoted. Therefore, organisations should invest in it (Cloutier et al., 2015). As stated earlier, according to Dhanpat et al. (2018), development and training have a favourable psychological impact, and can lead to employees remaining committed to the organisation. The said authors' findings align with those of Ohunakin et al. (2020), who postulate that training and development influence employee dedication and job performance positively and significantly. Through consistent support for career development, organisations are able to gain employees' full attention and positive behaviour (Ohunakin et al., 2020). According to Boatman (2022) and Kumari (2023), reskilling and upskilling existing employees is an economical way to find the best talent for upcoming operational requirements. The said authors further argue that with access to internal opportunities, employees are matched to projects from which they can gain practical experience and develop new skills.

2.4 Working Conditions

Working conditions are defined as conditions in which employees perform their duties, which include factors like safety, equipment, disciplinary procedures, and communications, amongst others (Muleya et al., 2016). Human resource management should prioritise the creation of good working conditions and create an interesting climate for employees to be motivated (Papa et al., 2017). In their study, Kundu and Lata (2017) found that a harmonious working environment and perceived organisational support positively impact talent retention. Similarly, Naz et al. (2020) discovered that a healthy working environment impacts talent retention positively and deduces that a strong correlation exists between workplace conditions and talent retention, which protects employees from stress and burnout owing to the support that they receive from supervisors and co-workers. However, Noranee et al. (2021) found that work environment has no impact on talent retention.

2.5 Effective Talent Management and Harmonious Employment Relations

The goal of employment relations is to strike a fair and equitable balance between the employment relations parties' convergent and divergent interest (Nel et al., 2016). According to Bendix (2019), the study of relationships, work situations, and working people, as well as the difficulties and issues of new industrial and post-industrial society, as well as procedures, structures, institutions, and regulations unique to this relationship, is known as employment relations. Harmonious employment relations is critical for organisational success, prosperity and long-term viability, and also result in highly

devoted, motivated and loyal employees in organisations (Samwel, 2018).

Effective talent management in the organisation has enabled employees to boost their work ability to create quality and quantity in accordance with organisational objectives (Anwar, 2021). Furthermore, according to Samwel (2018), if there is a strained connection between employees and their employers, organisations cannot function better or accomplish their goals; hence, it is vital for managers to maintain harmonious employment relations with their workers. Top management's poor talent management skills could sabotage effective talent management implementation and result in negative outcomes at organisational and employee levels (Jyoti & Rani, 2014). Additionally, King and Vaiman (2019) identified three major talent management impediments, namely an organisational-level approach, an HR-centric approach, and a primarily intra-organisational focus, which limit cross-level strategic integration and hamper the significance of talent management as a basic corporate strategy. Guest (2017) states that, essentially, both employees' and employers' interests should be considered, which may be done by adopting a pluralist approach and framing it in the context of the employment relationship. Furthermore, Valizade et al. (2016) contend that favourable employment relations environments allow for the development of partnerships, resulting in profits for all concerned parties. Boxall (2013) suggests three mutuality dimensions in employment: capability match; commitment match; and contribution match. Capability matches balance employer needs with employees' desires, while commitment matches with job stability and fair treatment, and contribution matches satisfy both parties. Muthuku (2020) contends that it is crucial for stakeholders in an organisation to understand the value of human capital and to prioritise their care and welfare. The creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment is something that organisations can do to support the health and wellness of their employees.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theory of Motivation

Employee motivation plays a most important role in the dynamic, unpredictable, uncertain, complicated, and ambiguous global corporate environment and in workplaces, generally (Valk & Yousif, 2021). According to Werner (2017), both internal and external influences can impact motivation. Additionally, Werner (2017) points out that external influences are often things that are outside a person's control and include things like rewards and benefits, while internal forces are those inner motivators such as the desire to achieve, feelings of attainment, personal ideals, and wishes. Additionally, low levels of motivation at work can result in erratic or unethical

behaviour, which reduces service quality and speed, employee performance on the job, as well as withdrawal-induced behaviour such as employee turnover plans or actual turnover (Kong et al., 2018; Robbins et al., 2016). Moreover, Kong et al. (2018) mention that when staff are happy in their professions, they usually provide consumers with high-quality service. Additionally, satisfied workers are more productive, upbeat, and creative than dissatisfied ones (Kong et al., 2018). Werner (2017) reiterates this viewpoint when she argues that motivated individuals go beyond and above what is expected of them.

3.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

One of the most well-known content theories of work motivation is the two-factor theory of motivation, which was developed by Frederick Herzberg. According to Jaworski et al. (2018), the two-factor theory's fundamental component is the separation of motivators and hygiene factors into two distinct dimensions that have an impact on many facets of work satisfaction. To retain top talent and boost productivity, the employer must maintain high levels of employee satisfaction. Leaders and managers must be able to pinpoint the primary drivers of employee behaviour to comprehend how people behave at work, and in doing so will encourage their staff to take their jobs seriously and perform to a high standard, which will significantly influence the organisation's success (Valk & Yousif, 2021). Understanding what needs, drives, and incentives entail and how they relate to one another is essential to comprehend the process of motivation (Luthans et al., 2015). According to Yadav (2022), policies, job security, working conditions, employee-supervisor relationship, and salary do not increase job satisfaction effectively.

In their study, Dhamija et al. (2019) found that while hygiene factors do not significantly impact employee satisfaction, their absence can lead to employee dissatisfaction. Additionally, the factors that contribute to job satisfaction differ from those that cause job dissatisfaction (Ann & Blum, 2020). According to Herzberg (2003), job discontent is the opposite of job dissatisfaction, just as no job satisfaction is the opposite of job contentment. Furthermore, Luthans et al. (2015) assert that Herzberg's two-factor theory sheds fresh light on the substance of work motivation, since management had previously focused mostly on hygiene elements and had often used greater pay, extra benefits, and a harmonious working environment as a remedy for morale issues. In addition, Luthans et al. (2015) found that Herzberg's research indicates that job satisfaction is linked to job content, while job dissatisfaction is linked to job context.

4. Research Methodology

In this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative research method, anchored on the interpretivist approach, namely the exploratory research design. The qualitative approach was chosen owing to its ability to provide new insight on the effectiveness of talent management strategies at the provincial department of health in the Free State. A qualitative study is a series of activities designed to maximise research integrity, whilst it employs non-numerical data, and its goal is to explore meaning and expose various realities (Saunders et al., 2007; Polit & Beck, 2010; Polit & Beck, 2014). Conversely, according to Saunders et al. (2007), exploratory research aims to seek new insight into a given phenomenon.

4.1. Research findings

Theme 1: Current Talent Management Strategies and Employment Relations

The theme current talent management strategies and employment relations emerged due to applicants' responses on the impact of the application of current talent management strategies on employment relations. The study revealed that at the Tokollo and Mafube hospitals, the application of current talent management strategies impacted employment relations negatively. Some of these impacts include unfair labour practices, job dissatisfaction, and workplace conflicts.

Sub-theme 1: Unfair Labour Practices

Some of the participants perceived that certain talent management strategies have led to unfair labour practices, resulting in demoralized and disgruntled staff members. From this perspective, **UN12** posited:

"...A nurse completed her specialty course and was called for an interview without her applying for the position, and she was ultimately not appointed, causing her to lodge a grievance as she does not understand why she was called for the interview if it was not for promotional purposes or talent management..."

Additionally, **NCLIN3** stated:

"...that is how talent is managed here. We know coworkers who have committed fraud, and some of them have even received promotions instead of facing disciplinary action. In our department, it is common for someone to commit fraud and succeed in their career..."

The current study's findings are congruent with Nel et al. (2016), who state that all employee relations processes, methods, and practices should be consistent, geared towards certain objectives, and serve as the foundation for achieving

cohesiveness and direction clarity. Similarly, Harris and Foster (2010) highlight the unique conflicts that public sector managers face when implementing talent management, particularly in relation to their adherence to diversity and equality policies. Correspondingly, Samwel (2018) found that if there is a strained relationship between employees and their employers, organisations cannot function better or accomplish their goals. Likewise, Jyoti and Rani (2014) found that top management's poor talent management skills could sabotage effective talent management implementation and result in negative outcomes at both organisational and employee levels.

Sub-theme 2: Job Dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction emerged as another sub-theme when participants provided insights around the application of current management strategies and employment relations. According to the participants, many of their staff members left the Free State Department of Health for the private sector, seeking higher earnings and job satisfaction. Moreover, inadequate personnel caused job dissatisfaction. In line with the above, **CLIN3** observed:

"...the situation here demoralizes ... we go an extra mile in terms of putting out extra work. Since, we are short staffed we have no choice, but to do it... it demoralizes even waking up in the morning sometimes to come to work knowing the situations you are going to come across at work. It is not the nicest thing..."

This study finding is in line with the study of Dixit and Arrawatia (2018), who observed that both talent management practices and their overall effectiveness significantly influenced job satisfaction. Moreover, effective talent management practices, including talent acquisition, staffing, financial rewards, and employee retention, according to Senona (2017), impacted the job satisfaction of public-school teachers significantly. However, in contrast, Yadav (2022) maintains that policies, job security, working conditions, employee-supervisor relationship, and salary do not increase job satisfaction effectively. Similarly, Ann and Burn (2020) advance that the elements that contribute to job satisfaction are different to those that cause job dissatisfaction.

Sub-theme 3: Workplace Conflicts

Another sub-theme, which emerged in this theme was workplace conflicts. The participants cited issues like worker shortages, poor management, and communication as key causes of organisational disharmony. In this regard, **UNI2** stated:

"...shortage of staff is a fundamental problem. It impacts staff morale; it affects service delivery; it also causes conflicts

between management and labour unions...”.

Additionally, **CLIN2** averred:

“...what I have witnessed is that our units operate in silos... there is also poor management and communication within our hospital units, which is hindering progress and causing conflicts...instead of continuing to think in silos, we ought to be aiming for teamwork...”.

The findings of the current study are consistent with the study of Hashemzaee and Ghasemi (2017), which found that effective conflict management impacts employee motivation positively, which in turn impacts employment relations positively. Similarly, Mathimaran and Kumar (2023) advance that effective talent management strategies can enhance communication, commitment, and support.

Theme 2: Current Talent Management Strategies and Organisational Sustainability

The main objective of this theme was to establish how the department’s talent management strategies affected organisational sustainability. Most of the participants acknowledged that ineffective talent management strategies had a direct impact on organisational sustainability at the Free State Department of Health, particularly at the Tokollo and Mafube hospitals. These impacts included poor service delivery, poor working conditions, and skills shortages.

Sub-theme 1: Poor Service Delivery

In terms of service delivery, the study found that ineffective talent management strategies led to high absenteeism, low staff morale, and staff shortages, which resulted in poor service delivery at Tokollo and Mafube hospitals. In line with this, **NCLIN1** submitted:

“... performance is poor... and it is giving us problems. Like, recently, we had AG in the house, but due to shortage of staff... we were not able to complete or reply to the outcomes of the Auditor General. As a consequence, it affects service delivery...”.

In support of **NCLIN1**’s statement, **MAN3** mentioned:

“... people are not providing quality service... it is like they are always angry, they do not care, and they are always absent...”.

The findings of the current study are congruent with the study of Govender et al. (2018), which found that increased workloads, reduced staff morale, and unfavourable attitudes from current employees were triggered by a shortage of human

resources such as clinicians, nurses, and allied health professionals, as well as support services people such as porters, drivers, cleaners, and security personnel. Similarly, Barati et al. (2016) also found that in most hospitals, the shortage of staff, particularly nurses and doctors, is a serious problem. As a result, managers end up with high workloads and little time to properly oversee all their duties. In addition, Hackett and Bycio (1996) found that high absenteeism at workplaces is a sign of discontentment with one's job, and sickness is often provided as the reason.

Sub-Theme 2: Poor Working Conditions

The findings of the current study further revealed that some working conditions at the Free State Department of Health are poor. These include a lack of consumable goods, equipment and the hospital infrastructure, in general, creating an environment, which is not conducive for productivity, whilst detrimental to the health of personnel, as well as patients that seek emergency healthcare. In line with the above, **UNI1** stated:

“The performance of the department is deteriorating...the tools that we are supposed to get from the department to perform our duties, they are always out of stock...sometimes we use our money to buy certain consumables...like gloves, photocopy paper, etc...”.

In concurrence, **NCLIN3** submitted:

“... I think high staff turnover, skills shortages, and lack of basic resources are the reflection of the status of our hospitals. Why do we have dirty facilities? Why do we have patients sleeping on the floors? Why do we have babies being put in boxes instead of cribs? Why are hospitals running out of gloves? Why are hospitals running out of paper? It is what we are sitting with. So, I do not think current talent management strategies are effective...”.

The findings of the current study are in line with the study of Naz et al. (2020), which found that a relationship exists between harmonious work environment and talent retention. Likewise, Kudu and Lata (2017) also found that a supportive working environment has a positive impact on talent retention. Contrary to the above, Govender et al. (2018) found that the regional hospitals' infrastructure in KZN, which consists primarily of buildings, is dated and often needs upkeep and renovation, and there were persistent shortages of necessary supplies such medication, bandages, gauze, syringes, pharmaceuticals, and linen at regional hospitals. In a similar vein, a study by Ghiasipour et al. (2017) found that a lack of funding led to unfavourable working conditions such as a lack of equipment and accessories.

Sub-Theme 3: Skills Shortages

The current study further revealed that skills shortages impacted organisational sustainability negatively. This finding is consistent with extant literature. For example, Ali and Elias (2023) discovered that the public sector has not anticipated or planned for future staff shortages sufficiently. Hence, Tamunomiebi and Okwakpam (2019) emphasise that it is crucial for every organisation to plan how to build the future structure of their organisation so that the appropriate people with the necessary talents are identified and appointed within the organisation, and this talent management goal is the cornerstone of long-term organisational success. Likewise, Collings and Mellahi (2009) and DiRomualdo et al. (2009) also stress the need to identify vital positions, which are crucial to guarantee that appropriate people are hired for the correct position that effectively match their skills. In line with this, **MAN2** stated:

“Yes, shortage of staff does affect us, because now all those people that I have said that they are leaving, they are leaving the department and they are scarce skills, like doctors and nurses who have specialities are leaving the department and we are left with people who have no skills that are needed by the department...”.

Similarly, **NCLIN3** submitted:

“... I think the fact that maybe we are always speaking in terms of who we employ in posts, and I do not know whether it is necessarily like only driven by diversity and equity... I think we often have people in reasonably higher posts that are not necessarily skilled enough... we should be aiming to develop a pocket of excellence...”.

5. Recommendations

The current study has charted some, though not exhaustive, recommendations to improve talent management at the provincial department of health in the Free State. These recommendations are proposed to provide a roadmap for policymakers, managers, and HR practitioners to navigate the complex terrain of talent management.

5.1 Commitment towards Consistent Application of Talent Management Strategies Is Imperative

There is a need for consistent application of talent management strategies at the provincial department of health in the Free State. This can be achieved by establishing clear policies and procedures, providing training and development opportunities, and ensuring that all employees have access to the same resources and support. Consistent application of

talent management strategies is key to building trust and ensuring that each worker feels empowered and appreciated to contribute to the organisation's success, while inconsistent application of talent management strategies can lead to perceptions of favouritism, unfairness, and discrimination. By consistently applying talent management strategies, the department of health in the Free State can promote a culture of fairness, transparency, and meritocracy. This can result in higher employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention, eventually leading to better outcomes for patients and the organisation.

5.2 An Enhanced Employee Retention Policy is Necessary

The Free State Department of Health should reassess and enhance its employee retention policy to address the challenges of retaining critical personnel, particularly in rural areas. In this case, the department should continue to offer competitive incentives such as free accommodation, bursaries, and a rural allowance to attract and retain top talent. Additionally, the department should focus on improving working conditions, offering opportunities for advancement and growth, and fostering a favourable work environment to encourage employees to stay. Furthermore, to enhance the effectiveness of the retention policy, the department should conduct regular needs assessments and exit interviews to understand the reasons for employee turnover. This will help to identify areas for improvement and inform the development of targeted retention strategies.

5.3 A Focus on Employee Well-Being is needed

There is an urgent need for the Free State Department of Health to prioritise employee well-being and recognise the value of work-life balance for employees to manage the demands of rural healthcare work. For example, high workloads, insufficient resources, and poor infrastructure have all been linked to stress, burnout, and labour turnover. For those reasons, the department should budget adequately for infrastructure maintenance. In addition, the department should initiate work-life balance initiatives and counselling services for their employees to improve their well-being. Again, the department should cultivate a more supportive culture by placing a higher priority on employee-wellness programmes. These initiatives will ensure that the department has access to high-level personnel, which will help to reduce fatigue and the department's absenteeism rate. A focus on employee well-being can help the department to attract top talent. Finally, by investing more in employee well-being, the department will have employees who are more engaged and productive, which will ultimately enhance the success and sustainability of their hospitals.

5.4 Just and Open Recruitment and Selection Processes are

Crucial

The Free State Department of Health should implement guidelines that guarantee justice and openness to resolve the perceived disparities and injustice in recruitment and selection processes. Accordingly, the department should ensure that recruitment and selection processes are fair, transparent, and bias-free. This can be achieved by using objective criteria that involve multiple stakeholders such as departmental and union representatives during recruitment and selection processes. Just and open recruitment and selection procedures will help to build trust and guarantee selection of the most qualified applicants for various roles. Unfair or biased recruitment and selection processes could lead to poor outcomes, including the selection of unqualified candidates, perpetuation of discrimination, and damage to the department's reputation. By ensuring that processes are fair and transparent, the Free State Department of Health hospitals can promote a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and meritocracy. This can enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention, thereby improving organisational performance and patient outcomes.

5.5 Integration of Cognitive Orientation and Cultural Influence on Talent Management Practices and Conflict Management is Imperative.

The Free State department of health should consider cultural differences in communication patterns to effectively manage talent. This can be achieved through cultural sensitivity training for recruiters, hiring managers, and employees. Cultural orientation programs can facilitate smooth onboarding and enhance teamwork and performance. Managers should use clear language, nonverbal cues, and adapt communication styles to suit different cultural contexts. Screening for cultural competence during recruitment, providing conflict resolution training, and addressing conflicts promptly can mitigate cultural misunderstandings. Similarly, considering cognitive orientation during hiring, offering training on cognitive diversity and communication, and adapting feedback to individual cognitive styles can enhance performance and retention. This holistic approach fosters a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and adaptability, driving business success.

5.6 Prioritisation of Autonomy in the Workplace Is Needed

To enhance employee motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction, the Free State department of health should prioritise autonomy in the workplace. This involves granting employees the freedom to make decisions, set goals, and manage their workload independently. Providing autonomy demonstrates trust in employees' capabilities, encouraging them to take ownership of their tasks and projects. Leaders should focus on setting clear objectives, providing necessary resources, and offering guidance while stepping back to allow employees to execute tasks in their unique way. By doing so,

the department can foster a culture of self-directed work, creativity, and innovation. Additionally, to effectively implement autonomy, the department can adopt several strategies. First, adopt flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible hours, to accommodate individual work styles. Second, empower employees to make decisions by delegating authority and providing necessary training. Third, provide regular feedback and coaching rather than micromanaging. Fourth, encourage self-directed learning and professional development. Finally, recognise and reward employees' achievements and contributions to reinforce autonomous behaviour. By embracing autonomy, the department can unlock employees' full potential, drive engagement, and achieve sustainable success. Regular evaluation and adjustments to autonomy-enhancing strategies will ensure their effectiveness in promoting a productive and fulfilling work environment.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the significance of effective talent management strategies in promoting organisational sustainability in the public health sector. The findings underscore the need for consistent application of talent management strategies, addressing employee well-being, and ensuring fair and transparent recruitment and selection processes. By implementing these recommendations, the Free State Department of Health can enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention, ultimately improving organisational performance and enhanced patient outcomes. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on talent management in the public health sector, providing valuable insights for policymakers, managers, and HR practitioners seeking to improve organisational sustainability.

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