



# Talent Acquisition and Organisational Performance in Public and Private Universities in South-West Nigeria: Evidence from a Multi-University Survey

Durotimi Amos Dada<sup>1\*</sup>, Tolutope Olubamiji Fakokunde<sup>2</sup> & Olufunmilayo Olajire Ebiniyi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Department of Business Administration, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State

<sup>2</sup>Department of Entrepreneurship, Federal University of Technology, Akure

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## ABSTRACT

## Original Research Article

This study examines the effect of talent acquisition on organisational performance in public and private universities in South-West Nigeria, conceptualising talent acquisition as a four-dimensional capability comprising workforce planning, employer branding, recruitment strategies, and selection-and-fit. Drawing on a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from academic and non-academic staff across selected universities. From an accessible population of 23,230 staff, 454 questionnaires were distributed, and 432 valid responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression techniques in SPSS. Reliability and convergent validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, indicating acceptable measurement quality for the study constructs. The regression results show that the talent acquisition dimensions jointly and significantly predict organisational performance ( $R = .590$ ;  $R^2 = .540$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = .533$ ;  $F(4, 427) = 33.752$ ;  $p < .001$ ; Durbin-Watson = 1.996), demonstrating substantial explanatory power. All four dimensions are positive and statistically significant predictors of organisational performance, with selection-and-fit emerging as the most influential component ( $\beta = .331$ ), followed by recruitment strategies, employer branding, and workforce planning. The findings imply that universities reporting stronger acquisition systems—particularly rigorous, merit-based selection processes aligned with institutional requirements—also report superior performance outcomes. The study concludes that organisational performance in Nigerian universities can be strengthened by institutionalising forward-looking staffing plans, enhancing employer branding, professionalising recruitment processes, and prioritising robust selection-and-fit practices.

**Keywords:** Talent Acquisition, Employer Branding, Recruitment Strategies, Selection-and-Fit, Workforce Planning, Organisational Performance.

\*Corresponding author: Durotimi Amos Dada

Department of Business Administration, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State

## Introduction

Universities are knowledge-intensive organisations whose performance depends heavily on the quality, motivation and deployment of academic and professional staff. In Nigeria, universities face persistent constraints including recurrent industrial actions, underfunding, and the outward migration of experienced academics, all of which weaken teaching quality, research productivity and administrative

effectiveness. These pressures are particularly salient in South-West Nigeria, home to some of the country's oldest and most visible public institutions and a fast-growing private university sector. Within this setting, strategic talent acquisition; the organised processes through which universities plan, attract and select suitably qualified candidates, has become a central governance and performance concern. Yet, empirical evidence that

disaggregates talent acquisition into actionable practice bundles and links them directly to organisational performance in Nigerian universities remains limited. This paper addresses that gap by assessing the influence of talent acquisition on organisational performance in universities in South-West Nigeria.

Talent acquisition, therefore, functions as a resource-orchestration mechanism: workforce planning aligns staffing with institutional priorities; employer branding strengthens organisational attractiveness in competitive labour markets; recruitment strategies broaden access to scarce talent; and selection-and-fit improves the probability that entrants possess distinctive competencies and values that align with the university mission (Reis et al., 2021; Kristof-Brown et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

### Organisational Performance in Universities

Organisational performance in this study refers to the extent to which a university attains its core academic and administrative objectives in a manner that is efficient, sustainable and valued by key stakeholders. Organisational performance in higher education extends beyond financial indicators to include academic output, research productivity, administrative efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional adaptability. Performance measurement is therefore multi-dimensional and politically salient, given external accountability regimes and competitive ranking environments (Kells, 1992; Times Higher Education, 2024)

Academic output captures teaching effectiveness and the ability of the institution to deliver credible learning outcomes, including the production of graduates who meet academic and professional standards (Times Higher Education, 2024). Administrative efficiency reflects the strength of internal processes, timely decision-making and effective deployment of fiscal, human and material resources to support core activities. Innovation and research productivity represent the institution's capacity to generate and disseminate new knowledge through research quality, publications and responsiveness to changes in the higher-education environment. Staff satisfaction reflects employees' evaluations of their work environment, motivation and perceived support; it is treated as a performance-relevant outcome because staff attitudes shape service delivery, student support and the sustainability of institutional improvements (Dada et al., 2025).

In the higher-education context, performance is also shaped by wider institutional constraints and accountability mechanisms, including sector-wide indicators and rankings (Kells, 1992; Times Higher Education, 2024). In Nigeria, funding pressures and recurrent industrial actions can disrupt teaching and research outputs, thereby affecting performance metrics and stakeholder perceptions (Ogunode & Abubakar,

2022; Toryuha, 2024; World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b). These pressures interact with academic labour-market dynamics, particularly brain-drain and research-capacity concerns, which further heighten the need for credible attraction and retention strategies (Akinyemi, 2017; Ikpi, 2023). Finally, core organisational capabilities and competencies remain important antecedents of sustained performance, especially where universities compete for scarce talent and resources (Agha et al., 2012).

### Talent Acquisition in Universities

Talent acquisition is defined as the strategic and planned set of activities through which universities identify, attract and appoint staff with the competencies, qualifications and values required for institutional performance. Strategic talent acquisition in universities is consistent with broader strategic talent management thinking, which treats attraction and selection as forward-looking investments aligned to institutional strategy and labour-market conditions (Cappelli, 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010).

Talent acquisition is a distinct yet integral dimension of talent management practices, emphasising that universities in South-West Nigeria compete for scarce academic and professional talent amid funding constraints, labour-market mobility and quality assurance pressures. In practice, HRM guidance emphasises the integration of workforce planning, recruitment channels, and fair selection processes as part of a coherent acquisition system (Armstrong, 2020a). In operational terms, talent acquisition is decomposed into four practical components that can be assessed in university settings: workforce planning, employer branding, recruitment strategies and selection-and-fit processes.

### Workforce Planning

Workforce planning concerns the systematic assessment of current and future staffing needs and the alignment of recruitment with programme expansion, accreditation requirements and succession planning (Kusi et al., 2020). Employer branding reflects how universities communicate an employment value proposition that attracts qualified candidates and signals a supportive academic culture.

### Employer Branding

Employer branding can reduce information asymmetry in recruitment markets and strengthen applicant quality by communicating institutional values and opportunities (Spence, 1973; Nguyen et al., 2021). As noted by AlQdeimat and Alkshali (2023), attraction contributes to organisational excellence. It was observed that universities that project positive employer brand are better able to recruit staff who support their strategic and cultural aspirations. Brahimaj (2025) highlights that effective employer branding is essential for attracting and retaining scarce talent, particularly when organisations cannot compete solely on pay.

## Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment strategies capture the transparency, reach and fairness of attraction channels; including internal and external sourcing, advertisement and networking (Akor, 2024). Selection-and-fit reflect the rigour of screening, interviewing and appointment decisions, including the extent to which hires match job requirements and institutional values, reducing mismatch costs and improving early performance (Cappelli, 2008; Tarique and Schuler, 2010).

## Selection-and-Fit

Selection-and-fit aligns with person–organisation fit theory, which argues that value congruence and perceived fit enhance subsequent attitudes and performance (Kristof, 1996). Tanış (2024) reports that perceptions of fair and systematic talent management, including selection and deployment, significantly raise commitment of personnel in an organization. Almaaitah et al. (2020) find that recruitment and selection improve organisational performance.

## Theoretical Review

Talent acquisition in this study is anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Human Capital Theory (HCT), which jointly explain its performance implications in universities. Recent strategic human capital scholarship clarifies that resources generate advantage only when they are linked to specific performance outcomes and organisational systems that mobilise them (Ployhart, 2021; Gerhart & Feng, 2021). Accordingly, talent acquisition is conceptualised here as a strategic capability through which universities build a workforce that can deliver teaching quality, research productivity and administrative effectiveness.

The RBV posits that sustained competitive advantage derived from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN), (Barney, 1991, 2001). In universities, the most strategically consequential resources are intangible and knowledge-based; academic expertise, research capability, pedagogical competence, and administrative professionalism. However, contemporary RBV logic emphasises that competitive advantage depends not only on the possession of human resources but on the capabilities and routines through which organisations acquire and renew them over time (Ployhart, 2021; Gerhart & Feng, 2021). Accordingly, talent acquisition is conceptualised in this study as a capability bundle that enables universities to secure and refresh VRIN-like human capital.

Human Capital Theory (HCT) complements this argument by specifying the productivity mechanism through which acquired talent yields performance gains. Human capital theory conceptualises employees' knowledge and skills as productive investments that generate organisational returns through improved efficiency, quality, innovation and service delivery (Becker, 1993; Wright, 2021). Because universities'

core outputs (teaching quality, research productivity and administrative effectiveness) depend heavily on specialised expertise, acquisition practices that improve the quality and alignment of staff should translate into superior organisational performance. Recent strategic human capital research also stresses that the performance value of human capital depends on organisational systems that attract, select and enable the appropriation of returns from specialised talent (Kryscynski et al., 2021).

This integrated RBV–HCT perspective is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where institutional and contextual factors influence the design and effectiveness of HR systems (Akwei & Nwachukwu, 2022). Empirical evidence from state-owned universities in Southwest Nigeria also shows that recruitment and selection criteria are associated with academic job performance (Oginni et al., 2022), reinforcing the argument that structured acquisition processes matter for performance. Overall, RBV explains the strategic value of acquired talent and the routines that secure it, while HCT explains the productivity effects of higher-quality human capital, predicting a positive relationship between effective talent acquisition and organisational performance.

## Empirical Review

Empirical evidence reviewed consistently positions talent acquisition (often framed as talent attraction, recruitment and selection) as the entry point of effective talent management systems and a significant predictor of organisational performance. In higher education, studies report positive associations between attraction practices and university performance outcomes, including institutional excellence and effectiveness (e.g., AlQdeimat & Alkshali, 2023; Shah et al., 2021; Jais et al., 2023). Evidence from African and Nigerian contexts is broadly consistent: talent management dimensions that include attraction are associated with performance improvements in public-sector and service settings (e.g., Eseferuo et al., 2022), while sectoral studies in Nigeria also show that recruitment and selection practices predict employee and organisational outcomes (Akor et al., 2024).

Across the reviewed studies, the underlying mechanism is that better attraction and fit improve the quality of staff inputs, reduce mismatch and turnover costs, and strengthen universities' capacity to deliver on teaching, research and administrative mandates. This research highlights persistent gaps that motivate talent acquisition-focused testing in South-West Nigerian universities: many studies treat talent management as a broad, unitary construct without isolating talent acquisition; theoretical integration across RBV and HCT is limited; and higher-education-specific evidence in Nigeria remains comparatively underdeveloped relative to studies from Asia, and the Middle East. These gaps support the expectation that stronger talent acquisition practices will be positively associated with organisational performance in the study context.

Recent evidence from Nigerian university contexts further supports the performance relevance of structured talent management and acquisition-related practices. For instance, evidence on non-academic staff indicates that talent management practices are associated with improved organisational outcomes in government universities (Dada et al., 2025). Taken together with related evidence from both private and public service, the cumulative pattern suggests that merit-based attraction, transparent selection, and sustained development practices are important levers for organisational performance in Nigeria (Eseferuo et al., 2022; Akor et al., 2024).

## Methodology

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted to estimate the influence of talent acquisition practices on organisational performance. The study focused on public (federal and state) and private universities located in South-West Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey designs are appropriate for testing in organisational settings where constructs are perceptual and where multi-site access permits variance in organisational practices (Dillman et al., 2014).

The target population comprised 23,230 academic and core non-academic staff across 18 universities in South-West Nigeria. A target sample size of 454 respondents was determined using established sample size guidance for known populations at the 95% confidence level (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Israel, 1992). A multi-stage sampling approach was used. First, universities were selected to ensure representation across ownership categories. Second, staff were stratified into academic and non-academic categories to reflect core university workforce segments. Third, within each stratum, questionnaires were distributed proportionately across institutions and units to capture diverse functional roles. A total of 432 usable questionnaires were returned, providing sufficient statistical power for multiple regression with four predictors (Hair et al., 2019).

Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed in hardcopy and electronic formats. All items were rated on five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while Convergent validity was assessed through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

**Table 1.** Reliability and Convergent Validity of Study Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Talent acquisition practices	0.832	0.892	0.819
Organisational performance	0.774	0.855	0.598

Notes: CR = composite reliability. AVE = average variance extracted. Values above 0.70 for alpha/CR and above 0.50 for AVE are commonly interpreted as indicating acceptable reliability and convergent validity.

The data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to profile the respondents, while multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the study hypotheses and measure the influence of talent acquisition dimensions. Therefore, the model specification of study is stated as;

$$OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TA + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots i$$

$$OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WPL + \beta_2 EMB + \beta_3 RES + \beta_4 SAF + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots ii$$

## Results

Table 2 presents the model summary statistics for the regression analysis examining the effect of talent acquisition

dimensions on organisational performance. The model indicates a moderate-to-strong association between the predictors and organisational performance ( $R = .590$ ) and explains a substantial proportion of variance ( $R^2 = .540$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = .533$ ), with 54% of performance variation accounted for by workforce planning, employer branding, recruitment strategies, and selection-and-fit. The minimal reduction from  $R^2$  to Adjusted  $R^2$  suggests model stability and limited overfitting. The standard error of the estimate (.21162) reflects modest residual dispersion, while the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.996) indicates no evidence of autocorrelation. Overall, the model demonstrates satisfactory statistical adequacy

**Table 2.** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.590 <sup>a</sup>	.540	.533	.21162	1.996

a. Predictors: (Constant), Workforce Planning, Employer Branding, Recruitment Strategies, Selection-and-Fit.

b. Dependent Variable: Organisational Performance.

Table 3 reports the regression coefficients for the individual predictors. The overall regression model is statistically significant,  $F(4, 427) = 33.75$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the talent acquisition dimensions jointly predict organisational

performance. All four predictors are positive and statistically significant. Workforce Planning shows a positive effect ( $B = .057$ ,  $SE = .017$ ,  $\beta = .138$ ,  $t = 3.280$ ,  $p = .001$ ), indicating that improvements in workforce planning are associated with

increases in organisational performance, holding other variables constant. Employer Branding demonstrates a stronger positive association ( $B = .100$ ,  $SE = .020$ ,  $\beta = .211$ ,  $t = 4.983$ ,  $p = .001$ ), suggesting that enhanced organisational attractiveness significantly contributes to performance outcomes. Recruitment Strategies also exhibit a significant positive effect ( $B = .119$ ,  $SE = .021$ ,  $\beta = .240$ ,  $t = 5.670$ ,  $p = .001$ ), indicating that structured recruitment mechanisms are associated with improved organisational performance. Selection-and-Fit records the largest standardized coefficient ( $B = .176$ ,  $SE = .022$ ,  $\beta = .331$ ,  $t = 7.848$ ,  $p = .001$ ),

signifying that rigorous selection procedures and alignment between employee competencies and institutional requirements exert the strongest influence on organisational performance.

The relative magnitude of standardized coefficients indicates that selection-and-fit contributes most strongly, followed by recruitment strategies, employer branding, and workforce planning. Collectively, these findings provide empirical support for the hypothesis that talent acquisition positively and significantly influences organisational performance.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis of Talent Acquisition on Organisational Performance

Model	B	SE	$\beta$	T	P
Constant	2.062	.147		14.073	.001
Workforce Planning	.057	.017	.138	3.280	.001
Employer Branding	.100	.020	.211	4.983	.001
Recruitment Strategies	.119	.021	.240	5.670	.001
Selection-and-Fit	.176	.022	.331	7.848	.001

Note:  $N = 432$ .  $F(4, 427) = 33.75$   $B =$  unstandardized coefficient;  $SE =$  standard error;  $\beta =$  standardized coefficient.

Source: Researchers computation using SPSS Version 25 (2025).

## Discussion

The findings provide higher-education-specific support for the argument that the acquisition of high-quality human capital is a key route to improved institutional performance. Consistent with resource-based and human capital explanations, universities that better plan their staffing needs and present a stronger employer brand report higher performance. The significance of recruitment strategies suggests that widening and professionalising attraction channels (including digital platforms) can improve the quality and diversity of applicant pools. Importantly, the dominance of selection-and-fit implies that performance gains depend not only on attracting applicants but also on the integrity and rigor of the selection process, including structured panels, transparent criteria and systematic assessment of cultural and role fit. However, respondents' acknowledgement that non-merit factors can influence recruitment decisions indicates a governance vulnerability that may erode the performance benefits of otherwise strong systems. Strengthening recruitment governance and accountability is therefore critical.

In interpreting these relationships, it is important to recognise that university performance is also affected by systemic conditions, especially funding adequacy, industrial disputes, and sectoral quality pressures, which may condition the returns to talent acquisition investments (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022; Toryuha, 2024; Times Higher Education, 2024; World Bank, 2025a).

## Practical and Policy Implications

First, university councils and HR leadership should institutionalise workforce planning linked to programme expansion, accreditation requirements and research strategy. Second, universities should invest in employer branding that credibly communicates career development opportunities, research support, and fair reward systems to counter brain-drain pressures. Third, recruitment strategies should emphasise wide, transparent advertising and modern recruitment tools to expand high-quality applicant pools. Fourth, selection systems should be strengthened through trained panels, structured interviews, job-relevant assessments (e.g., teaching demonstrations for academics), and documented decision trails. Finally, anti-nepotism safeguards and oversight mechanisms should be formalised to protect merit-based recruitment and sustain trust in HR systems.

## Limitations and Future Research

The study is cross-sectional and relies on staff perceptions, which may inflate associations due to common method variance. Future studies could combine survey data with objective indicators (e.g., publication outputs, student progression, processing turnaround times) and use longitudinal designs to strengthen causal inference. Additional work could test whether the talent acquisition–performance relationship differs systematically between public and private universities or between academic and non-academic staff groups.

## Conclusion

This paper provides evidence that talent acquisition practices are strongly associated with organisational performance in universities in South-West Nigeria. Workforce planning, employer branding, recruitment strategies and selection-and-fit practices all contribute positively, with selection-and-fit emerging as the most influential dimension. Improving the integrity and professionalism of attraction and selection systems, while addressing non-merit influences, offers a practical route to improved university performance in Nigeria.

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