

Human Capital Management Strategies in Zion Royal Theatre

Oki, Olumide Joshua ; and Olajide, Monsuru (PhD) 

Department of Performing Arts, Music and Film Studies, Lead City University, Ibadan. Nigeria.

Corresponding author: okiolumide@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In contemporary organisational studies, the management of human resources has increasingly been recognised as a cornerstone of institutional performance and sustainability. Within the creative industries, and particularly in theatre practice, the human element constitutes the most vital asset driving innovation, collaboration, and artistic excellence. Yet, in faith-based artistic organisations, where spirituality intersects with creativity, the question of how human talent is managed remains largely unexplored. Human capital management within Nigerian faith-based drama troupes remains an underexplored area in both theatre studies and management scholarship. This research focuses on Zion Royal Theatre, the theatrical arm of the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama and an extension of Mount Zion Faith Ministries, to examine how human resources are strategically mobilised in such settings. While human capital has been widely recognised as a driver of organisational growth, its dynamics within faith-driven artistic organisations require further interrogation. Anchored on Human Capital Theory and Spiritual Leadership Theory, the study investigates recruitment, training, retention, and development practices, the challenges and opportunities encountered, and their implications for performance, growth, and sustainability in Zion Royal Theatre. Adopting a qualitative research design, data were generated through semi-structured interviews with ten participants, comprising leaders, long-standing members, and newer recruits. The findings reveal that Zion Royal Theatre's recruitment is largely pipeline-driven through Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama, ensuring strong alignment between personal calling and organisational mission. Training integrates technical skill-building with spiritual mentorship, while retention is sustained by intrinsic motivation rooted in religious conviction rather than financial incentives. Key challenges include financial constraints, burnout, and limited exposure to professionalised standards. Nevertheless, the troupe benefits from strong opportunities through mentorship, community ethos, and spiritual leadership. The study concludes that Zion Royal Theatre demonstrates a distinctive model of human capital management where faith, creativity, and organisational resilience converge. Recommendations include diversifying recruitment pathways, institutionalising training and certification, enhancing welfare mechanisms, and advocating for broader recognition of faith-based drama in Nigeria's cultural policy landscape.

Keywords: Human Capital Management, Faith-Based Drama, Zion Royal Theatre, Human Capital Theory, Spiritual Leadership Theory.

Introduction

Management remains a foundational concept within organisational studies and is described as the systematic process of planning, organising, directing, and controlling resources to

achieve set objectives with both efficiency and effectiveness (Nurhikmah, 2024). From its classical foundations in Taylor's scientific management and Fayol's administrative principles to contemporary approaches that emphasise systems thinking and strategic alignment, management has consistently highlighted the centrality of human resources as the most valuable organisational asset (Chukwudi & Eusebius, 2023). The evolution of management practice from mechanistic efficiency to human-centred and adaptive paradigms demonstrates that organisational sustainability is inseparable from the effective management of people.

This logic extends beyond the corporate sector into the creative and cultural industries, where the application of management principles to artistic labour has produced the field of arts administration. Arts administration involves coordinating resources, nurturing creativity, and sustaining institutions in sectors such as visual arts, dance, music, and theatre (Barkela, 2021). Unlike corporate management, it balances economic considerations with creative integrity, often navigating tensions between profitability and art's intrinsic cultural or social value (Kirmani, 2023). In such contexts, human capital is not merely a means to efficiency but the embodiment of artistic vision and institutional survival. Within arts administration, theatre management occupies a distinctive space. It encompasses the coordination of artistic, technical, and administrative functions required to stage productions, while simultaneously managing financial, temporal, and logistical constraints (Idogho, 2025). The unique challenge of theatre management lies in reconciling artistic freedom with institutional accountability. Success depends on the careful cultivation of human capital such as actors, directors, writers, designers, and stage managers whose collaborative efforts directly shape both artistic quality and audience reception.

Human capital management, as a specialised dimension of organisational management, is particularly relevant to theatre organisations. It highlights processes of recruitment, training, retention, and succession planning as central to organisational growth and sustainability (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021; Arsawan et al., 2022). In the creative industries, where performance quality and innovation are talent-driven, the ability to manage, develop, and retain skilled individuals determines long-term success. The capacity of a troupe to renew itself through structured mentorship, motivate members despite resource constraints, and maintain continuity of leadership is a decisive factor in organisational endurance.

Drama troupes provide a compelling case for examining human capital management. In Nigeria, troupes have historically served as vehicles for storytelling, cultural preservation, and social critique. From Yoruba travelling theatre traditions to modern stage performance and film ministries, they have mobilised collective creativity for both entertainment and education (Okwuowulu et al., 2023). Over time, these groups have evolved from itinerant ensembles to more structured artistic communities that combine performance with moral

and social commentary. Yet their effectiveness is inseparable from the ways in which they recruit, train, and retain members, given the collaborative nature of dramatic performance. Faith-based drama troupes form a specialised subset of this landscape. Emerging prominently in the late 1980s and 1990s with groups such as Mount Zion Faith Ministries International, these troupes employ drama as a tool of Christian evangelism, moral instruction, and social transformation (Olayiwola, 2020). They differ from secular counterparts in that participation is frequently voluntary, driven by spiritual conviction rather than financial reward. Their talent pipelines often rely on informal mentorship, Bible study sessions, and spiritual discernment in recruitment. While this model sustains a strong sense of mission, it also creates vulnerabilities such as skill gaps and difficulties in succession planning, which threaten continuity (Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024).

In this context, the study of human capital management within faith-based drama troupes becomes critical. Existing literature has highlighted the contributions of Christian drama to evangelism and moral reformation (Ojo & Olatunji, 2023), but less attention has been paid to the internal organisational processes that sustain these ministries. Without systematic strategies for talent development and retention, troupes' risk inconsistent performance quality, reduced outreach capacity, and eventual decline. This gap is particularly striking in Nigeria, where the creative economy is expanding and faith-based troupes continue to wield significant cultural influence.

Zion Royal Theatre provides an ideal case study for this inquiry. Renowned for its community-based outreach dramas across churches and universities, it represents a microcosm of the opportunities and challenges facing Nigerian faith-based drama ministries. Its reliance on volunteers, emphasis on spiritual maturity, and commitment to artistic excellence make it a fertile site for examining how human capital management is conceptualised and operationalised in such contexts.

This study therefore investigates human capital management in Zion Royal Theatre, with particular attention to its recruitment, training, retention, and succession planning practices. By situating the analysis within the broader field of management and arts administration, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how talent is managed in non-profit, faith-driven creative organisations. It also addresses a critical gap in literature by foregrounding the interplay between economic rationality, artistic creativity, and spiritual conviction in shaping organisational sustainability. Thus, the study seeks to enrich both academic debates and practical strategies for strengthening faith-based drama troupes in Nigeria and beyond.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate human capital management in faith-based drama troupes, with a specific focus on Zion Royal Theatre, in order to understand how recruitment, training, retention, and succession planning contribute to the sustainability, artistic excellence, and spiritual mission of the ministry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the human capital management strategies adopted by Zion Royal Theatre in recruiting, training, retaining, and developing members.
2. To assess the impact of human capital management on the performance, growth, and sustainability of Zion Royal Theatre.
3. To identify the challenges and opportunities encountered by Zion Royal Theatre in managing human capital within a faith-based context.
4. To propose recommendations for strengthening human capital management practices in Nigerian faith-based drama troupes.

Research Questions

1. What human capital management strategies are employed by Zion Royal Theatre in recruiting, training, retaining, and developing its members?
2. How does human capital management influence the performance, growth, and sustainability of Zion Royal Theatre?
3. What challenges and opportunities does Zion Royal Theatre face in managing human capital?
4. What strategies can be recommended to enhance human capital management in Nigerian faith-based drama troupes?

Literature Review

Concept of Management

The study of management has long held a central place in the field of organisational research, not only because of its practical relevance but also due to its theoretical depth. At its core, management entails coordinating people, processes, and resources in a structured manner to accomplish predetermined objectives. According to Nurhikmah (2024), this involves the systematic processes of planning, organising, leading, and controlling, all of which are directed towards balancing efficiency in resource use with effectiveness in goal attainment. The classical schools of thought, including Frederick Taylor's scientific management, Henri Fayol's administrative principles, and Max Weber's bureaucracy, highlighted order, discipline, and structure in managing human and material resources (Dar, 2022; Gunasekara, 2023; Monteiro & Adler, 2022). However, subsequent human relations and behavioural approaches, such as Elton Mayo's Hawthorne studies and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, shifted attention towards the human dimension of work, underscoring the significance of motivation, satisfaction, and leadership style (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2021; Eze, Ogbuka, & Ugwu, 2022).

Contemporary theories now situate management as a dynamic and context-driven process, shaped by cultural, economic, and institutional realities. Systems theory and contingency theory highlight adaptability, feedback, and context-sensitive strategies (Chatterjee et al., 2024). Strategic management, meanwhile, has emphasised positioning organisations

within competitive environments (van Lieshout et al., 2021). This evolution makes clear that managing people is not simply an administrative necessity but a strategic imperative.

Human Capital Management

Human Capital Management (HCM) refers to the strategic process of recruiting, developing, motivating, and retaining individuals whose knowledge, skills, and creativity drive organisational success. It extends beyond administrative personnel functions to include deliberate planning and investment in human resources to enhance institutional effectiveness and long-term sustainability (Armstrong, 2024). In essence, Human Capital Management underscores the idea that people are not merely instruments for achieving goals but the central force through which organisational performance is realised.

In practice, effective Human Capital Management involves creating systems and environments that enable individuals to contribute optimally to organisational objectives. Recruitment processes are designed to identify individuals whose competencies align with institutional values and goals, while training and development initiatives build the capacities needed to adapt to changing operational contexts. Motivation and retention strategies ensure that employees or members remain committed, productive, and innovative, even in the face of constraints such as limited resources or external pressures (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021; Arsawan et al., 2022).

Within the creative and cultural sectors, Human Capital Management assumes a distinctive complexity. Artistic labour is deeply personal, skill-intensive, and often unpredictable. Managers must balance intrinsic motivations rooted in creativity and passion with organisational realities such as funding limitations, time pressures, and audience expectations (Mensah, 2025). Traditional performance management tools may therefore be inadequate, as creative personnel are typically driven by inspiration, artistic satisfaction, and opportunities for self-expression rather than material rewards. In such environments, effective Human Capital Management requires sensitivity to both the artistic and human dimensions of labour.

In theatre organisations, for instance, recruitment and retention depend not only on technical proficiency but also on collaborative temperament, adaptability, and shared artistic vision. Training takes place through workshops, rehearsals, mentorship, and practical experience, while performance evaluation often involves collective reflection rather than rigid appraisal systems. Because the success of a production depends on the synergy of diverse creative professionals such as actors, directors, designers, writers, and technicians, the management of human capital becomes both a strategic and relational task.

In faith-based drama ministries, the dynamics of Human Capital Management are even more critical. Membership is frequently voluntary, and motivation is sustained by spiritual conviction rather than financial reward. This means that recruitment often occurs through spiritual mentorship and personal calling, while training combines artistic skill development with discipleship and moral instruction. Retention and performance are anchored in

commitment to shared values and vision rather than contractual obligation. Such contexts demonstrate how Human Capital Management is beyond conventional management practices to embrace moral, spiritual, and communal dimensions of human engagement, particularly within creative and mission-driven organisations.

Arts and Theatre Management

Arts administration, or cultural management, applies management principles to the cultural sector, encompassing fundraising, marketing, human resources, and audience development (Barkela, 2021). It is a field that navigates the intersection between cultural value and financial sustainability, requiring sensitivity to both artistic vision and institutional accountability (Kirmani, 2023).

Within this field, theatre management is particularly notable. It involves managing artistic productions, coordinating technical and creative staff, and ensuring that performances meet both artistic and audience expectations. Theatre managers must manage scarce resources while safeguarding artistic integrity, often in challenging environments where funding and infrastructure are inadequate (Idogho, 2025). Importantly, theatre management requires attention to the recruitment and development of talent, since actors, directors, playwrights, and technicians are the lifeblood of productions. Thus, theatre management provides a fertile context for examining Human Capital Management strategies in practice.

Faith-Based Drama Troupes

Drama troupes have historically played vital roles in Nigeria's cultural and social life, from indigenous folk theatre to modern stage and film productions (Okwuowulu et al., 2023). Faith-based drama troupes, in particular, represent a specialised subset, defined by their mission to combine artistic expression with religious evangelism. Emerging prominently in the late 1980s, with Mount Zion Faith Ministries International serving as a pioneer, Christian drama groups have used theatre and film to promote moral instruction and religious transformation (Oki & Olatunji, 2024).

These troupes are unique in their management practices. Unlike secular troupes, which often operate within professional and commercial frameworks, faith-based groups rely heavily on volunteer participation, spiritual calling, and informal mentorship structures (Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024). Recruitment frequently occurs through church fellowships or perceived divine inspiration, training is embedded in spiritual and artistic mentorship, and retention depends largely on personal conviction and shared mission rather than financial incentives. While these characteristics enable high levels of commitment, they also raise sustainability challenges. Talented members may leave in search of professional opportunities, performance quality may vary due to skill gaps, and leadership succession may lack structure.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on Human Capital Management (HCM) within religious and cultural organisations have illuminated both the opportunities and challenges these bodies face in sustaining their workforces. Alfawaire and Atan (2021), in their study of non-profit organisations, argued that volunteer-based groups often lack sustainability when systematic training and retention mechanisms are absent. They found that passion and initial enthusiasm frequently wane if participants are not supported by structured professional development opportunities. Similarly, Jahani and Parayandeh (2024) examined faith-driven volunteerism and noted that while spirituality can mobilise people quickly, such enthusiasm alone does not guarantee long-term growth. Their study highlighted the necessity of professional frameworks to complement religious zeal.

In the Nigerian context, several scholars have noted that cultural and faith-based organisations often suffer from weak or absent human resource systems. Arifka (2024), in his assessment of cultural troupes, observed that many rely on informal structures where leadership charisma overshadows systematic planning. This often results in skill gap, burnout, and loss of institutional memory. Idogho (2025) further demonstrated that Nigerian theatre troupes are particularly vulnerable to instability due to the irregular availability of skilled actors and production crew. He stressed that the absence of structured mentorship schemes and incentives contributes to organisational fragility. This argument is echoed by Okwuowulu et al. (2023), who studied drama troupes and found that while they remain central to community mobilisation, their lack of formal Human Resource Management systems leads to performance inconsistency and weak succession strategies. Scholars examining church and ministry-based organisations have also underscored similar challenges. Ojo and Olatunji (2023), focusing on Christian drama ministries in South-West Nigeria, observed that these groups have contributed significantly to evangelism and socio-cultural transformation, yet they continue to operate with underdeveloped internal management practices. They found that poor human resource planning and the absence of structured training pipelines hinder the ability of these ministries to sustain their impact. Khurana and Ghosh (2021) reinforced this argument by noting that performing arts organisations without formal organisational and human resource structures often struggle with sustainability, operational continuity, and long-term growth, thereby limiting their capacity to scale productions and sustain influence over time.

Cyster and Salubi (2022) investigated Human Resource Management practices in church-based organisations and noted that while religious commitment sustains initial participation, inadequate attention to motivation, welfare, and development often results in attrition. Similarly, Ojuroye (2024) examined NGOs in Nigeria and found that their reliance on volunteerism makes them susceptible to high turnover unless professional Human Resource practices are institutionalised. Ngomane and Mahlangu (2014) observed that organisations built primarily around founder-charismatic leadership often struggle with leadership continuity because emerging leaders are not intentionally mentored or prepared for succession. This tendency can result in stagnation and weakened

organisational sustainability when founding leaders step aside. Other Nigerian-focused research in theatre and creative industries also underscores the need for Human Capital Management. Anyanwu (2019) studied cultural policy and theatre in Nigeria, highlighting the neglect of structured talent development as a critical weakness in sustaining theatre movements. These findings converge with Tugyetwena (2023), who explored management practices in Nigerian NGOs and stressed that human resource planning, continuous training, and incentive structures are essential for sustaining voluntary organisations.

Global scholarship reinforces these observations. Vanitha, Ganapathi, and Bhatla (2025) argued that artistic groups worldwide face instability when they lack professional Human Resource structures, as the creative sector is heavily reliant on irregular labour. Balanovska et al. (2024) added that the sustainability of creative organisations depends not just on artistic flair but on systematic approaches to managing human capital. Armstrong (2024) also underscored that human capital management must integrate leadership development, structured learning, and retention strategies to foster resilience in any organisation, whether corporate, cultural, or faith-based.

Despite these contributions, notable gaps persist in the literature. Much of the scholarship on Nigerian faith-based drama has treated Mount Zion Faith Ministries as a single, monolithic entity, often overlooking the diversity of its expressions and affiliated arms. While attention has been paid to the ministry's broader impact, less focus has been given to how its subsidiary groups such as Zion Royal Theatre practically organise, recruit, train, and sustain their human capital. Furthermore, although existing studies have examined Human Resource Management in churches, NGOs, and cultural troupes, there remains a scarcity of detailed, qualitative investigations into the everyday management of human resources within faith-based drama groups. An in-depth case study of Zion Royal Theatre therefore offers fresh insights into how faith-driven creative organisations negotiate the tension between spiritual commitment and professional management in contexts that often operate outside conventional HR frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two interrelated theoretical perspectives: Human Capital Theory (HCT), and Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT). These frameworks provide a multidimensional lens through which to understand human capital management in faith-based drama troupes, particularly Zion Royal Theatre.

Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Human Capital Theory posits that individuals' skills, knowledge, and capabilities constitute critical assets that contribute to organisational success. In the context of creative and faith-based organisations, this perspective is particularly relevant as the artistic and spiritual competencies of members are not merely supportive but central to the mission. Within Zion Royal Theatre, investments in training, mentorship, and spiritual development represent

strategic ways of enhancing the troupe's collective capacity. HCT explains why volunteer actors, even without formal remuneration, are treated as valuable assets whose growth determines the sustainability of the ministry.

Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT)

Spiritual Leadership Theory, advanced by Fry (2003) and further developed by Allen and Fry (2023), emphasises the role of vision, faith, and altruistic love in motivating followers. Unlike conventional leadership theories focused on transactional or transformational exchanges, SLT highlights how spiritual leaders inspire commitment by instilling a sense of calling and membership. In faith-based drama troupes, leadership is often rooted in spiritual authority and pastoral responsibility, rather than formal managerial hierarchy. Leaders motivate volunteer actors not primarily through financial incentives but by framing participation as ministry service, offering spiritual fulfilment and eternal value. SLT is therefore vital in explaining why members remain committed despite financial challenges, and how values-driven leadership sustains the troupe's mission.

These two perspectives illuminate the dynamics of human capital management in faith-based drama troupes. Human Capital Theory foregrounds the importance of investing in human talent, and Spiritual Leadership Theory explains the motivational and spiritual foundations that underpin volunteerism and long-term commitment. This integrated framework allows for a nuanced exploration of Zion Royal Theatre, recognising it simultaneously as an artistic organisation, a faith-based ministry, and a community of practice shaped by spiritual values.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, specifically a case study approach, to provide an in-depth exploration of human capital management in Zion Royal Theatre. The research is informed by two theoretical perspectives: Human Capital Theory and Spiritual Leadership Theory. These frameworks jointly guide the design of the study, the formulation of interview questions, and the interpretation of data.

The study population comprises members of Zion Royal Theatre, including both leadership (founders, directors, and coordinators) and participants (actors, technical crew, and trainees). Since the troupe is not excessively large, purposive sampling was used to select participants who have significant experience and insight into recruitment, training, retention, and performance processes. The sample size consists of 10 participants, ensuring representation from leadership, long-standing members, and newer recruits. This size is sufficient for a qualitative case study, as it balances depth with manageability while enabling data saturation.

Data saturation was reached at the eighth interview, as no substantially new themes or insights were emerging from subsequent interviews. However, two additional interviews were conducted to confirm thematic consistency and ensure adequacy of coverage across participant categories. The determination of saturation followed the principle of redundancy in qualitative inquiry, where repeated responses and recurring patterns indicated that the data corpus was sufficiently rich for thematic interpretation.

This study employs semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection method. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for in-depth exploration while retaining a degree of structure that ensures comparability across participants. They are particularly well suited for investigating processes, perceptions, and meanings in qualitative inquiry, allowing the researcher to capture the lived experiences of members of Zion Royal Theatre. The choice of semi-structured interviews aligns with the study's theoretical framework. Human Capital Theory emphasises the value of investing in people through recruitment, training, and retention, making it essential to capture members' experiences of these practices.

All interviews were conducted in English and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the meanings conveyed by participants. Field notes were also taken during and immediately after interviews to document contextual observations, non-verbal cues, and emerging reflections relevant to the study.

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis approach. This method was chosen because it provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The analysis followed six interrelated stages. The first stage involved familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts and listening to audio recordings. During this process, preliminary observations and reflective notes were documented. The second stage involved generating initial codes by systematically identifying significant statements, recurring ideas, and meaningful patterns related to recruitment, training, retention, development, challenges, and sustainability within Zion Royal Theatre.

The third stage involved searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader conceptual categories. Codes associated with spiritual motivation, mentorship, volunteerism, organisational growth, and financial challenges were clustered together to form preliminary themes. In the fourth stage, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and consistency with the coded extracts and the overall dataset. The fifth stage involved defining and naming the themes by clarifying their meanings, boundaries, and relevance to the research objectives and theoretical framework. Finally, the sixth stage involved producing the analytical narrative in which the themes were interpreted and connected to existing literature and the guiding theories of the study.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adopted strategies addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants, careful transcription of interviews, and the use of

direct quotations to accurately represent participants' perspectives. Transferability was strengthened through thick description of the research context, participants, and organisational setting, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar faith-based organisations. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail documenting the research process, including interview procedures, coding decisions, and theme development. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive journaling and the consistent grounding of interpretations in participants' accounts rather than researcher assumptions. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Department of Performing Arts, Music and Film Studies, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation throughout the study.

Findings

Recruitment, Training, Retention, and Development Strategies

Recruitment into Zion Royal Theatre follows two main pathways, which participants consistently highlighted in the interviews. All ten participants identified spiritual compatibility and shared values as central criteria for recruitment into the troupe. The first pathway is through personal networks, church fellowships, and informal recommendations. This reflects the faith-based character of the troupe, where spiritual commitment is considered as important as artistic skill. Several participants noted that joining the troupe was more of a spiritual experience than a formal application. For instance, Key Informant 3 explained, "I came in because a church friend introduced me to the troupe. The leader prayed with me, and from there I was allowed to join rehearsals. It felt more like a spiritual calling than a formal audition." This process emphasises community trust and spiritual discernment, ensuring that new members share the troupe's values and mission.

The second and more formalised pathway is through the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama, the academic training arm of Mount Zion Faith Ministries. Eight out of the ten participants described the Institute as the primary channel through which the troupe sustains continuity and ideological alignment. Zion Royal Theatre functions as the theatrical arm of the Institute, and students of the Institute are automatically affiliated with ZRT upon completion of their training. Key Informant 1, a senior member, described this process: "One major route of joining is through the Institute. Once you are trained at the Mount Zion Institute, you become part of the theatre arm, which is Zion Royal Theatre. That has always been the arrangement." This institutional connection provides Zion Royal Theatre with a steady pipeline of new recruits, ensuring continuity and stability in its human capital base. It also formalises recruitment in a way that balances faith commitment with technical instruction, offering both spiritual grounding and basic artistic training.

Once recruited, members undergo training that combines structured and experiential learning. Formal training is mainly delivered through Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama courses, which include modules in scriptwriting, directing, acting, and stage

management. However, within Zion Royal Theatre, training occurs primarily through mentorship and practice. Nine participants described the learning culture as predominantly mentorship-driven and experiential, relying heavily on rehearsal participation and observation of senior members. Participants consistently described the learning culture as "learning by doing," with senior members guiding new recruits in rehearsals and productions. Key Informant 6, a mid-level member, noted, "We don't have a classroom style of training every time. It is more of learning by doing. The leaders' pair you with someone who has experience, and gradually you pick up the skills." This mentorship-based system allows members to gradually acquire both technical and spiritual competencies, ensuring that knowledge is passed down informally across generations.

Retention of members in Zion Royal Theatre is strongly tied to spiritual conviction rather than material incentives. Unlike secular drama troupes that often rely on contracts and salaries to retain talent, Zion Royal Theatre members remain largely because of their shared belief in the ministry's vision. Seven out of the ten participants admitted that financial difficulties had, at different times, made them consider withdrawing from the troupe, yet all seven emphasised that spiritual conviction and communal support ultimately sustained their commitment. Key Informant 7 admitted that challenges sometimes made him consider leaving but emphasised that prayer and spiritual encouragement gave him strength to continue: "Honestly, financial challenges make you want to leave. But then you pray, and God reminds you this is more than drama, it is a calling. That conviction is what keeps many of us here." The troupe fosters this retention through regular prayer meetings, fellowships, and the cultivation of a family-like atmosphere. All ten participants described Zion Royal Theatre as both a spiritual and emotional support system, suggesting that retention is sustained not only by religious conviction but also by interpersonal bonds and communal identity.

Member development within ZRT is also progressive and holistic. Eight participants explained that they had experienced personal growth beyond acting, particularly in leadership, writing, directing, and mentoring responsibilities. Participants described opportunities to move beyond acting into other areas of leadership, writing, and directing. Key Informant 4, who joined as a performer, recounted: "When I joined, I was just acting. Later, they asked me to lead rehearsals, then to write small skits. Gradually, I have developed leadership skills that I never thought I had." This system of gradual responsibility prepares members not only for artistic excellence but also for organisational leadership, thereby ensuring sustainability and succession planning. The blend of informal mentorship and formal opportunities to lead provides a platform for members to grow spiritually, artistically, and organisationally.

Impact of Human Capital Management on Performance, Growth, and Sustainability

The findings suggest that human capital management has a profound influence on Zion Royal Theatre's performance, growth, and sustainability. All ten participants defined organisational performance primarily in terms of spiritual transformation and ministry

impact rather than technical theatrical sophistication. Performance was consistently described not in terms of technical perfection but in terms of spiritual impact. Key Informant 1 highlighted this distinction: "Our power is not in stage effects but in the message. People cry, repent, or rededicate their lives during our plays. That is performance in our context." This demonstrates that in faith-based drama, artistic performance is evaluated primarily by its ability to minister and transform lives, rather than its alignment with secular theatrical standards.

Growth was noted both in membership and in the quality of productions. Seven participants observed noticeable improvements in production quality, technical coordination, and audience reach over time. Key Informant 5, one of the leaders, reflected on the trajectory of ZRT: "We started small, without proper costumes or sound. Now, we stage full productions with lighting, sound, and scripts that are far more advanced. The growth is undeniable." Such growth is tied to the development of members' skills, the institutional pipeline of recruits, and the increasing adoption of digital platforms.

Sustainability, however, remains a pressing concern. Nine out of the ten participants expressed anxiety regarding the troupe's long-term sustainability, particularly in relation to funding, leadership succession, and the retention of younger members. Key Informant 9 expressed this concern: "What if the leaders are not here tomorrow? Will the younger ones sustain it without resources? That is my fear." Although spiritual conviction has provided resilience, the sustainability of Zion Royal Theatre depends on strengthening human capital strategies, particularly in areas of structured mentorship, financial support, and professional training.

A major pattern emerging across the interviews is the tension between spiritual resilience and structural fragility. While participants consistently described strong spiritual motivation, communal support, and commitment to ministry as the forces sustaining the troupe, these same narratives were repeatedly accompanied by concerns about inadequate funding, burnout, inconsistent professional development, and uncertain succession structures. Rather than existing as separate categories of "strengths" and "weaknesses," the findings suggest that Zion Royal Theatre survives through a continual negotiation between spiritual endurance and organisational vulnerability. Spiritual conviction functions as a compensatory mechanism that enables members to persevere despite structural limitations, yet the continued dependence on sacrifice and improvisation also exposes the fragility of the organisation's long-term sustainability.

Structural Fragility and Spiritual Resilience in Human Capital Management

Despite the evident strengths of Zion Royal Theatre's human capital strategies, participants highlighted significant challenges that threaten sustainability. Eight participants identified financial constraints as the most persistent challenge confronting the troupe. Since members are not salaried, they often bear personal costs for transportation, costumes, and accommodation during productions. Key Informant 9 explained, "We practically fund ourselves. Sometimes it is transport, sometimes it is costumes. It can be discouraging, especially for new members who don't have much." This lack of financial support creates a

strain, particularly for younger members who may lack stable income, and risks discouraging long-term commitment.

Another recurring challenge was skill gaps. Six participants acknowledged that although Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama provides foundational preparation, members still require more advanced professional training to compete with secular theatre standards. Key Informant 6 observed: "When you compare us with secular troupes that have gone for professional arts training, you can see differences. We need more professional input to balance our passion." This highlights a tension between passion-driven ministry and the professional demands of theatre production, pointing to the need for consistent professional development.

Burnout also emerged as a major issue, given that members juggle multiple responsibilities such as careers, family obligations, and church service alongside their theatre commitments. Seven participants described experiences of exhaustion, scheduling pressure, and emotional strain arising from balancing ministry activities with personal responsibilities. Key Informant 2 expressed the difficulty of balancing these responsibilities: "Sometimes, we rehearse late into the night after work. It is not easy, and some people eventually withdraw because they can't manage everything." This challenge is compounded by the absence of financial incentives, making participation heavily reliant on intrinsic motivation and spiritual dedication.

Nevertheless, participants identified spiritual commitment as the troupe's most important sustaining force. All ten participants repeatedly returned to themes of divine calling, sacrifice, and spiritual purpose when explaining why the troupe continues despite structural difficulties. Key Informant 8 stressed this point: "What keeps us going is that we see this as service to God. That mindset makes us endure what would normally discourage us." The troupe's shared faith provides resilience in the face of financial and logistical difficulties.

Participants also highlighted opportunities presented by digital platforms. Five participants specifically discussed the role of social media and online streaming in expanding the troupe's visibility and ministry outreach. Key Informant 10 explained, "Uploading our plays online has opened doors. People outside Nigeria now watch us, and it encourages us that our work has impact beyond the stage." This digital shift provides new avenues for visibility, evangelism, and potential donor engagement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study on human capital management within Zion Royal Theatre reveal a distinctive interplay between spiritual calling, artistic discipline, and organisational survival. Unlike secular drama organisations that often rely on formal contracts, financial incentives, and hierarchical professional structures, Zion Royal Theatre is embedded in a faith-driven ecosystem where spiritual conviction largely shapes recruitment, training, retention, and development practices. Analysing these findings through Human Capital Theory, and Spiritual Leadership Theory highlights how human capital management in

faith-based settings combines universal management principles with unique spiritual dimensions.

Recruitment into Zion Royal Theatre follows unconventional but deeply embedded pathways. The strong link with the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama ensures a steady flow of members who are already socialised into the values, discipline, and vision of the ministry. This recruitment system, as participants repeatedly noted, guarantees alignment between personal calling and organisational mission. This approach may be understood through Human Capital Theory, which emphasises that the selection of individuals with appropriate knowledge, skills, and values is foundational to organisational performance (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). In Zion Royal Theatre's case, the knowledge imparted at the Institute is not only artistic but also spiritual, creating a dual competency that strengthens the troupe's human capital base.

The reasons behind this recruitment approach are evident when considered against the limitations of open auditions and secular recruitment mechanisms. By relying on Mount Zion Institute as its academic arm, Zion Royal Theatre mitigates risks of misalignment, ensuring that new members are both spiritually committed and theatrically equipped. However, this also has implications. While the system ensures ideological consistency, it may inadvertently exclude talented individuals outside the Mount Zion Institute pipeline who could have enriched the troupe artistically. This aligns with the observations of Okwuowulu et al. (2023), who noted that faith-based troupes often prioritise spiritual affinity over professional diversity, sometimes at the cost of innovation.

Training within Zion Royal Theatre was highlighted by participants as both artistic and spiritual. Members described rigorous rehearsal sessions, mentorship by senior leaders, and institute-based workshops that combined technical instruction with moral formation. Such training aligns with Human Capital Theory's claim that human capital investments in education and skill acquisition directly enhance productivity and performance (Arsawan et al., 2022). At the same time, the integration of spiritual discipline reflects Spiritual Leadership Theory's emphasis on vision, hope, and altruistic love as motivators of sustained performance.

The reasons for such a dual training approach are rooted in Zion Royal Theatre's mission. Unlike commercial troupes, where technical mastery alone suffices, Zion Royal Theatre views drama as a ministry tool. This theological orientation requires that actors embody not just performance competence but also spiritual integrity. The implication is that training becomes holistic, shaping both the craft and the character of the performer. This resonates with the studies from Jahani and Parayandeh (2024), who observed that in volunteer-driven organisations, training is most effective when it nurtures intrinsic motivation alongside technical skill. However, the lack of formal certification and structured curricula beyond Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama raises questions of standardisation and long-term professional recognition in the broader creative industry. Zion Royal Theatre thus faces the challenge of balancing ministry-focused training with professional standards expected in secular settings.

Retention emerged as one of the most challenging areas. While participants expressed deep loyalty to the troupe, financial pressures often threatened sustained participation. The reliance on volunteerism is consistent with the wider practice in faith-based organisations, where intrinsic motivations outweigh extrinsic rewards. The reasons for attrition are therefore unsurprising: economic realities in Nigeria compel individuals to prioritise survival, which can conflict with unpaid ministry commitments. The implications of this dynamic are twofold. On the one hand, it poses risks to continuity, particularly in retaining younger members who may be more vulnerable to financial pressures. On the other hand, those who remain despite such challenges embody extraordinary commitment, which Spiritual Leadership Theory would interpret as evidence of spiritual leadership fostering a shared sense of mission and meaning (Allen & Fry, 2023). Comparatively, studies in secular creative industries highlight salary, career progression, and visibility as key retention factors (Mensah, 2025). Zion Royal Theatre's divergence from this model underscores the uniqueness of faith-based troupes, but it also signals the need for creative welfare strategies, such as stipends, cooperative schemes, or skill-building initiatives that enable members to sustain their livelihoods.

The challenges faced by Zion Royal Theatre, particularly in terms of funding, resource constraints, and burnout, further underscore the fragility of relying solely on spiritual motivation. These limitations have significant implications. While they hinder Zion Royal Theatre's ability to expand productions to larger scales, they simultaneously foster resilience, improvisation, and creativity. Opportunities within Zion Royal Theatre, however, were equally pronounced. Members spoke of the deep sense of belonging, mentorship, and spiritual encouragement as sources of strength. The implications of such a culture are profound. It reduces burnout, builds strong team cohesion, and fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer. This aligns with the findings of Kirmani (2023), who observed that cultural organisations grounded in shared values demonstrate stronger resilience during times of crisis compared to those driven solely by profit. In agreement with Spiritual Leadership Theory, Zion Royal Theatre's leadership provides vision and spiritual grounding that sustain morale even in the absence of material incentives.

Perhaps most importantly, the impact of human capital management on Zion Royal Theatre's performance and sustainability was repeatedly highlighted by participants. This directly affirms Human Capital Theory's argument that investment in people is the most sustainable path to productivity. At the same time, it echoes the contention that human talent, when well nurtured, constitutes a resource that is valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate, thereby sustaining competitive advantage. The implication is clear: Zion Royal Theatre's continuity and growth depend less on financial capital and more on its ability to consistently cultivate, inspire, and retain people.

The findings also agree with studies highlighting the centrality of people in the survival of faith-based drama. For instance, Ojo and Olatunji (2023) demonstrated how Christian drama groups in Nigeria thrive not because of abundant resources but because of dedicated

individuals who integrate art and mission. However, this study also diverges from existing literature by emphasising the systemic role of Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama in formalising recruitment and training. While many studies have noted the informality of faith-based troupes (Jahani & Parayandeh, 2024), Zion Royal Theatre represents an evolution towards structured human capital pipelines, suggesting an adaptive model that other ministries may emulate.

The discussion highlights that Zion Royal Theatre's human capital management is characterised by a unique combination of spiritual conviction, informal but effective training, resource improvisation, and resilience. The reasons for this lie in the troupe's theological orientation and historical link with Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama. The implications include both opportunities, such as deep commitment and cohesion, and challenges, such as vulnerability to financial pressures and resource scarcity. When situated within broader scholarship, these findings both affirm and extend the literature by demonstrating that faith-based troupes are not merely volunteer collectives but strategic organisations that consciously invest in their people, even if through unconventional means. By grounding management in spiritual leadership while also drawing from human capital and resource-based perspectives, Zion Royal Theatre demonstrates a hybrid model of sustainability that is contextually appropriate for Nigerian faith-based creative organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined human capital management strategies in Zion Royal Theatre, a Nigerian faith-based drama troupe closely linked to the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama. Drawing upon the Human Capital Theory and the Spiritual Leadership Theory, the research explored how Zion Royal Theatre recruits, trains, retains, and develops its members; the challenges and opportunities it faces; and the impact of these strategies on its performance, growth, and sustainability. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten key informants representing leadership, long-standing members, and new recruits, ensuring a balanced understanding of the troupe's human capital practices.

The findings revealed that Zion Royal Theatre adopts an integrated model of human capital management that harmonises artistic discipline with spiritual formation. Recruitment is predominantly pipeline-driven through Mount Zion Institute, ensuring spiritual and creative alignment between members and the ministry's vision. Training combines technical competence with moral and spiritual mentorship, while retention is sustained by intrinsic motivation rooted in a sense of divine calling rather than financial incentives. Despite persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, burnout, and limited access to professional development, the troupe continues to thrive on the strength of community spirit, spiritual leadership, and a shared sense of purpose. These findings reaffirm that Zion Royal Theatre's most valuable resource lies not in its material assets but in its people.

The study concludes that Zion Royal Theatre's model demonstrates a faith-based adaptation of human capital management, where spiritual conviction and organisational practice intersect to sustain creativity and ministry. The findings affirm the proposition of Human Capital Theory that investment in people is the most critical driver of productivity, while also validating Spiritual Leadership Theory, which posits that vision, altruistic love, and hope motivate sustained commitment in mission-oriented organisations. Together, these frameworks reveal that faith-based drama troupes can achieve both artistic excellence and organisational resilience when human capital is developed through a balance of faith, skill, and community.

Based on these insights, several recommendations are advanced. Zion Royal Theatre should diversify its recruitment pathways beyond the Mount Zion Institute to include other spiritually inclined and talented individuals from outside the institution. This would broaden the troupe's creative base while retaining its spiritual integrity through value-driven auditions and orientation processes. Furthermore, institutionalising training through structured modules and certification, possibly in partnership with academic or professional institutions would enhance the credibility of the troupe's talent development and improve employability within the broader creative industry.

To ensure sustainability, Zion Royal Theatre should introduce modest welfare schemes and financial support systems such as stipends, cooperative savings, or donor-funded initiatives. These measures would reduce attrition caused by financial strain and promote member retention. Moreover, deliberate mentorship frameworks should be established to facilitate the transfer of skills, values, and leadership across generations, thereby securing continuity of the troupe's vision.

The implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems would also enhance accountability and strategic planning, enabling Zion Royal Theatre to track progress and refine its human capital strategies. Lastly, advocacy for policy recognition is essential. Zion Royal Theatre and similar troupes should engage in collective efforts to gain representation in Nigeria's creative industry policies, thereby accessing funding, training, and platforms that acknowledge the vital role of Christian drama in national cultural development.

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