



FACTORS IMPACTING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF NURSES IN NIGERIA: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *Institutional policies and patient characteristics continually change the roles of Nigerian nurses, thereby making recruitment and retention of Nigerian nurses difficult. With little data on recruitment, a systematic review showed that the characteristics of Nigerian nurses' retention are situational and interrelated, making them difficult to generalise. The study aims to discover Nigerian nurses' recruitment and retention factors. Data PubMed, CINAHL, Embase, Scopus (via Ovid Platform), and Web of Science were all searched for nursing literature. The search ended after 14 years (January 2010 – May 2024). Selected publications examined factors affecting Nigerian nurses' recruitment and retention. The systematic literature review employed the revised PRISMA flowchart to present reviewed papers. Studies were evaluated using the Centre for Evidence-Based Management (CEBMA) critical appraisal techniques; eight papers qualified. Individual and institutional factors affecting Nigerian nurses' retention were clustered around working situations and work-life balance. Many factors affect Nigerian nurses' retention, but recruitment factors are unknown, making the determination challenging. Problems with retention affect recruitment. According to major studies, retention rates differ by person and state in Nigeria, therefore further research is needed on recruitment criteria.*

KEYWORDS: Nigerian nurses, Recruitment, Retention, Factors.



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak has increased the number of Nigerian nurses fleeing for jobs abroad. Due to the challenges facing the health system in Nigeria, nurses have left the country (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014), resulting in many nursing positions in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and other countries being widely circulated on social media and through personal networks, especially during the pandemic. The large number of nurses departing is aggravating, creating a sensitive system thereby increasing the strain for the remaining nurses and leaving them weary, overwhelmed, and looking for a way out (Salami et al., 2016).

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) UK reported that 2,946 Nigeria-trained nurses were added to the UK's permanent register from March 2021 to March 2022 (NMC, 2022). This represents a 68% increase from March 2021, the largest number in 5 years. In March 2018, the UK permanent registration listed 2,796 Nigeria-trained nurses. The number rose by 8% to 3,021 in 2019. Since then, the number of nurses has climbed every other year, peaking at 7,256 in March 2022 (NMC, 2022). The rise in Nigeria's population has exacerbated nursing shortages (Adeloye et al., 2017).

Adejoro (2022) noted that the President of the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives worried about the five-year exodus of Nigeria-trained nurses. Many nurses have left Nigeria, and more are preparing to move to Canada, the UK, Australia, the Philippines, or Saudi Arabia. The exodus of nurses has hampered Nigeria's healthcare system, which already struggles to serve almost 200 million people (Adejoro, 2022). With a nurse-to-patient ratio of 1:1660, Nigeria's healthcare system is struggling. This imbalance strains the system's capacity and longevity (Adejoro, 2022).

Clemens (2007) found that 12% of Nigerian nurses migrated by 2000 to the United States. The Migration Policy Institute (2015) reports that Nigerians have the most African migrants in the U.S. Nigerian professionals, especially, healthcare workers, typically go to industrialised countries for better prospects (Adeloye et al., 2017).

Healthcare organisations worldwide benefit from Nigeria-trained nurses, yet Nigeria's acute nursing shortage makes universal health coverage difficult. A recently released Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria directive has alarmed Nigerian nurses (Ugwu, 2024). This circular changed certificate verification guidelines for nurses and midwives applying to international nursing regulatory organisations or councils. This change is due to the nursing shortage in the country (Ugwu, 2024).

Clinical experience and a thorough literature analysis have shown that nurses' recruitment and retention, especially in Nigeria, have remained unstable for over three decades (Okafor & Chimereze, 2020). Hence, the goal of this systematic review is to critically analyse the most reliable evidence regarding the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of nurses in Nigeria's healthcare sector.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The recruitment and retention of nurses in Nigeria are pressing concerns, influenced by various socio-economic, professional, and institutional factors. One theory that offers a holistic understanding of these factors is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which differentiates between motivators and hygiene factors in the workplace (Herzberg, 1966).

According to Herzberg's theory, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction stem from distinct factors. Factors like recognition, opportunities for growth, and the nature of the work itself have a significant impact on job satisfaction and can play a crucial role in attracting and retaining employees (Herzberg, 1966). In the Nigerian context, it is essential to prioritise professional development and acknowledge the valuable contributions made by nurses. Research has indicated that nurses tend to be more inclined to remain in their roles when they perceive distinct possibilities for career progression and when their efforts are recognised (Mbemba et al., 2016).

On the other hand, factors related to hygiene, like salary, working conditions, and job security, may not directly result in job satisfaction. However, if these factors are not properly taken care of, they can lead to dissatisfaction, as stated by Herzberg in 1966. In Nigeria, the challenges of low pay, unfavourable working conditions, and job uncertainty pose major obstacles to attracting and keeping nurses (Ahmat et al., 2022). As an example, it is worth noting that a significant number of Nigerian nurses choose to relocate to different countries in pursuit of improved compensation and working environments. This decision further contributes to the existing shortage of healthcare professionals within the local healthcare system (Dovlo, 2007).

Another theory is the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which offers valuable insights into the dynamics of relationships between nurses and the institutions they work for. Based on this theory, the connection between nurses and their employers is seen as transactional. Nurses anticipate receiving fair compensation, a supportive work environment, and opportunities for career growth in exchange for their services. When these expectations are not met, nurses may choose to move on, seeking better opportunities or experiencing burnout (Spence Laschinger et al., 2012).

By integrating various theoretical perspectives, this systematic review seeks to delve into the complex factors that impact the recruitment and retention of nurses in Nigeria. Through the identification of key motivators and hygiene factors as well as a deep understanding of social exchange dynamics, this review aims to offer evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice. These recommendations are intended to tackle the persistent challenges faced by the nursing workforce in Nigeria.



METHODOLOGY

Search Strategy

Extensive nursing literature searches were conducted using PubMed, CINAHL, Embase, Scopus (via Ovid Platform), and Web of Science. The vast journal coverage of electronic databases makes them popular in biomedical literature (Oermann et al., 2021). An extensive citation review and methodical strategy were employed to find researches that used specialised terms within the criteria.

As a solid foundation for qualitative or quantitative research, the Population, Exposure/Outcomes (PEO) framework guided the study question and search phrases (Munn et al., 2018). Table 1 lists the review question-related search phrases.

Table 1: Search Terms

Search Terms	
Population	Exposure/Outcome
Nigerian nurses OR nursing staff in Nigeria OR nursing students in Nigeria OR nursing personnel in Nigeria OR qualified nurses in Nigeria OR Nigerian-trained nurses OR Nigeria-trained nursing personnel OR nurses in Nigeria	factors OR determinants OR predictors affecting recruitment OR hiring OR employed OR intention to be employed AND retention OR intention to stay AND Nigeria

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For a complete and updated review, the search lasted 14 years (January 2010 - May 2024). The selected papers included peer-reviewed empirical research, quantitative, qualitative, and triangulated multi- and single-site investigations. The analysis included studies on Nigerian nurses' workforce recruitment and retention across nursing disciplines. All analytical studies were in English. International literature was also reviewed for pertinent information.

To reduce bias, perspective pieces, editorials, secondary research, commentaries, and charitable-funded studies were not considered in this study.

Study Selection, Data Extraction, and Quality Assessment

The titles and abstracts of the papers were carefully assessed and selected to determine which ones warranted a comprehensive review and should be included in the analysis. The papers chosen for this study are presented in the revised Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) flowchart, depicted in Figure 1, as explained by Moher et al. (2015). Figure 1 displays a staggering number of 10,805 publications that were discovered on the subject. The papers were downloaded to Zotero from each database for the purpose of record keeping and subsequent analysis.

Upon eliminating duplicate articles, a significant portion of the remaining papers failed to meet the inclusion criteria as per their titles. These papers did not comprehensively cover the Nigerian nursing workforce. There were a few opinion pieces or editorials. After a thorough analysis, it was found that 192 of the remaining papers did not meet the inclusion criteria. These papers either contained non-empirical research or were not relevant to the subject matter of this

review. After conducting a comprehensive evaluation, 20 papers that fulfilled the inclusion criteria were selected from all the papers evaluated for this study. However, a total of eight papers were subsequently selected for further analysis after careful consideration.

The process of extracting data required collecting information on the author, objectives, location, methodology, results, and any deviations from the quality assessment criteria (CEBMA, 2014). The Centre for Evidence-Based Management (CEBMA, 2014) was employed to conduct thorough evaluation of survey and qualitative research instruments, as shown in Table 2, to determine their effectiveness.

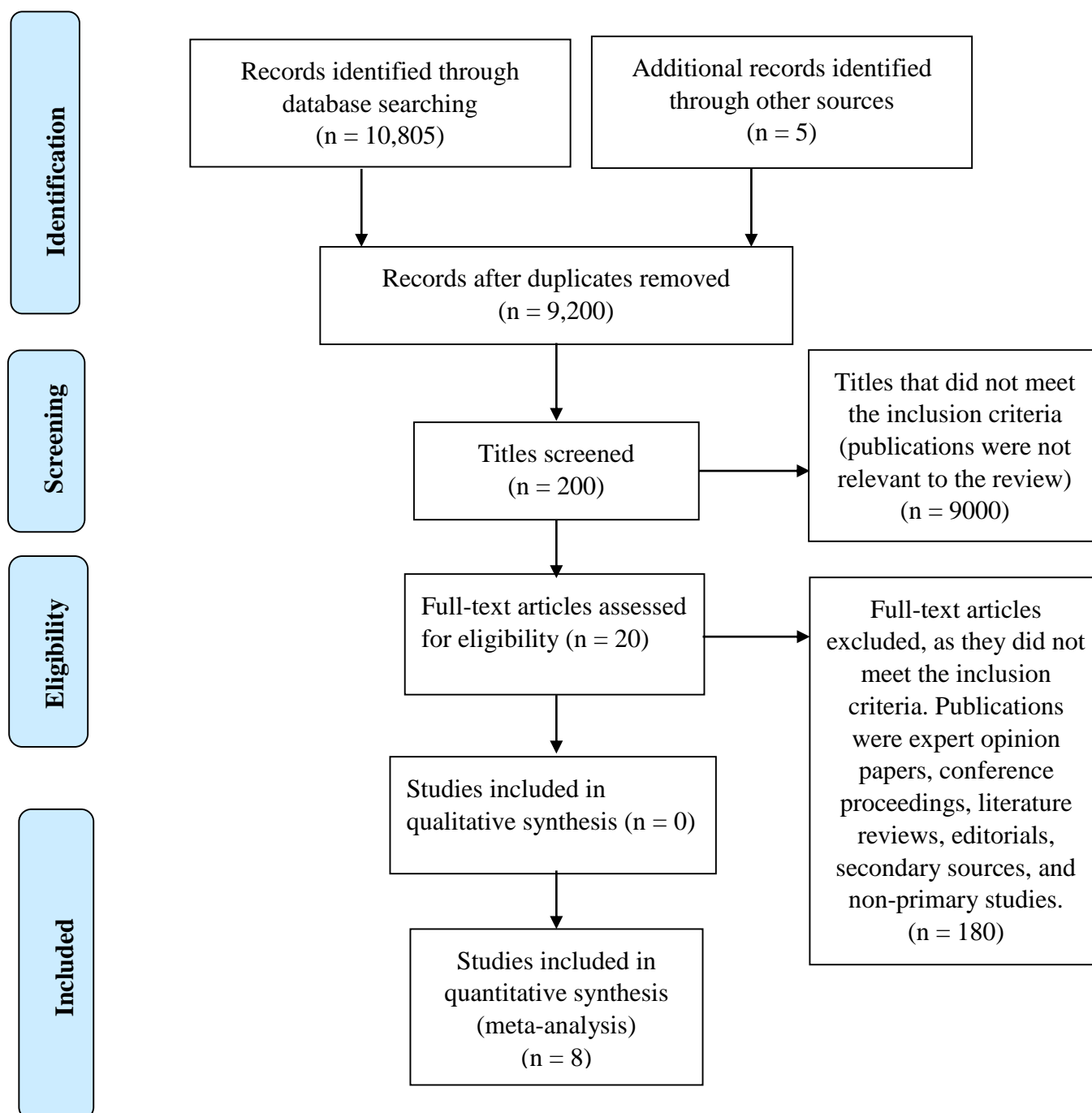


Figure 1: Paper selection process using the PRISMA flow diagram.

**Table 2: Characteristics of the studies**

Authors	Study Objective	Study Location	Study Design and Participants	Study Results	Exceptions in Relation to the Quality Appraisal
Makata et al. (2023)	To evaluate the likelihood of nurses in tertiary health institutions in Edo State leaving their jobs and the reliability of their categorical data.	Nigeria	The study was cross-sectional. Stratified simple random sample was used to recruit 326 Edo State tertiary health institution participants for proportionality.	The study found a strong association between marital status and intent to quit, with 26.9% of respondents indicating moderate intent. No significant link was identified between intent to resign with cadre, nursing qualification, or gender.	The study selected nurses with more than a year of experience, creating an uneven sample. Unjustified sample size.
Orukwou and Kue (2022)	The study investigated the factors that impacted nurses' satisfaction in tertiary health care centres in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	Nigeria	A quasi-empirical design with 205 samples was used.	In Port Harcourt tertiary health care centres, nurses' working conditions, pay/salary, professional esteem, burnout, and job satisfaction were strongly correlated. The authors found that nurses can improve their performance with proper measures.	Unjustified sample design and size.
Akinyemi et al. (2022)	This study investigated the correlation between job satisfaction, pay,	Nigeria	A cross-sectional survey sample of 220 nurses from six public hospitals in Ondo State,	Salary, job happiness, and nurses' emotional dedication were found to be correlated, highlighting their importance in staff	Self-administered questionnaire bias. Unjustified sample size.



	<p>affective commitment, and turnover intentions among Registered Nurses working in public hospitals in Ondo State, Nigeria.</p>		<p>Nigeria, were recruited.</p>	<p>retention. Salary rises improve job satisfaction for Nigerian nurses, defying common wisdom. Researchers showed that job satisfaction increased nurses' emotional commitment and chance of staying in their jobs.</p>	
<p>Akinwale and George (2020)</p>	<p>To examine how socio-political climate, administrative and managerial support, autonomy, responsibility, salary, supervision, working conditions, recognition, achievement, advancement and promotion affect job satisfaction among Lagos State government hospital nurses.</p>	<p>Nigeria</p>	<p>The longitudinal study used the Aiken and Patrician nursing work index scale, simple random sampling, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis with a sample size of 402.</p>	<p>This study indicated that many factors affect nurses' job happiness. Salary was the most important indicator, followed by advancement and promotion. The socio-political climate, administrative and managerial support, autonomy and responsibility, salary, supervision and working conditions, recognition and achievement, and advancement and promotion all improved nurses' job satisfaction, according to the study. The study indicated that hospital management should focus job satisfaction to lower nurses and healthcare workers'</p>	<p>The study only included nurses who had been employed for 9-12 months, excluding additional nurses who could have contributed to the research. Unjustified sample size.</p>



				turnover intentions. This can improve healthcare system efficiency and nurse mental and social well-being.	
Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014)	The study examined factors affecting Lagos State hospital nurses' recruitment and retention.	Nigeria	The authors used mixed methods to discover factors affecting Lagos State nurses' recruitment and retention. The study had 344 participants.	The study discovered many empty nursing leadership posts in Lagos State. In Lagos State, salary increases and benefits helped recruit and retain nurses. Lack of nursing leadership, employment insecurity, and a poor work environment hurt nurses' recruitment and retention.	The sample size was unjustified, and the authors' random sampling method may be biased. Questionnaire data collecting was biased.
Jegade et al. (2013)	The study examined the various elements that impacted the motivation and retention of primary healthcare workers in rural regions of Oyo State, Nigeria.	Nigeria	The research involved interviewing 433 health workers, and nurses. The authors analysed quantitative data using logistic regression and qualitative data using narrative analysis.	Financial and non-financial incentives motivated rural healthcare personnel; the authors found. Improving rural retention required addressing the unequal distribution of health facilities and workers.	The authors failed to address ethical considerations in their study. Study design and sample size were not fully explained by the authors.
Ayamolo et al. (2013)	The study examined community health nurses' work environments, job	Nigeria	A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted in public primary health care facilities in Ekiti State,	The study indicated that few nurses were satisfied with their jobs. Overall work atmosphere and nurse job satisfaction were	Self-administered questionnaire was biased. Unjustified sample size.



	satisfaction, and work environment elements that could improve job satisfaction.		Nigeria. Out of 216 nurses recruited, 161 responded. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics from a 58-item semi-structured questionnaire.	positively correlated. Modern equipment and fast wage payment boost job satisfaction.	
Ebuehi and Campbell (2011)	The study compared rural and urban Nigeria health workers' attraction and retention characteristics. Additionally, it identified what motivates people to work in rural areas.	Nigeria	The research used a cross-sectional survey to examine health professionals' current job experiences, satisfaction, and motivations and to determine what attracts and retains rural health workers. The whole Ogun State health workforce was considered to calculate the sample size, and multi-stage sampling was used to choose participants. Qualitative methods provided more information. The study had 188 participants.	The elements that attract and retain health workers in rural locations were also studied. The data showed that rural health workers (62.5%) worked in rural areas more than urban workers (16.5%). Both groups are driven by better working conditions, support systems, professional advancement opportunities, financial incentives, living conditions, and family assistance. Lack of job satisfaction due to poor infrastructure was the biggest hindrance to motivation. Poor professional advancement prospects dissatisfied rural health personnel. Due to unhappiness with their working	Self-administered questionnaire bias. Unjustified sample size.



				and living conditions and professional progression chances, many urban health workers want to quit.	
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ANALYSIS

A systematic review approach was utilised, which offers a comprehensive analysis of evidence on a particular topic. By consolidating the findings of multiple studies, this method assists in making informed clinical decisions and effectively allocating resources (Davies, 2019). This approach is highly regarded for its reliability in generating robust evidence, which aids in reducing bias when compared to alternative methods (Davies, 2019). Moreover, the systematic literature review is an incredibly valuable approach that enables the integration of diverse methodologies, including both experimental and non-experimental research (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). This research has the potential to significantly contribute to evidence-based practice in the nursing field (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Data extractions were conducted based on the reviewed topic and employed a Cochrane narrative synthesis as the method for data analysis. This method is well-known for its high level of reliability and systematic approach (Campbell et al., 2018; Milani et al., 2019).

RESULTS

The selected eight studies were conducted in Nigeria, encompassing a wide range of participants across all of them.

Synthesis of Results and Emergent Themes

The studies focused on investigating the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of nurses and other healthcare professionals in different states of Nigeria. I examined the emerging and recurring themes identified in the selected studies, both at the individual and institutional levels, which were subsequently selected for synthesis. In Figure 2, the items have been clustered based on their similarities, either as a main theme or a subtheme. A comprehensive analysis of each theme, including all relevant sub-themes was conducted.

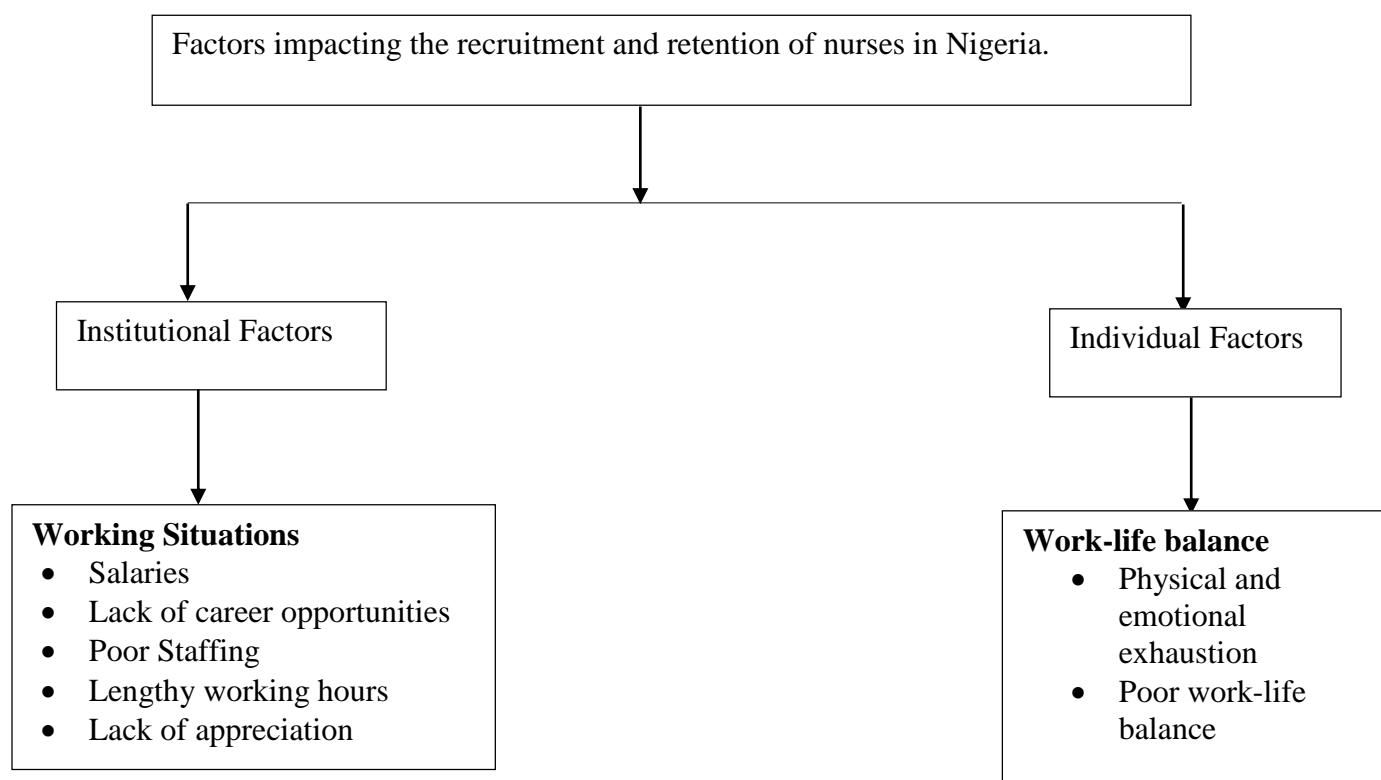


Figure 2: Themes and sub-themes from reviewed literature

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Working Situations

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of different work environments on nurses' retention and turnover rates in Nigeria. Several studies have identified multiple factors that have substantial impact on nurses' choices to remain in or depart from their roles (Makata et al., 2023; Orukwowa & Kue, 2022; Akinyemi et al., 2022; Akinwale & George, 2020; Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014; Jegede et al., 2013; Ayamolowo et al., 2013; Ebuehi & Campbell, 2011). Based on a study conducted by Ayamolowo et al. (2013), it was discovered that a significant portion of the nurses surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with their work environments, with 44% rating it as below average. On the other hand, 31% of the respondents reported having work environments that met high standards. In their study, Ayamolowo et al. (2013) thoroughly investigated five distinct aspects of the working situation.

Thus, in this study, various aspects related to professionalism, management practices, workplace support systems, career advancement opportunities, and health and safety in the workplace were examined. Many participants voiced their discontent with the lack of recognition in their field, and a significant number also described a highly unfavourable work environment. A limited number of participants expressed satisfaction with the work environment.



In a recent study conducted by Akinwale and George (2020), it was discovered that many participants expressed the belief that the satisfaction of nurses working in healthcare institutions in Nigeria is greatly impacted by professional recognition and management support. The authors also emphasised the impact of the socio-political climate on the work environment and how it can affect the satisfaction of nurses in their workplace. A study conducted by Akinyemi et al. (2022) indicated the importance of professional development, workplace support systems, and career development opportunities in recruiting and retaining nurses in healthcare institutions in Nigeria. The study revealed that participants held a firm conviction regarding the beneficial effects of work-life balance policies on their job retention. On the other hand, they also emphasised the substantial impact of insufficient support from the organisation on their motivation to explore better opportunities elsewhere. According to a study conducted by Jegede et al. (2013), a considerable number of participants voiced their discontent with the senior management practices in their workplaces. Based on the feedback from the participants, it seems that these practices are not effective in improving service delivery or providing sufficient support for nurses in the workplace.

It was noted by a considerable number of respondents that how secure they feel in a job can influence their decisions to accept a job offer (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014). Interestingly, a significant number of respondents expressed strong agreement with this idea (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014).

Salaries

The salaries of nurses have a substantial impact on their choices to continue working in healthcare institutions in Nigeria (Orukwowa & Kue, 2022). According to the study's findings, it has been noted that ensuring timely payment of salaries, providing salary increments, and offering comprehensive social benefits such as insurance and pension significantly enhance the overall job satisfaction of nurses working in Nigeria's tertiary healthcare institutions. It brought immense joy to nurses to be able to continue their work, knowing that their salaries were always paid on time and that there were clear pathways for career growth.

According to a study conducted by Ebuehi and Campbell (2011), specific financial incentives were identified as significant factors in the retention of healthcare workers in rural areas. These incentives encompassed salary and allowance increases, a guaranteed retirement scheme, and the opportunity to access affordable housing and vehicle loans. It is intriguing that this study, despite focusing on other healthcare workers, supports the conclusions reached by Jegede et al. (2013). Research findings indicate that financial incentives play a crucial role in influencing the intention of healthcare workers, such as nurses, to remain in their positions across different healthcare organisations in Nigeria.

However, a considerable number of participants in the study conducted by Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014) highlighted the significance of receiving consistent salary payments and occasional salary and allowance raises to maintain their positions. Several nurses argue that providing fair compensation, aligned with the socio-economic and political conditions in the Nigerian healthcare system, would not only incentivize them to remain in their roles but also bolster their dedication to delivering improved services.



Lack of Career Opportunities

According to a study conducted by Ayamolowo et al. (2013), a considerable number of participants mentioned that lack of opportunities for professional development played a role in their decision to look for employment elsewhere, possibly outside of Nigeria. In their study, Akinwale and George (2020) shed light on the significant boost in motivation experienced by nurses in Nigeria due to career advancement, particularly job promotion. Research findings indicated that motivation is a key factor in ensuring the delivery of high-quality service to patients and attendees of healthcare facilities in Nigeria. This is mainly because job promotion leads to increased salaries, allowances, and rewards, which are important considerations for Nigerian nurses to retain their positions. Furthermore, continuous engagement in professional development programmes is essential for ensuring the sustained success and effectiveness of nurses in Nigeria.

According to Akinyemi et al. (2022), the absence of career advancement programmes leaves nurses feeling dissatisfied, leading them to seek better job opportunities elsewhere that prioritise their professional growth. A recent study by Makata et al. (2023) shed light on the detrimental effects of limited career advancement opportunities on the work environment for nurses in Nigeria. The lack of growth prospects created a sense of uncertainty and fear among nurses, which made them consider leaving their current positions in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Efforts should be made by healthcare leaders to organise and provide funding for ongoing education to enhance the retention of nurses (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014). According to Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014), a considerable number of participants disagreed with the idea that their employers were making efforts to enhance nurse retention through conference fee reimbursement.

Poor Staffing

Based on a study conducted by Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014), it was found that a significant number of participants voiced their apprehension regarding the insufficient number of nurses in their healthcare facilities. The shortage has greatly affected their capacity to efficiently conduct their research. In their study, Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014) discovered that participants highlighted the detrimental effects of a low nurse to patient ratio on their capacity to deliver adequate care. These errors of omission were observed in their workplaces.

In addition, the findings of Jegede et al. (2013) discovered that inadequate staffing led to below-average healthcare services being provided in the specific local government area under examination. The authors argued that the underwhelming performances seen in different primary health care centres may be due to the lack of sufficient staff to provide adequate care to the population. Furthermore, it was observed by Ebuehi and Campbell (2011) that staff members were required to call upon their colleagues who were not on duty to help during extremely busy periods, as their healthcare facilities were experiencing a shortage of personnel.

Lack of Appreciation

As highlighted by Ebuehi and Campbell (2011), the acknowledgment and appreciation of the work performed by nurses and healthcare professionals have a significant impact on their job satisfaction and retention. On the other hand, not feeling valued or acknowledged can be disheartening and might prompt individuals to explore different options (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014). The recruitment and retention of nurses can be greatly influenced by the leadership of



health organisations. When leaders show sincere appreciation towards nurses, it greatly influences their capacity to provide excellent services to end users (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014). In addition, this recognition promotes a feeling of empowerment among nurses and enhances their commitment to remaining in their current roles for an extended period.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Work-Life Balance

Physical and Emotional Exhaustion

Oyetunde and Ayeni (2014) claimed that a significant number of respondents shared their perceptions that nurses face a demanding workload, leading to both physical and emotional exhaustion. It is evident from this study that the inadequate ratio of nurses-to-patients has a profound effect on the overall health of individuals, which is due to the exhaustion experienced by nurses. Additionally, nurses are facing immense challenges, leading to both physical and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, it is evident that the quality of care they can provide is being affected (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014). According to a study conducted on the work environment of nurses, a considerable number of respondents expressed their discontent with the quality of occupational health and safety measures in their workplaces (Ayamolowo et al., 2013).

In the same study, concerns were raised about the working conditions of nurses, particularly the inadequate and outdated equipment they must deal with. These circumstances may result in both physical and emotional fatigue, presenting ongoing challenges to their overall health and happiness. It was found that a significant number of nurses expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs, mainly because of the negative work atmosphere. This discontent arose from a sense of weariness and an imbalance between work and personal life due to the demands of their occupation. The work environment plays a crucial role in shaping the happiness and commitment of nurses, ultimately affecting the goals of healthcare institutions in Nigeria (Akinwale & George, 2020).

Poor Work-Life Balance

In research conducted by Akinyemi et al. (2022), it showed that implementing work-life balance policies has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of nurses in Nigeria. This, in turn, leads to their commitments to staying in their jobs and making valuable contributions to the provision of high-quality healthcare services for the populace in Nigeria.

Orukwoku and Kue (2022) also discovered in their study that the demanding workload experienced by nurses can have a negative impact on their job performances, leading to lack of motivation to stay in their current positions and explore other opportunities.

Moreover, this study revealed a significant link between positive social relationships and job satisfaction among nurses in tertiary healthcare facilities. There are several factors that may contribute to this phenomenon. One possible reason is the ample opportunities for social interaction with colleagues outside of work. Additionally, there are opportunities to engage professionally with individuals from other fields, which can be beneficial. Being a part of department and institutional committees allows for greater involvement and contribution.



Another factor is the chance to contribute to nursing research, which can be fulfilling. Lastly, the existence of a well-defined pathway for nurses to progress in hospital management is also a contributing factor.

A system that effectively balances the work and personal lives of nurses, in accordance with organisational policies, can greatly enhance their motivation to stay in their jobs. This, in turn, can result in higher retention rates within healthcare institutions in Nigeria (Oyetunde & Ayeni, 2014).

DISCUSSION

After conducting a thorough review of various literature sources, it has been discovered that a multitude of factors greatly influence the recruitment and retention of nurses in Nigeria. How these factors operate at both the individual and organisational levels have previously been discussed. It is important to highlight that the World Health Organisation (2020) has pointed out that nurse retention can be addressed through different methods. One possible solution is to address salary disparities and strive for equal pay. In addition, enhancing the working environment and offering growth opportunities can also play a role in retaining nurses. Finally, allowing nurses to fully leverage their scope of practice can be advantageous in this context.

Through extensive research, multiple studies have delved into the factors influencing nurses' departure from their positions, with a significant focus on the importance of job satisfaction. Various factors can impact the recruitment and retention of nurses, such as management style, feelings of isolation, stress, and burnout (Doering, 1990). Additional important factors to consider are nursing leadership, education and career progression, the work environment, staffing levels, professional concerns, workplace support, personal and demographic influences, and financial compensation (Marufu et al., 2021). When working in Public Health Agencies, certain factors hold significant sway. These include the flexibility of work schedule, autonomy in decision-making, the opportunity to innovate, and alignment with the organisation's mission (Yeager & Wisniewski, 2018).

The significance of salary, personal development, work atmosphere, and interaction with patients is also emphasised (Stolte & Myers, 1995). Within certain contexts, there is a focus on the importance of organisational and job-related factors such as decision-making opportunities, recognition, support, autonomy, and satisfaction (Cameron et al., 2004). Furthermore, it has been found that factors such as stress, economic considerations, alignment of values, and chances for altruism play crucial roles in the retention of nurses (Ellenbecker et al., 2008). Clearly, some of these factors are direct results of previous discussions. Considering contextual differences is crucial when evaluating these variables. The level of resilience of nurses can be influenced by the setting or context.

In Nigeria, there are various factors that influence the decision of nurses trained in the country to remain there. These factors cover a wide range of aspects, including salary and benefits, job stability, work atmosphere, professional growth opportunities, compensation packages, and relationships within the industry. In a recent publication by Silas et al. (2020), studies have indicated that the level of commitment exhibited by employees, particularly, affective and normative commitment, is a significant factor in determining their likelihoods to stay with an



organisation. Recent research has highlighted the significant impact of various factors on employee retention, including job satisfaction, pay, and affective commitment.

Research has demonstrated that these factors contribute significantly to higher retention rates. However, it has been discovered that performance appraisal can have a detrimental impact on employee retention (Isiramen, 2021). These findings underscore the significance of taking these factors into account when striving to enhance employee retention in organisations. Various factors, such as future job opportunities, the potential for travel, and the influence of parents, can all contribute to the decision of pursuing a career in nursing (Isiramen, 2021). Understanding the significance of meeting fundamental psychological needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness is crucial for cultivating career satisfaction and dedication. Onyishi (2019) has emphasised the significant impact of these factors on employee retention.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The insights derived from this systematic review have significant implications for both research and practice in addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining nurses in Nigeria.

Implications for Research:

- **Policy-Oriented Studies:** There is a need for further research focused on policy interventions that can mitigate the negative impact of poor remuneration and working conditions on nurses' retention. Studies should evaluate the effectiveness of different policy frameworks and incentive structures in various Nigerian states to provide data-driven recommendations for national policies.
- **Longitudinal Research:** Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to better understand how factors influencing recruitment and retention evolve over time. This approach can help identify long-term trends and the impact of specific interventions on nurses' retention rates.
- **Comparative Studies:** Comparative studies between different regions within Nigeria, as well as between Nigeria and other countries facing similar challenges, can provide a broader perspective on effective strategies. Such research can highlight best practices and innovative solutions that can be adapted to the Nigerian context.
- **Qualitative Research:** There is a need for more qualitative research to capture the life experiences of nurses. This approach can provide deeper insights into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that influence their career decisions, complementing quantitative findings.

Implications for Practice:

- **Enhanced Compensation Packages:** Healthcare institutions and policymakers must prioritise improving nurses' salaries and benefits to make the profession more financially attractive. Competitive compensation packages can significantly reduce the migration of nurses to other countries.



- **Improved Working Conditions:** Addressing issues related to inadequate infrastructure, heavy workloads, and job security is critical. Investments in healthcare facilities, staffing, and safety measures can enhance job satisfaction and retention.
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** Providing continuous education and career advancement opportunities is essential. Establishing clear career pathways and offering training programmes can motivate nurses to remain in the profession.
- **Recognition and Support Systems:** Developing a culture of recognition within healthcare institutions, where nurses' contributions are regularly acknowledged, can boost morale and retention. Additionally, implementing support systems such as mentorship programmes can help new nurses transition smoothly into their roles.
- **Local and International Collaboration:** Collaborative efforts between local healthcare institutions, government agencies, and international bodies can facilitate knowledge exchange and the implementation of best practices. Such partnerships can also support resource mobilisation for addressing systemic issues in the healthcare sector.

By integrating these research and practice implications, stakeholders can develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance the recruitment and retention of nurses in Nigeria, ultimately improving the quality of healthcare delivery.

LIMITATIONS

There were a few drawbacks linked to this review. Research on Nigerian nurses' recruitment and retention is currently limited and varied. In addition, there was a wide range of methods, instruments, and surveys, each with their own unique characteristics and included constructs or items.

In addition, it is difficult to ascertain that this research has included all relevant studies on the retention of Nigerian nurses, considering the various job descriptions. Nevertheless, a comprehensive review of citations and a snowball approach to uncover additional terms or potential papers were conducted. Furthermore, there was a noticeable variation in the quality of the reviewed papers. The reviewed papers lacked depth and failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding the retention of nurses in Nigeria. Moreover, they did not offer any strong potential solutions to address these problems. Consequently, these methodological challenges hindered the ability to draw definitive conclusions.

Ethical considerations were also considered in almost all studies, with only a few exceptions. It remains unclear whether the lack of mention of ethics approval indicates a disregard for the process by researchers or simply a failure to document it.

CONCLUSION

Many factors affect Nigerian nurses' retention, but recruitment factors are largely unknown, making it difficult to determine. Some retention issues also affect recruitment. According to



significant studies, retention rates depend on circumstances and vary by person and state in Nigeria.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Additional research on nurses' recruitment and retention in Nigeria can illuminate their issues. Qualitative research is needed to fully understand recruiting and retention factors. In contrast, a structured questionnaire may not provide enough information on individual and organisational influences.

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