



Addressing Brain Drain in the Health Sector towards Sustainable National Development in Nigeria: Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable National Development is significant towards attaining and maintaining a better quality of life for individuals in any nation from time to time. Over the years, Nigeria has struggled to create a favorable environment for retaining its human capital. The health sector is vital in sustaining national development by promoting healthy lives and well-being. In recent times, the health sector has been battling a high brain drain instigated by the movement of healthcare personnel out of the country for better opportunities that provide the quality of life they desire. This paper examines brain drain in the health sector and its effect on sustaining national development. It also examines the causes and consequences of brain drain in the health sector. The study adopted a systematic review of relevant literature on the various issues addressed in the research. The study revealed that brain drain in the health sector has resulted in the depletion of human capital, class division, large-scale emigrants, private investment and consumption, remittance relief, unemployment, and brain circulation. Also, brain drain in the health sector is caused by underfunding, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, poor motivation and remuneration of health workers, insecurity challenges, and political and bureaucratic corruption. Consequently, the study recommends that there should be adequate finance for residency training. The pay scale for resident doctors needs to be reviewed higher with sufficient incentives and medical apparatuses, and reinstatement of the Overseas Exchange Program to reduce the brain drain in the health sector of Nigeria.

Keywords: Brain drain, Sustainable National Development, Health sector, Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Every nation's decisive goal is to attain sustainable national development with focus on its human, social, economic and environmental factors. This describes the ability of a nation or country to achieve comprehensive improvements and maintenance in all aspects of its existence for a long time. The capacity of national systems and the social problems that humanity is facing are tied together by sustainable development. In today's knowledge-based economy, sustainable development has evolved into a term that cuts across all academic fields. It is related to having "omnipotent capacities" of providing answers to every issue facing society and man. To ensure the well-being of future generations, it advocates for peaceful coexistence and high standards of personal development among members of society (Onyenemezu & Okanezi 2013). Human capital constitutes a major determinant of national development and high productivity can be achieved through education and full health.

The health sector accounts for one of the primary and fastest-growing industries globally with a direct impact on the quality of life of citizens and contributes significantly to the economy. To satisfy the health needs of individuals and populations, the global healthcare sector is organized into many sub-sectors and relies on

interdisciplinary teams of qualified professionals, paraprofessionals, and healthcare leaders (Technofunc, 2012). However, the global healthcare sector has been put under severe tension due to social restrictions, increased patient burdens, poor health facility infrastructures, and shortages of medical equipment, medications, and diagnostics putting a tremendous amount of strain on healthcare leaders and professionals (WHO, 2022).

In the attainment of sustainable national development, health is a major contributor. Health is significant both as a goal in and of itself as a component of human well-being, which also involves material, psychological, social, cultural, educational, occupational, environmental, and political components, as well as personal security (Lawal 2016). Both benefiting from and contributing to the progress of our health. It is also a significant sign of what inclusive, egalitarian, rights-based, and people-centered development aims to accomplish. These well-being facets are linked and rely on one another. Investments in health, especially those that focus on preventing illness, boost a nation's economic output through their effects on skill acquisition and educational achievement, decent employment, and labor productivity, increased savings and investment, demographic transition, and effects on the environment (WHO 2013).

The 2030 Sustainable National Development agenda emphasized the role of environmental factors in health. According to a World Health Organization report, a healthy society can be achieved by preventing disease. This report state that 23% of all fatalities could be linked to environmental problems such as air pollution, inadequate sanitation, radiation exposure, and other environmental causes. (WHO, 2016). The report concluded that improved health indicators will result from progress on the SDGs that focus on environmental enhancements (Acharya et al 2018, WHO 2016).

The Nigerian economy's health sector offers basic health services to Nigerians wherever they may be located within Nigeria's territorial jurisdiction (Omoleke & Taleat 2018). The government of Nigeria plays a major role in supporting health. However, despite the recognition of the importance and significant support by the government to the health sector, Nigeria is severely underserved in the area of health care despite its key location in Africa. The healthcare sector has had several setbacks such as inadequate funding for the health sector, inadequate remuneration, outdated infrastructure, inadequate medical facilities, and brain drain (Omoleke & Taleat 2018, Welcome, 2011).

In spite of the support from government, the allocation for the health sector in Nigeria is minimal, accounting for about 16% of current health spending and less than 4% of the overall government budget in 2019. (WHO, 2019). In Nigeria, 76% of current healthcare costs are borne by private individuals, with the remaining 24% coming from the government and other external sources (WHO, 2019). Although the Nigerian government has proposed several reforms to address the wide range of problems with the healthcare system, there haven't been remarkable changes in the health sector (Anaemene, 2016).

Healthcare workers are the most valuable resource for health and the crucial role they play in society. These categories of people provide treatment and services to the sick and injured, either directly as a doctor or nurse or indirectly as an assistant, assistance, laboratory technician, or even as person who manages medical waste. Globally, a large number of the workforce are health workers, and approximately there are about 65 million health workers (WHO, 2022). One of the riskiest industries to work in is the healthcare sector as workers are often exposed to a wide range of health and safety risks as a result of their jobs. Health professionals are essential to increasing the population's access to high-quality healthcare. They offer fundamental services that support wellness, fight disease prevention, and provide primary health care to people, families, and communities (WHO 2022).

Health workers are prevented from performing their duties effectively because of an excessive workload, a lack of training and support, poor compensation, unfavorable working conditions, psychological stress, a lack of high-quality personal protective equipment (PPE), social exclusion/stigmatization, a lack of incentives, a lack of coordination, and improper management (Jaeger et al (2018), Razu et al (2021), Jaeger et al (2018)). Approximately 145 000 doctors are needed in Sub-Saharan Africa to care for the 821 million people living there, and a significant element in this shortage is the highly skilled medical professionals who leave the region (Okolo & Lawrence 2021).

Brain drain is the migration of highly skilled individuals from emerging nations to industrialized nations (Ogaboh et al., 2020). Health professionals, who make up barely 3% of the global workforce in a continent where 25% of the world's diseases are present, have been driven out of Africa as a result of the phenomenon known as brain drain (Dohlman et al., 2019). Nigerian professionals in a variety of fields—particularly those

in the health and education sectors—regularly depart the country for wealthier nations in pursuit of better opportunities. Industrialized nations like the USA, Canada, Dubai, China, and the UK frequently became recipients or destinations for registered health workers, undermining the effectiveness of the health and educational systems in developing nations (Andrew & Baomin, 2015). The movement of highly qualified workers from underdeveloped countries to industrialized countries is a necessary component of globalization and has both positive and negative effects (Terry & Zubair, 2017).

Recently, it was revealed that the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom employs no fewer than 5,405 Nigerian-trained physicians and nurses. Similarly, according to data given by the British government, Nigerian health professionals make up 4% of the 137,000 international employees representing 202 different nations who work alongside British doctors and nurses (Ajayi et al, 2022). Additionally, the Nigerian healthcare system is heavily taxed by the outflow of medical professionals from Africa, failing to fully meet constituents' healthcare demands. Achieving Nigeria's health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets could be hampered by the ongoing emigration of medical professionals and the resulting physician shortage in that country. These factors could also have negative impact on human capital development, health outcomes, and economic growth (Ikhide 2021).

Studies that have been conducted on the migration of healthcare professionals have highlighted "push" and "pull" elements as influences on decision-making (Hajian et al, 2020). According to Ogujiuba et al (2019), push factors are events that take place in a professional's home country that cause them to relocate. As opposed to "pull factors," which are unintentional and/or intentional steps taken by the recipient country's policies and activities to draw in health professionals. The pull factors include a lack of well-established professional options, subpar pay and working conditions, low job satisfaction, management flaws, civic unrest, and personal safety. The pull reasons include a rise in the need for health professionals in recipient nations (such as the requirement for care for elderly populations), financial incentives, chances for training and career growth, and better working conditions (Ogaboh et al., 2020)

Mohammad et al (2019) opined that lack of adequate financial benefits and rewards, poor career advancement, lack of continuous education, poor hospital infrastructure, resource inaccessibility, poor hospital administration, political issues, family issues, and lack of innovative training, and development are some of the elements that contribute to brain-drain. This was corroborated by young (2021) who stated that economic prospects, including access to better employment, improved living standards, housing, and healthcare, as well as conflict and instability in politics, are contributing factors to brain drain. Wilfred & Iheonu (2021) also stated that the lack of sufficient funding in the health sector is the top-most reason for brain drain.

It was revealed that the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom currently employs no fewer than 5,405 Nigerian-trained physicians and nurses. In a similar vein, the British Government's figures showed that Nigerian health professionals make up 4% of the 137,000 foreign employees from 202 different nationalities who work alongside British doctors and nurses (Saheed (2019), Ajayi et al (2022)). Several studies have identified the causes and effects of brain drain in the health sector as well as on the Nigerian economy. Osigbesan (2021), in a study on Medical Brain Drain and its Effect on the Nigerian Healthcare sector, identified challenges of living in Nigeria; the lack of government support; and the reality of knowledge gap causes of brain drain in the health sector. According to Ogaboh et al (2020), brain drain in the health sector is caused by poor remuneration, poor workers' safety, and inadequate working tools. Furthermore, Ojo Omonijo et al (2011) researched understanding the escalation of brain drain in Nigeria from a poor leadership point of view. The study identified huge unemployment, poor earnings and working conditions, widespread poverty, and crises in politics, religion, and society as well as poor education as the cause of brain drain. The study identified loss of human capital assets in the health sector, loss of tax revenue from emigrating laborers, and loss of money committed to education for emigrating laborers as the effect of brain drain on the economy. Several studies have been conducted on the concept of brain drain, its causes, and its effect on various sectors of the economy, including the health sector. However, there is a dearth of research that have explore the effect of brain drain on sustainable national development. Against this background, this paper examines the brain drain in the Nigerian health sector and its effect on sustaining national development. The study aims to examine brain drain in the Nigerian health sector and its effect on sustaining national development. Other objectives are to examine the causes of brain drain in the Nigerian Health sector, examine the consequences of brain drain in the health sector and assess the effect of brain drain in the Nigerian health sector toward sustaining National Development in Nigeria

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Sustainable National Development

Unprecedented difficulties are being presented to the world community by the current global conditions of weak economic growth, social inequality, and environmental degradation. The same patterns of production, use of energy, and consumption cannot be maintained. The current paradigm needs to give way to one of inclusive, long-term sustainable growth. To address these issues, the 193 United Nations Member States engaged in open, democratic, and participatory negotiations with a wide range of civil society, academic, and private sector stakeholders. This led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Goals and 169 Targets, lays out an ambitious vision for sustainable development, and integrates its economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Aggarwal 2008).

The idea of sustainable development has gained a lot of traction among academics from different fields. According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), sustainable development refers to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of both the present and the future. Furthermore, according to Abraham (2012), the idea of sustainable development obliges current generations to approach growth and development methodically and to manage natural, produced, and social capital for the benefit of both their own and future generations - a system that connects time and space. The opposite is true for national development, which is defined as national growth across all indices, including those related to the economy, society, culture, politics, and the environment. However, it also includes the good things a country does to raise the standard of living of its people. Its goal is to extricate people from poverty (Agboeze, 2011).

Social, economic, and environmental factors together form the three main pillars of sustainable national development. The ideals that support equality and respect for individual rights are referred to as the social aspect of sustainable development. This pillar is based on an entity's capacity to promote economic expansion and development. In other words, they must reduce the hazards associated with their manufacturing to encourage and promote environmental protection. Therefore, the use of renewable energy and product recycling are crucial components of the growth of the economic factor. The environmental formed was established with a commitment to safeguarding the environment by lowering risks and assessing how a firm's operations affect the environment (Delubac, 2022). Additionally, the benefits of sustainable national development are as follows: it helps in ensuring a better life for present and future generations, lowers the impact on the environment by reducing air, water, and soil pollution, and helps in achieving long-term economic growth (BYJUS, 2022).

2.2 Brain Drain in the Nigerian Sector: General History & Development

When many European health professionals moved to the United Kingdom and the United States in the 1940s, high-skilled international migration first became a significant public health concern. The losses reached a level of worry by the middle of the 1960s. The World Health Organization (WHO) published a thorough 40-country study on the value and movement of health professionals in 1979. The study's findings suggested that just five nations—Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States— attracted nearly 90% of all migrant physicians.

According to Eyerusalem (2016), brain drain refers to the transfer of healthcare professionals in quest of better living and working conditions, higher pay, access to cutting-edge technology, and more stable political environments in various locations throughout the world. According to Terry & Zubair (2017), brain drain is the wholesale exodus of people with technical skills or knowledge, typically as a result of a lack of opportunity, political unrest, armed conflict, or health problems and risk factors. Globalization, which has both positive and negative effects, is thought to promote this.

Poor working conditions and low pay have been cited by doctors as grounds for emigration to countries like the UK, US, and Canada with better working environments. These countries offer compensation, prospects for professional advancement, and an all-around higher standard of living (Abang 2019). Lack of medical resources and inadequate funding for the health sector, which frequently causes strikes, have also been mentioned as factors causing Nigeria's brain drain. Only 3.6% of Nigeria's N8.8 trillion yearly budget was earmarked for healthcare in 2019 (Egbejule 2019). According to a 2017 survey by Nigeria's polling organization NOI Polls and Nigerian Health Watch, the majority of doctors look for possibilities abroad, with 88 percent of doctors seeking job options abroad (Abang 2019) and on average, 12 doctors relocate each week (Egbejule 2019).

The desire for a better life, which is considered to be the primary driving force behind looking for greener pastures, was one of the push factors found by another poll. Better job conditions were also regarded as a very major pull factor for relocation (Adetayo 2010). Similar conclusions were drawn in the CanadaRush Study conducted by the African Polling Institute (API), which identified Nigeria's poor economic performance, lack of security for people and their property, and the country's poor leadership as the ultimate and marginalization "push factors" and a driver of the recent emigration pattern to Canada, which has also introduced immigration policies with a background enabling environment. These function as substantial "pull factors" for Nigerians with advanced educations and high levels of ability (Africa Polling Institute 2021).

2.3 Contribution of the Health Sector to Sustainable National Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer an ambitious, all-encompassing plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity as well as for eradicating the inequities that underlie subpar health and development results, acknowledging the connection between health and development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lays out a revolutionary vision with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the advancement of economic, social, and environmental well-being. All of the goals are interconnected, albeit only SDG 3 focuses on human health by ensuring healthy lifestyles and promoting well-being for all. (WHO 2022,).

Obstacles and financial struggles brought on by weak health systems and insufficient financing channels not only worsen health inequality but also put other SDGs in danger of failure (Mackey et al 2018). For instance, unsustainable health spending has left more than half of the world's population without access to basic healthcare and has annually driven up to 100 million people into poverty. High drug prices are the main driver of catastrophic spending and are expected to rise in tandem with the global rise in noncommunicable illnesses and the demand for long-term care (Cylus et al (2018), WHO (2018)).

Therefore, achieving universal health coverage could aid in reaching the SDGs by resulting in equitable and sustainable health outcomes. Gaps of ineffective governance exacerbate several health inequities between people of different socioeconomic classes. For instance, corruption makes it far more difficult for the most vulnerable to acquire health care, medications, and information (Mackey et al 2018). Additionally, elements like race, gender, and disability may make these health inequities worse (Manandhar et al 2018). Thus, it is crucial to monitor the indicators that gauge the health of vulnerable groups. The status of human rights and socioeconomic equality within states could be revealed by tracking equitable access to health care (Hosseinpoor et al 2018). To accomplish SDG 3 and other SDGs like achieving gender equality, reducing poverty, and enhancing education, it will be helpful to have a greater understanding of the factors that affect access to health services (Hosseinpoor et al 2018, Bueno de Mesquita et al 2018).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This chapter utilized qualitative research methodology through collecting and analyzing empirical literatures and non-numerical data to contextualize opinions, understand an experience, and juxtapose concepts, which helps a researcher to gather in-depth insights into a problem for the generation of new ideas (Bhandari, 2020). Therefore, the study did a critical analysis of 20 relevant research journals, articles, publications, opinions, and editorials. They were all reviewed logically, strategically, and structurally in accordance with the study's objectives of examining brain drain in the Nigerian health sector and its effect on sustaining national development. The study adopted a systematic review because the methodology offers a thorough and lucid summary of the data that is currently available in the research area. Additionally, the methodology assists in identifying research gaps from what has been previously done.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Causes of brain drain in the Nigerian Health Sector.

In examining the causes of brain drain in the Nigerian health sector. Studies reviewed revealed that inadequate funding is one of the main causes of brain drain in the health sector. Nigeria does not provide sufficient funding for its health sector which has led to its inability to offer competitive salaries or provide good working conditions for its health workers. As a result, many of these workers choose to leave the country and work in other countries that can offer them better pay and working conditions this resonates with the findings of Momoh (2022) and Oluwatola (2022). These studies stated that Nigeria has repeatedly failed to satisfy the demands of the WHO and the Abuja Declaration, which called on African governments to devote at least 15%

of annual national budgets to health. The health sector received N724 billion from the federal government, or N4.2 percent of the N17.16 trillion budget for 2022 as opposed to other sectors of the economy buoyantly funded. This poor funding has resulted in several inadequacies in the health sector.

Additionally, Wage disparities between wealthy and developing countries provide an inducement for health workers to migrate as most health workers have realized the income, they will receive abroad does not compare to those received domestically. This is supported by Agba & Ushie, (2013), Agba, et al., (2013), Attah & Angioha, (2019). Due to the terrible economic conditions in developing countries, the majority of professionals receive salaries that are significantly less than those of their counterparts in wealthy countries. Many professionals in poor countries, particularly in Africa, struggle to make ends meet on meagre salaries and live below the poverty line, and lack essential resources like clean water, electricity, and comfortable housing. Consequently, healthcare workers in poor countries are motivated to migrate, because of the higher incomes, greater employment possibilities, and technologies in industrialized countries. (Dimaya, et al (2012), Ogaboh et al., (2020), Omoleke and Taleat, (2017))

Additionally, most medical facilities lack adequate medical supplies and Infrastructure leading to the demotivation of health workers and a driving factor for brain drain. This is in agreement with studies that opined that the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia have solid infrastructures and basic facilities in contrast to developing countries where these institutions are practically non-existent. (Agba & Ushie, (2010); Ukwai, Angioha, & Ojong-Ejoh, (2018); Agba, Eteng & Coker, (2016)). Corruption and persistent insecurity have also been identified as a push factor to brain drain. Due to corruption, political connections rather than merit are used to employ, corruption alters the size and composition of public spending moving funds away from essential areas like health toward others that are more secretive and less transparent. Corruption is also reflected in inconsistent policies, a lack of resources, incessant strikes, severe underinvestment, and capacity gaps. These actions decrease the returns on human capital investments and raise the unemployment rate leading to a brain drain (Mawusse (2016), Ariu & Squicciarini (2013), Saenz & Lewer (2017); Mungiu-Pippidi (2013); Schneider (2015))

4.2 Consequences of brain drain in the health sector

Assessing the consequences of brain drain in the health sector, the main issue with brain drain is the loss of highly qualified individuals in Nigeria's health industry as a result of the Push-Pull variables at play. The negative effects of brain drain have been identified to include a decrease in the stock of human capital and increased emigrants in the health sector as the statistics of emigrants continue to rise rapidly with over 12 health workers leaving the country every week and more on the waiting list. This consequently leads to a shortage of skills and expertise in the health sector resulting in poor health services in the country. This is in corroboration with Obisesan (2021) which identified a labour/skills shortage in the health sector. This shortage in human capital also impacts the ability of the sector to innovate and adopt more advanced technologies.

The health sector's public and private consumption as well as investment spending have been impacted by brain drain since some migrants took their money and investments with them when they left the nation. The government's capacity to deliver public health services has been hampered, and private organizations are now less likely to participate in the healthcare industry as a result of the gloomy state of the sector. Through declines in incomes and corporate taxes, brain drain has drastically lowered the revenue base of the healthcare industry and government funding for health has unavoidably been impacted. This agrees with the findings of Dauda (2018) who stated that brain drain has caused a decline in the standard of healthcare services.

The provision of poor health services has also increased the cost of medical tourism and caused class division among the highly influential citizens who can afford to seek medical treatment outside the country as opposed to those who cannot, and are left to endure the dilapidated condition of Nigeria's healthcare sector. The health sector is also faced with a decrease in economic growth and a decrease in productivity of the health sector.

4.3 Effect of brain drain in the Nigerian health sector toward sustaining National Development in Nigeria

Exploring the effect of brain drain in the Nigerian health sector toward sustaining National Development in Nigeria revealed that brain drain has posed a significant development constraint in terms of lost investment prospects and development opportunities. In Nigeria, fulfilling Sustainable development goal 3 (SDG 3) which

emphasizes excellent health and well-being may be difficult due to the growing trend in the number of doctors who are relocating abroad.

The rising level of brain drain has depleted the nation's human capital, the majority of which was acquired using public funds. This is corroborated by Dinkovski & Markovska-Simoska (2018). SDG 3 includes improving health professionals' retention, professional growth, and recruiting as one of its goals. However, Nigeria may not meet the SDG 3 targets by 2030 due to the high rate at which doctors are departing the nation. Brain drain has posed a significant development constraint in terms of lost investment prospects and development opportunities.

According to the 2019 sustainable development report, Nigeria was ranked 159th out of 162 countries assessed internationally and ranked 16th among the 16 nations of West Africa in terms of achieving the 2030 sustainable development goal. This implies a high rate of poverty and a low level of living among citizens. This assertion is supported by Dauda 2018. Additionally, the Nigerian government is not paid by individuals who leave for other nations which may bring about the underdevelopment of the health sector and other major industries and fiscal losses in the economy.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Health care plays a major role in sustainable national development. This study examined the effect of brain drain in the health sector. From the study, brain drain is caused by inadequate funding of the health sector, poor remuneration, a poor working environment, inadequate facilities, and infrastructure as well as corruption in the nation's economy. The study stated that brain drain has posed a significant development constraint in terms of lost investment prospects and development opportunities in the health sector and consequently it may be difficult for the nation to achieve the 2030 sustainable development goal. The following recommendations were made in light of these findings: there should be adequate finance for residency training. The pay scale for resident doctors needs to be reviewed higher with sufficient incentives and medical apparatuses, and reinstatement of the Overseas Exchange Program to reduce the brain drain in the health sector of Nigeria.

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