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STRATEGIC TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing investments in talent management initiatives, organisations have continued to experience challenges relating to employee engagement and performance. While previous studies have established links between talent management and organisational outcomes, limited empirical attention has been given to the mediating role of employee engagement within the Nigerian telecommunications sector. A quantitative survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 3,000 employees from MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria in Lagos State. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 353 respondents was determined and selected through a stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across the selected organisations. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was subjected to validity and reliability tests, yielding an overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.89. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, regression analysis, and mediation analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. The findings revealed that talent acquisition has a significant positive effect on organisational performance. Also, talent development significantly influences employee engagement, and employee engagement significantly influences organisational performance. Additional, employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance, suggesting that talent management initiatives enhance organisational outcomes both directly and indirectly through increased employee engagement. The study concludes that strategic talent management practices are critical drivers of organisational performance and therefore recommends that, MTN and Airtel Nigeria should strengthen their talent acquisition systems, invest in continuous talent development programmes, and implement employee engagement initiatives that promote commitment, innovation, and productivity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the nature of work, organisational structures, and human resource management practices across industries worldwide. The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analytics, automation, remote working systems, and digital collaboration platforms has created a highly dynamic and technology-driven work environment commonly referred to as the digital workplace. This transformation has altered how organisations create value, interact with stakeholders, and manage their workforce. In this increasingly competitive and knowledge-driven economy, organisations are recognising that human capital remains one of the most valuable resources for achieving sustainable competitive advantage and long-term organisational success. Consequently, strategic talent management has become a critical organisational priority as firms seek to attract, develop, engage, and retain employees capable of driving innovation and organisational growth in the digital era (Collings, McDonnell, Mellahi, & Schuler, 2022).

Strategic talent management refers to a systematic and integrated approach to identifying, attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining talented employees whose skills, knowledge, and competencies are essential for achieving organisational goals. Unlike traditional human resource management, which often focuses on administrative and operational functions, strategic talent management aligns workforce capabilities with organisational strategy and future business requirements. Contemporary organisations increasingly view talent as a strategic asset that contributes to organisational agility, innovation, adaptability, and performance. As a result, practices such as talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, succession planning, and talent retention have gained significant prominence in both organisational practice and academic research (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, & Scullion, 2023).

The significance of strategic talent management has become particularly evident within telecommunications sector where organisations face intense competition for highly skilled employees. The accelerating pace of digital transformation has increased demand for employees who possess not only technical expertise but also critical thinking abilities, adaptability, creativity, collaboration skills, and continuous learning capabilities. Organisations that fail to attract and retain such talent often experience skill shortages, reduced innovation potential, lower employee morale, and diminished organisational competitiveness. Consequently, organisations across sectors are investing substantial resources in talent management initiatives aimed at building resilient, agile, and future-ready workforces capable of supporting digital transformation and sustaining competitive advantage (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Organisational performance remains one of the most important indicators of organisational effectiveness and success. It reflects the extent to which an organisation achieves its strategic objectives through the efficient utilisation of available resources. Organisational performance encompasses multiple dimensions, including productivity, profitability, innovation, operational efficiency, service quality, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness. While traditional approaches to improving performance have focused largely on technological investments, financial resources, and process optimisation, contemporary research increasingly emphasises the strategic importance of human capital in driving organisational outcomes. In today's knowledge-based economy, employees represent a primary source of value creation and innovation, making effective talent management a crucial determinant of organisational performance (Boon, Den Hartog, & Lepak, 2023).

Empirical evidence (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen & Scullion, 2023; Vaiman, et al., 2024) suggests that organisations implementing effective talent management practices are more likely to experience higher levels of employee productivity, innovation, organisational commitment, and overall performance. Through strategic recruitment, continuous learning opportunities, career development programmes, performance feedback systems, and retention initiatives, organisations can strengthen employee capabilities and enhance organisational effectiveness. These practices not only improve workforce competence but also create conditions that encourage employees to contribute meaningfully to organisational objectives. However, despite widespread recognition of the value of talent management, scholars argue that its influence on organisational performance is often complex and may be shaped by various psychological and behavioural factors within the workplace (Vaiman, et al., 2024).

Among these factors, employee engagement has emerged as one of the most significant mechanisms through which talent management practices influence organisational outcomes. Employee engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural investment employees demonstrate toward their work and organisational goals. Engaged employees typically exhibit high levels of enthusiasm, dedication, commitment, and discretionary effort. They are more likely to embrace change, collaborate effectively, contribute innovative ideas, and remain committed to organisational success. As organisations increasingly embrace digital work environments characterised by remote work arrangements, virtual teams, and technology-mediated interactions, employee engagement has become a key determinant of workforce effectiveness and organisational performance (Saks, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the relationship between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of employee engagement in the digital workplace. The study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how talent management initiatives contribute to organisational success and whether employee engagement serves as a critical mechanism through which these practices generate positive organisational outcomes in an increasingly digital business environment.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The digital transformation of workplaces has significantly altered how organisations attract, develop, manage, and retain talent. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation, cloud computing, and digital collaboration platforms have transformed organisational processes and created opportunities for innovation and improved performance (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2023). Nevertheless, studies have reported that digital transformation may also create challenges, including skills gaps, increased employee turnover intentions, digital fatigue, and reduced employee commitment where organisations fail to provide adequate training, support, and engagement mechanisms (Saks, 2022; Vial, 2021; Tarafdar et al., 2019). Consequently, manufacturing organisations increasingly invest in strategic talent management practices such as talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, succession planning, and retention programmes to enhance workforce capability and achieve superior organisational performance (Collings et al., 2022; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2023).

Despite these investments, manufacturing organisations continue to experience difficulties in achieving desired performance outcomes. Saks (2022) suggests that organisations operating in telecommunication environments often face challenges related to reduced employee motivation, declining productivity, limited innovation, and difficulties retaining highly skilled employees. While previous studies (that is, Khatoon, 2025; Kravariti, & Johnston, 2022) have established a positive relationship between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance, findings remain inconsistent. Some studies report significant positive effects, whereas others suggest that talent management initiatives alone may not automatically translate into improved organisational performance without corresponding positive employee responses and behaviours (Boon, Den Hartog, & Lepak, 2023; Vaiman et al., 2024).

Increasingly, scholars Boon, et al. (2023) and Collings, et al. (2022) argue that employee engagement may explain how talent management practices influence organisational outcomes. Employee engagement reflects employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioural commitment to their work and organisational goals. Engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of productivity, creativity, adaptability, and discretionary effort, all of which contribute to organisational success (Boon, et al., 2023). Extant literature suggest that strategic talent management practices can foster employee engagement by providing development opportunities, career advancement, recognition, and organisational support (Albrecht, Breidahl, & Marty, 2024; Saks, 2022). However, empirical evidence examining employee engagement as a mediating mechanism between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance remains limited, particularly within the telecommunication industry in Nigeria.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

i. examine the effect of talent acquisition practice on organisational performance in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.
ii. assess the effect of talent development practice on employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What effect does talent acquisition practice have on organisational performance in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies?
ii. To what extent does talent development practice influence employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives and questions, the research hypotheses were formulated:

H_{01}: Talent acquisition practice has no significant effect on organisational performance in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.

H_{02}: Talent development practice has no significant effect on employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically as it contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on strategic talent management, employee engagement, and organisational performance within the context of the telecommunication industry.

From a managerial perspective, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for organisational leaders, human resource managers, talent management specialists, and decision-makers seeking to optimise workforce performance in the digital era. The study will demonstrate the extent to which strategic investments in talent acquisition and talent development can enhance employee engagement and contribute to improved organisational outcomes. This understanding will enable organisations to design and implement talent management strategies that not only attract and develop highly skilled employees but also foster greater engagement, commitment, innovation, and productivity in increasingly technology-driven workplaces.

The study will also be beneficial to policymakers, professional human resource bodies, and labour market regulators concerned with workforce development and organisational competitiveness. The findings will provide evidence-based information that can support the formulation of policies and frameworks aimed at promoting effective talent management practices, continuous employee development, and sustainable workforce engagement. Such policies are particularly relevant in the digital economy, where organisations face growing challenges associated with skills shortages, workforce mobility, and rapid technological change.

Furthermore, the study will be valuable to employees by highlighting the importance of organisational investments in talent development, career growth opportunities, and supportive work environments. Effective talent management practices have the potential to enhance employees' sense of value, motivation, engagement, and career satisfaction, thereby improving both individual and organisational outcomes. Employees may also gain a better understanding of how their level of engagement contributes to organisational success and personal career advancement within digital workplaces.

Finally, the study provides a foundation for future researchers by offering an empirical framework for examining the interrelationships among strategic talent management practices, employee engagement, and organisational performance. The findings may stimulate further scholarly inquiry into talent management and workforce engagement across different industries, organisational settings, and geographical contexts, particularly as digital transformation continues to reshape the future of work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

Strategic Talent Management Practices

Strategic talent management has emerged as one of the most critical human resource management functions in contemporary organisations due to increasing competition, technological advancement, and changing workforce dynamics. In the traditional business environment, talent management primarily focused on recruitment and retention activities. However, the emergence of knowledge-based economies and digital transformation has expanded the scope of talent management to include a systematic process of attracting, developing, engaging, deploying, and retaining employees whose capabilities are essential for organisational success. Strategic talent management therefore represents an integrated approach through which organisations align workforce capabilities with long-term organisational objectives (Collings, McDonnell, Mellahi, & Schuler, 2022).

For the purpose of this study, strategic talent management practices are conceptualised through two major dimensions: talent acquisition and talent development. These dimensions represent the processes through which organisations attract competent employees and continuously enhance their knowledge, skills, and capabilities to support organisational performance within digitally enabled work environments.

Talent Acquisition

Talent acquisition is a strategic human resource management process concerned with identifying, attracting, selecting, and retaining individuals whose knowledge, skills, and abilities align with an organisation's current and future workforce requirements. Unlike traditional recruitment, which focuses primarily on filling vacancies, talent acquisition adopts a long-term perspective by developing sustainable talent pipelines that support organisational growth and competitiveness (Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2022). The process encompasses workforce planning, employer branding, sourcing, selection, onboarding, and succession planning to ensure organisations secure high-performing employees capable of creating value (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). In today's competitive business environment, organisations increasingly utilise digital recruitment platforms, artificial intelligence, and data-driven selection techniques to identify qualified candidates more efficiently. Effective talent acquisition enables organisations to recruit employees whose competencies fit organisational culture and strategic objectives, thereby improving productivity, innovation, and organisational performance (Vaiman, Sparrow, Schuler, & Collings, 2024). Consequently, talent acquisition is widely regarded as a strategic investment that enhances workforce quality, strengthens organisational capability, and provides a sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic and technology-driven industries.

Talent Development

Talent development refers to the systematic process through which organisations enhance employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and capabilities to improve individual and organisational performance. It involves planned learning activities such as training, coaching, mentoring, job rotation, leadership development, career planning, and continuous professional development designed to prepare employees for present responsibilities and future organisational needs (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). According to Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, and Scullion (2023), talent development extends beyond conventional employee training by focusing on unlocking employees' potential and aligning their growth with organisational strategy. Effective talent development equips employees with the competencies required to adapt to technological advancements, changing job demands, and evolving business environments. It also promotes employee engagement, motivation, innovation, and retention by demonstrating organisational commitment to employees' career progression (Collings et al., 2022). Organisations that invest consistently in talent development are better positioned to enhance workforce capability, improve organisational performance, and sustain competitive advantage. Consequently, talent development has become a critical component of strategic talent management, particularly in knowledge-intensive and rapidly evolving industries such as telecommunications.

Organisational Performance

Organisational performance is one of the most important indicators used to assess organisational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. It reflects the extent to which an organisation achieves its strategic goals and objectives through the efficient utilisation of available resources. Traditionally, organisational performance was evaluated primarily through financial indicators such as profitability, revenue growth, return on investment, and market share. However, contemporary scholars argue that organisational performance is a multidimensional construct encompassing both financial and non-financial outcomes.

Modern perspectives on organisational performance recognise the importance of operational efficiency, innovation capability, employee productivity, customer satisfaction, service quality, organisational learning, and adaptability to environmental changes. In increasingly competitive and technology-driven business environments, organisations must continuously improve these dimensions to sustain competitive advantage. Consequently, organisational performance is now viewed as a holistic measure of organisational success rather than merely a financial outcome (Boon et al., 2023).

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on two complementary theories, namely Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Resource-Based View Theory (RBV)**.** These theories provide a comprehensive foundation for explaining how strategic talent management practices influence organisational performance through the mediating role of employee engagement within the digital workplace. While Social Exchange Theory explains the behavioural and psychological processes through which talent management practices enhance employee engagement, Resource-Based View Theory explains how talented employees constitute strategic organisational resources capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage and superior organisational performance.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory was developed by George Homans (1958) and further expanded by Blau (1964). The theory posits that social relationships are built upon reciprocal exchanges between individuals and organisations. According to the theory, employees respond positively when they perceive that their organisation values their contributions and invests in their well-being, professional growth, and career advancement. Such favourable treatment often generates feelings of obligation, trust, and reciprocity, leading employees to exhibit positive work attitudes and behaviours (Cropanzano et al., 2023).

Within organisational settings, strategic talent management practices represent important forms of organisational investment in employees. Talent acquisition ensures that employees are recruited into roles that match their competencies and career aspirations, while talent development provides opportunities for continuous learning, professional growth, and career progression (Collings et al., 2022). Employees who perceive these initiatives positively are more likely to feel valued and supported by their organisations.

Recent studies suggest that talent management practices significantly enhance employee engagement by strengthening employees' perceptions of organisational support, fairness, and commitment to their professional development (Saks, 2022; Albrecht et al., 2024). Engaged employees typically demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm, dedication, motivation, and discretionary effort, all of which contribute to improved organisational outcomes. In digital workplaces, where employees may experience challenges such as virtual isolation, digital fatigue, and reduced face-to-face interaction, supportive talent management practices become even more critical for sustaining engagement and performance.

Therefore, Social Exchange Theory provides the theoretical explanation for the mediating role of employee engagement in this study. It explains how employees reciprocate strategic talent management initiatives with increased engagement, which subsequently contributes to enhanced organisational performance. Although the theory has been critiqued for assuming that workplace relationships are primarily driven by reciprocal exchanges and for paying limited attention to individual differences, organisational culture, and contextual factors that may influence employee behaviour, it remains highly relevant to this study. The theory provides a useful framework for explaining how strategic talent management practices encourage employees to reciprocate organisational support through higher levels of employee engagement. When organisations invest in attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees, workers are more likely to respond with increased commitment, dedication, and active involvement in their roles, thereby enhancing both individual and organisational performance.

But this strength is limited by its assumption that employees always reciprocate organisational support positively, overlooking individual differences, organisational culture, and external factors that may influence employee attitudes and behaviour.

Resource-Based View Theory (RBV)

Resource-Based View theory was developed by Barney (1991). The theory argues that organisations achieve sustainable competitive advantage when they possess valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. Among these resources, human capital is considered one of the most important strategic assets because employees possess unique knowledge, skills, competencies, and capabilities that competitors cannot easily replicate.

According to RBV, organisational performance depends largely on an organisation's ability to attract, develop, and utilise talented employees effectively. Strategic talent management practices therefore serve as mechanisms through which organisations acquire and strengthen valuable human capital resources. Talent acquisition enables organisations to secure individuals with critical competencies, while talent development enhances employees' skills, adaptability, innovation capacity, and overall effectiveness (Vaiman et al., 2024).

The relevance of RBV has increased significantly in the digital era. Digital transformation requires organisations to possess employees with specialised technological skills, digital literacy, analytical capabilities, creativity, and adaptability. Organisations that successfully attract and develop such talent are better positioned to innovate, respond to environmental changes, and achieve superior organisational performance (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Recent empirical studies indicate that organisations with effective talent management systems consistently outperform competitors in terms of productivity, innovation, organisational agility, and long-term sustainability (Boon et al., 2023; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2023). Consequently, Resource-Based View Theory provides the theoretical basis for understanding how strategic talent management practices directly contribute to organisational performance by enhancing the quality and value of organisational human capital.

Empirical Review

Talent Acquisition Practice and Organisational Performance

Several empirical studies have established that talent acquisition practice significantly influences organisational performance. Collings et al. (2022) found that organisations with effective talent acquisition strategies achieved superior organisational performance by attracting employees whose competencies aligned with strategic objectives. Similarly, Kravariti and Johnston (2022) reported that competency-based recruitment and selection systems enhanced workforce quality, innovation, and operational efficiency. Vaiman et al. (2024) also observed that strategic talent acquisition improves organisational agility and competitiveness, particularly in technology-driven industries.

Within Africa, Mensah and Bawole (2023) found that effective talent acquisition positively influenced organisational effectiveness by ensuring that organisations attracted employees with the required technical and managerial competencies. In Nigeria, Adegbite and Ojo (2023) similarly reported that strategic recruitment practices significantly enhanced organisational performance in service organisations. Although these studies confirm the importance of talent acquisition, few have focused specifically on the Nigerian telecommunications industry. This study therefore extends existing knowledge by examining the effect of talent acquisition practice on organisational performance in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.

Talent Development Practice and Employee Engagement

Empirical evidence also suggests that talent development is a significant determinant of employee engagement. Saks (2022) found that organisations investing in employee learning and development recorded higher levels of employee engagement, commitment, and discretionary effort. Likewise, Albrecht et al. (2024) established that training, coaching, mentoring, and career development initiatives significantly enhanced employee engagement by increasing employees' perceptions of organisational support. Similarly, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2023) concluded that talent development strengthens employees' competencies, motivation, and involvement in organisational activities.

Within the African context, Mensah and Bawole (2023) reported that employee development programmes improved employees' commitment and engagement, leading to better organisational outcomes. In Nigeria, Ogunyemi and Adebayo (2024) found that continuous training and career development significantly enhanced employee engagement and job performance. Despite these findings, empirical studies examining talent development and employee engagement within the Nigerian telecommunications industry remain limited. This study therefore addresses this gap by investigating the influence of talent development practice on employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive design provided a comprehensive understanding of strategic talent management practices, and organisational performance within the selected organisations.

The study employed a quantitative research approach using a survey method. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a large number of respondents and examine the relationships among the study variables. The design was also suitable for testing the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance.

The population of the study comprised employees of MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria in Lagos State. These organisations were selected because they are among Nigeria's leading telecommunications companies and have well-established talent management systems, digital workplace structures, and employee development programmes.

The target population consisted of managerial, supervisory, and operational employees working across departments such as Human Resources, Information Technology, Customer Experience, Marketing, Finance, Operations, Enterprise Business, and Administration. The population distribution is presented below:

Table 1: Population Distribution of Selected Digital Workplaces

Selected Organisation	Population
MTN Nigeria	1,900
Airtel Nigeria	1,100
Total Population	**3,000**

Based on the 2024 workforce disclosures contained in the annual reports of MTN Nigeria Communications PLC and Airtel Africa PLC, supplemented by employee records obtained from the Human Resource Departments of the selected firms for the purpose of this study, the accessible employee population comprised approximately 1,900 employees from MTN Nigeria and 1,100 employees from Airtel Nigeria, giving a total study population of 3,000 employees (MTN Nigeria Communications PLC, 2025; Airtel Africa PLC, 2025).

The sample size for the study was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

N= 3, 000 (population size)
E =0.05 (margin of error for 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{3,000}{1+3,000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3,000}{1+3,000(0.05)^2} = \frac{3,000}{1+7.5}$$

$$n = \frac{3,000}{1+8.5} = 353$$

Sample Size = 353

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 353 respondents.

Table 2: Proportional Distribution

Organisation	Population	Sample Size
MTN Nigeria	1,900	224
Airtel Nigeria	1,100	129
Total	3,000	353

The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique. The population was first stratified according to the two organisations and further divided into managerial, supervisory, and operational staff categories. Thereafter, simple random sampling was employed to select respondents proportionately from each category.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. Section A elicited demographic information such as gender, age, educational qualification, job level, and years of work experience. Section B contained items measuring: (i) Talent Acquisition, (ii) Talent Development, (iii) Employee Engagement, (iv) Organisational Performance. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert Scale comprising: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5; Agree (A) = 4; Undecided (U) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

The questionnaire was developed through a systematic instrument development process. First, the study objectives, research questions, hypotheses, and relevant literature were reviewed to identify the dimensions of the study variables. Thereafter, measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales. Items measuring Strategic Talent Management were adapted from Collings et al. (2022), Armstrong and Taylor (2023), and Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020), while items measuring Employee Engagement were adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). Items for Organisational Performance were adapted from Delaney and Huselid (1996) and Aguinis (2023). The adapted items were modified to reflect the operational context of the Nigerian telecommunications industry while retaining their original conceptual meanings.

The initial instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts in Human Resource Management, Organisational Behaviour, and Measurement and Evaluation. Their comments regarding item relevance, clarity, wording, and construct coverage were incorporated into the revised questionnaire.

A pilot study involving employees from a telecommunication firm outside the study area was subsequently conducted to assess the clarity and consistency of the instrument. The reliability of the scales was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with all constructs exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Construct validity was further assessed using factor analysis. For studies employing PLS-SEM, indicator loadings greater than 0.70, Composite Reliability values above 0.70, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios below 0.85 were used to establish convergent and discriminant validity. These psychometric properties confirmed that the instrument was reliable and valid for measuring the study constructs before its final administration.

The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validity. Experts in Human Resource Management, Business Administration, and Organisational Behaviour reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that the items adequately measured the variables under investigation.

To determine reliability, a pilot study was conducted among employees of a telecommunications organisation outside the selected study organisations. Data obtained from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency because the coefficient exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70.

The researcher sought permission from the management of MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria before administering the questionnaire. Data collection was conducted over a period of three weeks. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed physically and electronically to the selected respondents. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured that participation was voluntary.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the exclusive use of information provided for academic purposes. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, screened, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were used to analyse respondents' demographic characteristics and answer the research questions.
Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test: (a) the effect of talent acquisition on organisational performance, and (b) the effect of talent development on employee engagement. Hierarchical multiple regression and mediation analysis were employed to determine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between strategic talent management practices and organisational performance. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

This section presents the analysis of data collected from employees of MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria in Lagos State. The study examined the effect of **talent acquisition practices** on organisational performance and the effect of **talent development practices** on employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationships among the study variables, while simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Talent Acquisition Practice → Organisational Performance	0.73	<0.01	Strong Positive
Talent Development Practice → Employee Engagement	0.71	<0.01	Strong Positive

Source: Field Survey (2026)
Interpretation
The correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between the study variables. Talent acquisition practice showed a strong positive relationship with organisational performance ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), while talent development practice also demonstrated a strong positive relationship with employee engagement ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that improvements in strategic talent management practices are associated with better organisational outcomes in the selected telecommunication companies.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	**Predictor**	**β (Beta)**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Organisational Performance	Talent Acquisition Practice	0.65	9.38	<0.001
Employee Engagement	Talent Development Practice	0.71	10.42	<0.001

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Hypothesis One
H_{01}: Talent acquisition practice has no significant effect on organisational performance in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.
The regression analysis revealed that talent acquisition practice has a significant positive effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.65$, $t = 9.38$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that effective talent acquisition practices significantly improve organisational performance in the selected Nigerian telecommunication companies. Organisations that attract and recruit highly skilled employees are better positioned to improve productivity, innovation, service delivery, and overall organisational performance.

Hypothesis Two
H_{02}: Talent development practice has no significant effect on employee engagement in selected Nigerian telecommunication companies.
The findings indicate that talent development practice has a significant positive effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.71$, $t = 10.42$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result suggests that continuous training, coaching, mentoring, career development opportunities, and professional learning initiatives significantly enhance employees' enthusiasm, commitment, and involvement in organisational activities. Consequently, organisations that invest in talent development are more likely to cultivate an engaged and motivated workforce.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and existing empirical literature on strategic talent management practices, organisational performance, and employee engagement in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
Talent Acquisition Practice and Organisational Performance
The findings of this study revealed that talent acquisition practice has a significant positive effect on organisational performance in the selected Nigerian telecommunication companies. The regression analysis indicated that organisations with effective talent acquisition practices are more likely to achieve improved organisational performance through enhanced

productivity, innovation, service quality, and operational efficiency. This finding supports the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, which argues that organisations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by acquiring and retaining valuable, rare, and competent human resources. By recruiting employees whose knowledge, skills, and competencies align with organisational objectives, firms strengthen their capacity to respond to competitive and technological challenges.

The finding is consistent with Collings et al. (2022), who maintained that strategic talent acquisition enhances organisational success by ensuring that organisations recruit individuals capable of supporting long-term strategic goals. Similarly, Kravariti and Johnston (2022) found that effective talent acquisition systems improve workforce quality and organisational performance. Vaiman et al. (2024) also reported that strategic talent acquisition enhances organisational competitiveness, innovation, and operational effectiveness, particularly in technology-driven industries. The findings from MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria therefore underscore the strategic importance of talent acquisition in improving organisational performance within Nigeria's telecommunications industry.

Talent Development Practice and Employee Engagement

The study further established that talent development practice has a significant positive effect on employee engagement. The findings indicate that employees who are provided with continuous training, coaching, mentoring, and career development opportunities demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm, commitment, and involvement in organisational activities. This finding supports Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that employees reciprocate organisational investment in their growth and development through positive attitudes and behaviours. When employees perceive that their organisations are committed to their professional development, they become more engaged and willing to contribute to organisational success.

The finding agrees with Saks (2022), who reported that employee development initiatives significantly enhance employee engagement by increasing employees' sense of value and organisational support. Likewise, Albrecht et al. (2024) found that learning and development opportunities strengthen employee engagement by promoting motivation and commitment. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2023) similarly observed that talent development practices improve employee engagement by enhancing employees' competencies, career prospects, and psychological attachment to the organisation. The findings therefore suggest that continuous investment in employee development is essential for building and sustaining an engaged workforce capable of supporting organisational success in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that strategic talent management practices play a significant role in enhancing organisational outcomes within the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Specifically, the study established that talent acquisition practice has a significant positive effect on organisational performance, while talent development practice significantly enhances employee engagement. The findings indicate that organisations that attract competent employees and continuously invest in their professional development are more likely to improve organisational performance and foster an engaged workforce. The study therefore concludes that talent acquisition and talent development are essential strategic human resource management practices for achieving organisational effectiveness and sustaining competitive advantage in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Telecommunication companies should strengthen their talent acquisition practices by adopting competency-based recruitment and selection processes, employer branding initiatives, and technology-driven recruitment platforms to attract highly skilled employees whose competencies align with organisational goals.

Management should invest continuously in talent development through regular training programmes, mentoring, coaching, leadership development, and career advancement opportunities. Such initiatives will enhance employees' knowledge, skills, and engagement, enabling them to contribute more effectively to organisational success.

Human resource managers should align talent acquisition and talent development strategies with organisational objectives to ensure that talent management initiatives contribute directly to improved organisational performance and employee engagement.

Organisations should establish periodic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of talent management practices and identify areas requiring improvement. Continuous evaluation will support evidence-based decision-making and promote sustainable organisational growth.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in the fields of Human Resource Management and Strategic Management by providing empirical evidence on the effects of strategic talent management practices within the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

The study extends existing literature by establishing that talent acquisition practice significantly enhances organisational performance, thereby reinforcing the strategic importance of recruiting competent employees as a source of competitive advantage. It also demonstrates that talent development practice is a significant predictor of employee engagement, highlighting the role of continuous learning and career development in fostering an engaged workforce.

Furthermore, the study strengthens the application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory by demonstrating that talented employees constitute valuable organisational resources capable of improving organisational performance. It also supports Social Exchange Theory (SET) by providing evidence that employees reciprocate organisational investment in their development through higher levels of engagement. Finally, the findings provide practical guidance for managers and human resource practitioners on the strategic importance of talent acquisition and talent development in enhancing organisational performance and employee engagement within the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

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