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IMPACT OF HUMAN CAPITAL FLIGHT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU

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ABSTRACT: This paper examined the impact of human capital flight on the institutional development of Abia State University, Uturu. The objective is to find out the causes of human capital flight, its effects, and the various strategies to reduce it, as well as improve the institutional development of the University. A survey research design was adopted for the study, utilizing a mixed-method approach that combined both primary and secondary data collection. The study is anchored in structural functional theory. The research instrument was tagged "Human Capital Flight and Institutional Development Survey Questionnaire" (HCFIDSQ), and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient at a 0.05 significance level. The findings showed that there was a relationship between the causes of human capital flight, its effects and the dwindling development in the University, and that the institution management expressed interest in using the various strategies which could help them to reduce the rate of brain drain, but could not effectively utilize them. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government should regularly organize workshops/seminars to educate the university management on the need to effectively utilize the various strategies to reduce brain drain, and create an effective and efficient institutional policy capable of establishing a platform for entrepreneurship, as well as create opportunities to enhance development in the Abia State University.

Keywords: Human Capital Flight, Institutional Development, Management, Workshops, Entrepreneurship, Educational Opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian universities play a crucial role in fostering economic growth and development by cultivating a skilled workforce, driving innovation through research, and contributing to knowledge creation. They also provide a platform for entrepreneurship and offer educational opportunities that enhance human capital, thereby addressing the limitations and challenges facing

universities and helping them realize their full potential in driving economic progress (Minin & Odelewe, 2023). Universities are increasingly focused on generating new knowledge and fostering innovation, which are essential for institutional development. For example, the university research drives innovation, supports entrepreneurship, and the development of new technologies in a country. This knowledge creation can be translated into new products, services, and processes that can improve institutional productivity. Universities are primary sources of skilled labour, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for various industries and economic sectors. Higher education enhances human capital, which is a key driver of economic development. A skilled workforce can contribute to higher productivity and competitiveness, leading to increased institutional output. Universities can provide a platform for entrepreneurship by offering entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and access to resources for startups. University-industry collaborations can facilitate the commercialization of research findings and the development of new businesses. Entrepreneurial activities fueled by university research can create new jobs and contribute to economic diversification (Akuku, 2024).

Nigerian tertiary institutions can play a vital role in addressing specific economic challenges faced by the country. Research and development can lead to innovative solutions for issues such as poverty, unemployment, and resource management (Omotosho & Fakoyo, 2022). By tackling these challenges, universities can contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic development. In Nigeria, university research is not fully utilized due to factors such as funding constraints, weak connections between universities and industries, and limited commercialization of research. Addressing these challenges requires a stronger partnership between universities, industries and governments, as well as improved funding and infrastructure. Promoting interdisciplinary approaches and inclusivity in workforce development can enhance social and economic equity (Adenyi, 2023).

Human capital flight is the migration of skilled individuals, particularly professionals and intellectuals, from one institution or country to another (Chimee & Ojiako, 2021). It focuses on intra-institutional human capital flight, which is a slang term for the substantial movement of individuals from an institution. It can result from turmoil, the existence of favourable professional opportunities in other countries, or a desire to seek a higher standard of living. Brain drain can also occur at the organizational or industrial levels when workers perceive better pay, benefits, or upward mobility in another institution or organization. It can be triggered by various factors such as economic hardship, lack of opportunities, political instability, and better working conditions in other countries (Dami, 2022).

Institutional development encompasses the improvement of structures, systems, people, resources, and culture needed to run quality teaching, and research in the organization. It should be considered as "growing the university as an institution," not just running classes. Institutional development also focuses on qualitative factors that contribute to the well-being of a population. The consequences of human capital flight can be detrimental to the sending institution, potentially hindering institutional growth and development (Jewitt, 2025). Human capital flight is seen as the flight of skilled individuals, which significantly impacts the institutional development of Nigerian universities by reducing the quality of education, hindering research and development, and increasing dependence on foreign expertise. This results in a decline in academic and research

output, potentially hindering Nigeria's overall economic progress. Hence, there is need for the study.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, a lot of highly skilled researchers and professionals have been lost at Abia State University. The departures of these talented researchers have reduced research productivity and output, ultimately affecting the university's reputation and economic development. Again, the human capital flight has discouraged investment in research and development, as investors have viewed the loss of talent as a risk. Studies conducted by James (2021) and Agulu (2024) showed that human capital flight has a negative impact on economic development, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. According to Jewitt (2025), intra-institutional human capital flight has a significant negative impact on institutional development in the short and long run. Geographically, human capital flight occurs when talented professionals flee one country or region and move to a place or country they feel gives them better opportunities.

Regrettably, Abia State University may struggle to secure funding for research and development projects if they continue to experience significant flight. In the view of Chandra (2021), the consequences of human capital flight can be detrimental to the institution, hampering institutional development. However, depletion of skilled personnel has also discouraged institutional investment and decreased the ability of the university under study to innovate and compete globally. Therefore, this study is geared towards interrogating the nexus between human capital flight and institutional development in Abia State University.

Research Objectives

The core objective of the study is to examine the impact of human capital flight on the institutional development of Abia State University. The specific objectives are:

1. to find out the causes of brain drain against the institutional development of the Abia State University.
2. to examine the effects of brain drain on the institutional development of the Abia State University.
3. to identify the various strategies of reducing brain drain to improve the institutional development of the Abia State University.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are posed for the study:

1. What are the causes of brain drain as against the institutional development of the Abia State University?
2. How does brain drain affect the institutional development of the Abia State University?
3. What are the various strategies for reducing brain drain to improve the institutional development of the Abia State University?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the causes of brain drain and the institutional development of the Abia State University.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the implications of brain drain and the institutional development of the Abia State University.

Ho3: There is no significant strategy to be adopted to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of the Abia State University.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Human Capital Flight

The term "human capital flight" was coined by the Royal Society (RS) to describe the emigration of "scientists and technologists" to North America from post–World War II Europe. Another source indicates that this term was first used in the United Kingdom to describe the influx of Indian scientists and engineers into other countries (Benibo, 2021). Although in the opinion of Otupchunda and Itolo (2024), the term originally referred to technology workers leaving an institution for another, the meaning has broadened into the departure of educated or professionals from one economic sector to another or field, usually for better pay or living conditions within and outside a country. This could have inspired Chandra (2021) to see human capital flight as the movement of professionals from one nation to another. For him, it can be caused by various factors such as economic hardship, lack of opportunities, political instability, and poor working conditions in the countries. In this position, Dami (2022) reminds us that the consequences of brain drain can be detrimental to the sending country, potentially encumbering economic growth and development. He affirms that brain drain is the emigration or immigration of individuals with advanced training and skills from one country to another.

Adenyi (2023) highlights on the factors contributing to brain drain, including economic downturns, lack of career advancement opportunities, poor working conditions, and political instability in the sending country. He corroborates the argument that it can lead to a loss of skilled labour, hindering economic development in the sending country. Titus and Ogundiya (2023) appear to be on the same page with Dami (2022), when they posit that human capital flight is the emigration or immigration of individuals who have received advanced training in their organization or home country. They point out that the net benefit of human capital flight for the receiving organization or country is sometimes referred to as a "brain gain," whereas the net cost for the sending organization or country is referred to as "brain drain". In occupations with a surplus of graduates, immigration of foreign-trained professionals can exacerbate the underemployment of domestic graduates, whereas emigration from an area with a surplus of trained people can lead to better opportunities for those remaining. However, emigration may cause problems for the organization or home country if trained people are in short supply (Nuaghe & Abubakar, 2025).

Furthermore, research shows that there are significant economic benefits of human capital flight for the migrants themselves and for the receiving organization or country. The consequences for the country of origin are less straightforward, with research suggesting they can be positive, negative or mixed. Research also suggests that emigration, remittances and return migration can have a positive effect on democratization and the quality of political institutions in the country of origin (Waruta, 2021).

Causes of Human Capital Flight

Human capital flight has been defined as the movement of experienced or trained employees from one area to another. It often occurs between countries and cities where there is a sharp discrepancy in available opportunities. Looking at this assertion, Kashif and Nusrat (2023) observe that brain drain makes countries, industries, and organizations to lose a core portion of valuable individuals. The term is often used to describe the departure of certain researchers, professionals, including doctors, healthcare workers, scientists, engineers, financial professionals, etc. The places they leave are harmed in two ways; when these people leave, expertise is lost with each emigrant diminishing the supply of that profession (Agulu, 2024).

Subscribing to this, Abdelrahim and Ezenkwa (2023) opine that geographic brain drain occurs when talented professionals flee one region, and move to a region they feel that give them better and more opportunities. For them, several common causes can precipitate brain drain on the geographic level which include political instability, poor quality of life, limited access to health care, and a shortage of economic opportunity. These factors according to Adenyi (2023), can prompt skilled and talented workers to leave their countries for places that offer them better opportunities.

Organizational human capital flight involves the mass exodus of talented employees from a company or institution, often because they sense instability or a lack of opportunity within the company or institution (McCay-peet & Quan, 2022). Industrial brain drain happens when skilled workers exit not only a company but an entire industry. These two forms of brain drain are usually a byproduct of a rapidly evolving economic landscape in which organizations that are unable to keep up with technological and societal changes lose their best workers to organizations that can (Agbede & Adebayo, 2021). Several underlying factors can lead to this phenomenon, and they can vary depending on the type of brain drain that occurs. However, Otupchunda and Itolo (2024) highlight some of the causes or reasons employees choose to leave their countries/regions, including: (i) limited job opportunities - lacking suitable employment or career advancement opportunities. Economic opportunities including new and better jobs, higher standards of living, access to housing and health care, (ii) low pay or poor working conditions, where there is inadequate compensation or unsatisfactory work environments, and (iii) political instability or conflict, a situation where there are unstable political situations or conflict zones. To this end, Dami (2022) argues that most brain drains are geographic, but they can also occur as a result of situational factors. He contends that skilled workers may leave organizations when machines and technology replace human labour.

Effects of Human Capital Flight

The effects of human capital flight are felt not only in the area where it occurs, but also in the place where individuals move to. In this case, it can have chain reactions. For example, areas affected by brain drain end up with a dearth of human capital. Professionals who go elsewhere end up leaving a large gap behind, one that is not always easy to fill. Consider lecturers and medical professionals in developing nations who move to parts of the developed world for better opportunities; there may not be enough qualified people to replace them when they leave. This affects the overall quality of education or health care services in the institution or country (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023).

Speaking on the effect of loss of revenue, Nuaghe and Abubakar (2025) submit that governments rely on income taxes to fund their social programmes and infrastructure projects, pointing out that a mass exodus leads to a drop in tax receipts, which can stunt economic growth and development. Waruta (2021) on this note, observes that employees can experience overcrowding, especially in major metropolitan areas where more opportunities are available. He notes that a lot of people in one area put a strain on resources, and this can lead to higher prices and taxes. However, the effects of brain drain have been summarized by Benibo (2021) as; (i) loss of skilled workers, when highly skilled individuals, such as researchers and professors, leave a university or country, it can lead to a loss of expertise and innovation capacity, (ii) reduced research output, where the departure of talented researchers can decrease research productivity and output, ultimately affecting the university's reputation and economic growth, (iii) decreased investment, a situation where human capital flight can discourage investment on research and development, as investors may view the loss of talents as a risk, (iv) negative impact on economic growth - studies have shown that human capital flight can have a negative impact on economic growth, particularly in developing counties like Nigeria, (v) impact on university funding - struggling to secure funding for research, and development projects if they experience significant brain drain, (vi) low talent and expertise - depleting skilled workforce and impacting poor economic growth and development, (vii) reduced competitiveness – decreasing the ability to innovate and compete globally, and economic impact - losing investment in education and training.

Strategies for Overcoming Human Capital Flight

There is no easy fix for human capital flight but institutions and government leaders can do something to reduce or minimize it. However, Chimee and Ojiako (2021) suggest a few ways to mitigate brain drain in an institution to include; increasing investments in certain areas of the economy, offering of competitive wages, paving ways for legal, and social reform and improving the quality of resources such as housing and healthcare. To overcome human capital flight in Nigeria universities, Abdelrahim and Ezenkwa (2023) advocate for motivation and effective leadership style in the organization. For them, there is the need to implement motivation strategies to boost job satisfaction, and retain staff members. He adds that effective leadership style should be adopted to promote human capital development, such as transformational leadership to inspire and empower staff to achieve their best. Democratic leadership encourages participation and collaboration in decision-making processes. That is why Jewitt (2025) emphasizes on human relation leadership to foster positive relationships, and a supportive work environment.

James (2021) raises the issue of employee retention**,** maintaining that there is need for competitive compensation and benefits in the institution. In his view, the university management should offer attractive salaries, benefits, incentive packages and good working conditions to retain top talent. This could have positioned the mind of Adenyi (2023) to argue that there should be professional development opportunities aimed at providing training, mentorship, and opportunities for career advancement in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. He adds that there is need to improve the working conditions of the staff which cuts across enhancing infrastructure, facilities, and resources to create a conducive work environment. Writing on strategic human resource management**,** Akuku (2025) opines that there is need to foster on human capital contribution by prioritizing human capital development and contribution to organizational performance. Dami (2022) advocates for strategic capabilities to enhance economic development, and leveraging strategic capabilities to drive organizational growth and competitiveness.

Addressing brain drain will cut across addressing financial constraints, mitigating financial constraints that may drive staff members to seek opportunity elsewhere. Creating a supportive environment that encourages staff to stay and contribute to the university's growth (James, 2022). In the view of Benibo (2021), to mitigate these effects, universities can implement strategies such as offering competitive research grants and funding opportunities to retain top talent, providing state-of-the-art facilities, and supportive work environment to attract and retain skilled researchers, and fostering partnership with industries and other universities to create opportunities for researchers and students.

Concept of Institutional Development

The extent of institutional effectiveness determines the extent of productivity therein. An effective institution is a performance organization. This could be why Cole (2023) sees institutional development as the process of building, strengthening, and sustainable the capacity of an institution so it can perform its core functions effectively, adapt to change, and achieve its goals over time. For universities, it means improving everything that makes the university run well – not just buildings, but also people, systems, governance, and culture. In the view of Enoke and Onobun (2025), the core areas of institutional development in universities include governance and leadership – clear policies, transparent decision-making, effective councils/senates, autonomy with accountability; academic development – designing curriculum for quality teaching, research output, accreditation of programmes; and human resources – staffing, training, retention, performance management, academic staff/student ratios. Supporting this position, Adenyi (2023) adds that institutional development in universities cuts across having infrastructure and facilities such as lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, ICT, hostels, power, water; financial management – having sustainable founding, budgeting, IGR generation, audit compliance, prudent resource use; quality assurance – having internal QA units, external accreditation by NUC, tracer studies, student feedback systems; and community and industry linkages.

According to Etim (2021), the key indicators of institutional development for Nigerian universities are often based on what NUC, TETFund, and other stakeholders consider as factors, which include functional governing council and senate, strategic plan with clear KPIs, regular statutory meetings and published reports; academic quality – focusing on the percentage of progammes with NUC

accreditation, the staff: student ratio that meets NUC benchmark, e.g. 1: 20 for science; research publications per faculty member, number of PhDs among academic staff; staff development – looking at the percentage of staff with Ph.Ds/Masters, staff training programme per year, staff retention rate, competitive remuneration and welfare. Conceding this fact, Enoke and Onobun (2025) argue that institutional development for Nigerian universities should have adequate lecture theatres, labs, e-library access, ICT, student outcomes, research and innovation – cutting across the number of active research grants, patents, interventions, commercialized research, citation impact of publications and research capacity. In Nigeria, the NUC uses many of these indicators during accreditation and institutional accreditation exercises. TETFund also assesses institutional development when allocating intervention funds for infrastructure, research, and staff training.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on structural functional theory as its framework of analysis. The theory was developed by Gabriel Almond in 1953. Basically, this theory as a framework of analysis focuses attention on two primary issues - "functions" and "structure". Structural functionalism as is simply called raises two analytical questions, namely:

i. What functions are prerequisite and which must be performed in order to ensure the survival and maintenance of the institution as a system?
ii. What structures are needed to ensure the proper and adequate performance of such functions?

The ineffectiveness of the government or management of Abia State University to perform its functions creditably well, often cause migration to happen given to negative "push" factors from within and positive "pull" factors from outside the institution. For example, the irregular salaries, lack of research grants, insecurity, promotion delays at ABSU, and better pay in federal universities, modern laboratories, funding, career growth in foreign universities. However, to achieve the institutional goals in ABSU will depend on the extent to which the institution discourages inter-institutional human capital flight. The structure (ABSU management) can perform its functions well by focusing on reducing the indicators of direct negative impacts on ABSU's institutional development. This can manifest when there is attractive research funding, improved working conditions, effective collaboration and partnership with industries and other universities to create opportunities for researchers and students, etc. Such functions include digitalized human resource development and many more. Therefore, the institutional development of Abia State University depends on the extent to which there is active and committed management, improved employee motivation, training, professional skills and a high employee education level in the institution.

It is only when the management of the institution performs its functions creditably well by adopting effective administrative style to discourage human capital flight, such as transformational leadership – inspiring and empowering staff to achieve their best; offer attractive salaries, benefits, and incentive packages to retain top talent; mitigate financial constraints that may drive staff to seek opportunity elsewhere, etc. This explains why ABSU struggles to develop despite interventions.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of the teaching and non- teaching staff in Abia State University, with a population size of 1,491 personnel. Using the "Taro Yamane formula', 315 personnel were randomly selected as the sample size from the targeted population. The breakdown of the staff showed that the teaching staff has population size of 506 personnel, while the non- teaching staff has 985 personnel. A questionnaire titled; Human Capital Flight and Economic Development Survey Questionnaire (HCFEDSQ), was structured in a 4-Likert format. To ascertain the instrument's validity for the study, the researchers ensured that the questionnaire addressed the research questions and was reviewed experts. This was pilot tested, and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Thus, the questionnaires were administered for data collection, complemented with interviews and secondary data. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The decision rule for interpretation of the results of the data analysis was that of a mean score of 2.5 and above, which was regarded as agreed/ accepted while, below 2.5 was disagreed/ rejected.

RESULTS

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the causes of brain drain against the institutional development of the Abia State University?

Table 1: Mean Response on Causes of Brain Drain against the Institutional Development of the Abia State University.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	N	M	STD	DEC.
1.	Lack of suitable employment or career advancement opportunities.	150	90	40	38	985	315	3.14	1.04	Agreed
2.	Low pay or poor working conditions	109	102	62	40	906	315	2.88	1.02	Agreed
3.	There is political stability and job security in the institution.	41	73	97	104	681	315	2.16	1.03	Disagreed
4.	Most brain drains can occur as a result of situational factors.	120	98	66	31	937	315	2.97	0.99	Agreed
	Grand Mean/STD							**2.79**	**1.02**	**Agreed**

Source: Survey Data, 2025.

Table 1 showed that the respondents in items 1, 2 and 4 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed on the causes of brain drain against the institutional development of the Abia State University, while the respondents in item 3 disagreed with a mean score less than 2.50. Thus, the grand mean and standard deviation are 2.79 and 1.02, respectively. The implication is that many of the respondents believe in the causes of brain drain as opposed to the development of the Abia State University.

Research Question 2: How does brain drain affect the institutional development of the Abia State University?

Table 2: Mean Response on the Effects of Brain Drain on Institutional Development of Abia State University

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	N	M	STD	DEC.
5.	It does not reduces research outputs or results.	30	50	95	140	600	315	1.90	1.17	Disagreed
6.	There is loss of skilled workers.	111	98	63	43	907	315	2.88	1.04	Agreed
7.	There is negative impact on economic growth of the institution.	140	95	47	33	972	315	3.09	1.00	Agreed
8.	Human capital flight discourages investment on research and development.	115	101	79	20	941	315	2.99	0.93	Agreed
	Grand Mean/STD							**2.72**	**1.04**	**Agreed**

Source: Survey Data, 2025

Table 2 indicated that the respondents in items 6, 7 and 8 with mean scores above 2.50, agreed on how brain drain affected the institutional development of the Abia State University, while the respondents in item 5 disagreed with a mean score less than 2.50. However, the grand mean and standard deviation are 2.72 and 1.04, respectively. This implies that there is agreement among the respondents on how brain drain affects the development of the Abia State University.

Research Question 3: What are the various strategies to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of the Abia State University?

Table 3: Mean Response on Strategies to Reduce the Rate of Brain Drain and Improve the Institutional Development.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	N	M	STD	DEC.
9.	Offering competitive research grants and funding opportunities to retain top talent.	113	96	61	45	905	315	2.87	1.05	Agreed
10.	Implementing motivation strategies to boost job satisfaction and retain staff.	153	87	40	35	988	315	3.14	0.90	Agreed
11.	Creating economic/education opportunities for the staff.	112	102	62	37	915	315	2.90	1.03	Agreed
12.	Offering competitive salaries/wages to the staff.	117	96	76	26	934	315	2.97	0.97	Agreed
	Grand Mean/STD							**2.97**	**0.99**	**Agreed**

Source: Survey Data, 2025.

Table 3 reveals that all the respondents in items 9 - 12 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed on the various strategies to reduce the rate of brain drain, and improve the institutional development of the Abia State University. Again, the grand mean and standard deviation are 2.97 and 0.99 respectively. This underscores the fact that the people believe that the various strategies to reduce the rate of brain drain can improve the development of Abia State University.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Ha1: There is a significant implication of the causes of brain drain on the institutional development of Abia State University.

To test hypothesis one, data in Table 1 were used.

Ha1	There is a significant implication of the causes of brain drain on the economic development of Abia State University.	Pearson Correlation (r) = 0.87 Sig = 0.05 N = 315 Grand mean = 2.79 Standard Deviation = 1.02	"Fail to Reject" the alternative hypothesis.

The table above shows that the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation is 0.87 which indicates that there is correlation between causes of brain drain and dwindling institutional development of the Abia State University.

Ha2: There is significant relationship between the effects of brain drain and the institutional development of the Abia State University.

To test the hypothesis two above, data in Table 2 were used.

Ha2	There is significant relationship between the effects of brain drain and the economic development of the Abia State University.	Pearson Correlation (r) = 0.89 Sig = 0.05 N = 315 Grand mean = 2.72 Standard Deviation = 1.04	"Fail to Reject" the alternative hypothesis

The table above shows that the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation is 0.89 which indicates that there is correlation between the effects of brain drain and the weak institutional development of Abia State University.

Ha3: There is significant strategy to be adopted to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of Abia State University.

For the test of hypothesis three, data in Table 3 was used.

Ha3	There is significant strategy to be adopted to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the economic development of Abia State University.	Pearson Correlation (r) = 0.76 Sig = 0.05 N = 315 Grand mean = 2.97 Standard Deviation = 0.99	”Fail to Reject” the alternative hypothesis.

The table above shows that the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation is 0.76 which indicates that there is correlation between the strategy adopted to reduce brain drain and the degree of institutional development in Abia State University.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in table 1 revealed that there was significant implication of the causes of brain drain on the institutional development of the Abia State University. This finding is in line with the alternative hypothesis earlier postulated. Further assessment showed that poor institutional development in most Universities is due to human capital flight. This result agrees with Abdelrahim and Ezenkwa (2023), who opined that geographic brain drain occurs when talented professionals flee one region, and move to a region they feel that give them better and more opportunities. For them, several common causes that can precipitate brain drain on the geographic level include political instability, poor quality of life, limited access to healthcare, and a shortage of economic opportunity. Confirming this position, these factors according to Adenyi (2023) can prompt skilled and talented workers to leave their countries for places that offer them better opportunities. Supporting the result, Otupchunda and Itolo (2024) highlighted some of the reasons employees choose to leave their countries/regions to comprise limited job opportunities, low pay or poor working conditions, and political instability or conflict. Corroborating the result, while in an interview with a lecturer in the university, he observed that many of the resourceful staff left the institution due to poor education and economic opportunities cutting across higher standards of living, poor working conditions, as well as limited grants for career advancement within and outside the institution. Another lecturer stated that some institutions in Nigeria experienced overcrowding of skilled lecturers, especially in federal institutions where more opportunities are available.

Table 2 showed that there was significant relationship between the effects of brain drain and the institutional development of the Abia State University. This finding is in line with the alternative hypothesis earlier proposed. Further evaluation indicated that the effects of brain drain correlated with the dwindling institutional development of the Abia State University. In consonant with the result, Nuaghe and Abubakar (2025) submitted that the governments rely on income taxes to fund their social programmes and infrastructure projects, pointing out that a mass exodus can lead to a drop in tax receipts , which can stunt economic growth and development. Corroborating the finding, Benibo (2021) summarized the effects of brain drain to include loss of skilled workers**,** reduced research output**,** decreased investment**,** negative impact on institutional growth**,** inadequate university funding**,** low talent and expertise**,** reduced competitiveness and economic impact. Substantiating the result, while in an interview with a lecturer in the university, he lamented that “the effects of the flight is shortage of highly skilled lecturers like renowned researchers and professors leaving the university or country, which has led to a loss of expertise and innovation

capacity in the institution." Another one pointed at discouraged investment on research and development, as investors had viewed the loss of talents as a risk. According him, depleted skilled workforce had impacted poor economic growth and development in the institution.

Table 3 indicates that there are significant strategies to adopt to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of Abia State University. This finding is in agreement with the alternative hypothesis earlier postulated. Further valuation showed that well-adapted strategies could reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of the university**.** The finding agrees with the submission made by Chimee and Ojiako (2021), who suggested a few ways to fix brain drain in an institution, to include increasing investments in certain areas of the economy, offering competitive wages, paving the ways for legal and social reform, and improving the quality of resources such as housing, healthcare, working condition, etc.

Confirming this position, Benibo (2021) stated that the universities can implement strategies like; attractive research funding **-** offering competitive research grants and funding opportunities to retain top talent; improved working conditions - providing supportive work environment to attract and retain skilled researchers; collaboration and partnerships - fostering partnership with industries and other universities to create opportunities for researchers and students to mitigate the effects of brain drain, as well as improve the economic development of the Abia State University. To overcome human capital flight in Nigeria universities, scholars such as Abdelrahim & Ezenkwa (2023); Otupchunda & Itolo (2024); Jewitt (2025); Adenyi (2023); James (2021) and Akuku (2025), advocated for the following strategies to allay the effects of brain drain, and improve the economic development of the Abia State University to cut across effective motivation and leadership style**,** employee retention**,** strategic human resource management aimed at addressing brain drain in the Abia State University. To authenticate the result, a lecturer at the university advocated for competitive salaries, research grants, and funding opportunities for lecturers to retain top talent at the institution.

Conclusion

This study has examined the causes, effects, and various strategies to reduce human capital flight at Abia State University. The results of this study have provided empirical evidence that there is a correlation between "causes and effects" of brain drain and the dwindling rate of institutional development in the university. It is also established that there are various strategies available to reduce the rate of brain drain and improve the institutional development of the university. It is evident that the institution needs a platform for entrepreneurship, educational opportunities that are capable of enhancing human capital, and addressing the limitations and challenges facing the university, which is crucial for realizing the full potential in driving institutional progress. Universities are increasingly focused on generating new knowledge and fostering innovation, which are essential for institutional growth and development. For example, university research drives innovation, supports entrepreneurship, and fosters the development of new technologies in a country. This knowledge creation can be translated into new products and services, and processed to improve institutional productivity, with the aim of discouraging human capital flight at Abia State University and Nigerian universities at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. The university management should avoid the causes of human capital flight, such as limited job opportunities, low pay, poor working conditions, political instability, conflict, etc., to drive institutional development in the Abia State University.
2. The university management should work on the effects of human capital flight, such as (loss of skilled workers, reduced research output, low talent and expertise, etc.), to enhance the degree of institutional development in the university.
3. The government/university management should encourage the adoption of various strategies, such as offering competitive wages, creating economic/education opportunities and better working conditions, etc., to discourage human capital flight and improve the institutional development of the Abia State University.

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