

# A Case Study on The Effects of Human Resource Shortages on Project Management in The Uk Health Sector: Focusing on Achieve Care Solutions Agency

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## Abstract

The healthcare sector, one of the most in-demand sectors in the UK, is currently facing a shortage of human resources. This shortage is due to several factors, including a high turnover rate, an aging workforce, and a lack of younger staff entering the sector. This study explores the impact of human resource shortages on project management within the UK healthcare sector, focusing on Achieve Care Solutions Agency.

To understand the context of this shortage, we surveyed 50 professionals from Achieve Care Solutions Agency. Out of the questions asked, 85% of the responses were properly returned. The data was then analyzed using graphical statistics to create averages, tables, and graphs showing frequency and percentages.

The findings of the study suggest that training has a positive effect on the motivation of Achieve Care's human resources. The current workforce in social care is experienced, and compassionate, and values their work, primarily because they feel appreciated and well-trained. However, the critical shortage of human resources is negatively impacting the UK's healthcare system and organizations like Achieve Care.

This study highlights the need for a healthcare delivery system adequately staffed with human resources. It emphasizes the importance of providing everyone with access to the guidance, support, and care they need to live fulfilling lives. Despite the challenges posed by human resource shortages, the healthcare sector presents a promising career path with a bright future, especially as other industries contract due to increased automation.

**Keywords:** Human resources shortages, Healthcare sector, Project management, Achieve care agency, Healthcare system

## Introduction

Historically, human resource management has been seen by professionals and analysts as a necessary expense rather than a key component of companies. Assets such as capital, machinery, technology, and facilities were often considered to hold economic value. However, with the changing business landscape, an increasing number of companies are recognizing the strategic value of human capital (Major & Machin, 2020).

As businesses attempt to recover from the economic shock of the long-term pandemic, they are faced with unique challenges. These include the need for exceptional regulations, a fully

operational system, and adequate human resources to accommodate changes such as physical distancing in the workplace and remote working , 2020).

Consequently, human resource management and planning are being revitalized in today's enterprises, with their strategic importance rapidly gaining recognition. This is particularly evident in the context of labor forces, where the dynamics of supply and demand are seen. The global pandemic and the economic implications of Brexit in the UK, coupled with the increasing demand for healthcare, have led to predictions that the global health personnel gap will reach 12.9 million in the coming decades, according to the World Health Organization in 2013.

The 2019 global epidemic has undoubtedly posed significant challenges for managers and HRM professionals. They are tasked with devising creative solutions to keep their businesses running, manage projects, and support their staff through these difficult times. The setbacks and potential opportunities brought about by COVID-19, particularly in terms of technological alternatives, have led to significant challenges in human resources. Often, organizations are unprepared to handle such crises when they arise (Wang, Hutchins, & Garavan, 2009).

News and media outlets are currently reporting hundreds of thousands of vacant jobs across various sectors, with no one available to fill them. This situation, combined with the rapid advancement of technology, shifting workplace demographics, and the impact of COVID-19, is creating challenges for project and product managers. These factors significantly affect daily outputs in projects and programs, leading to renewed interest in human resource research as a potential solution for improved project management and organizational performance.

In the UK health sector, one of the key responsibilities is to recruit, manage, and maintain a healthy workforce. Human resources have become central to all corporate decisions, evolving into a strategic function crucial for business success. Besides financial capital, the availability of personnel, or human capital is a significant factor in project management and organizational growth. The success of an organization depends on its people, and the workforce, including human and intellectual capital, can provide a significant competitive edge.

According to a 2004 report by the World Health Organization (WHO), there is a critical global shortage of health workers, with over 6 million positions expected to be filled. Healthcare providers are in high demand worldwide. The WHO estimated in 2004 that about 4 million workers are needed globally. The report also suggested that Sub-Saharan countries would need to triple their existing human resources to meet the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), requiring an additional 1 million workers through engagement, recruitment, and upskilling.

Effective human resources are believed to improve project management performance, especially in health systems, even under challenging conditions. There is little doubt that effective healthcare workers are key to achieving the UK's health and MDGs. The importance of healthcare employees in the UK's health systems cannot be overstated.

Every country, regardless of its wealth, should have a national workforce plan tailored to its needs and health challenges. These strategies should ensure that every household has access to a motivated, capable, and supported healthcare professional, preferably selected from within the community, accountable to it, and encouraged to contribute to it (Chen et al., 2004).

This study emphasizes the influence of a population's socioeconomic status, income, and variations in demographic and epidemiological characteristics on the demand for health professionals. As the UK's demographics shift, there is a shortage of health workers and other human resources. The aging population increases the demand for healthcare services. Changes in healthcare delivery and a rise in the number of UK residents requiring medical attention have disrupted traditional patterns. Outpatient visits are increasing, while hospital stays are decreasing. Both home health care and long-term care are in high demand.

Despite fewer hospital admissions, the cost of patient care is rising, putting more pressure on long-term care facilities. Rapid growth is seen in human resources management for health professionals in fields such as nursing, medical records, and highly skilled technical roles in ultrasound, radiography, and labs. Many organizations and industries are struggling to find enough qualified workers to carry out critical projects. Staff shortages become a serious issue impacting project management delivery when an organization's management struggles to find qualified candidates for open positions, fails to provide necessary training, or when there is a rising demand for the service.

The integration of project management or human resource practices into the overall organizational structure is often overlooked, leading to most issues with human resource shortages. In the current global health crisis and Brexit in the United Kingdom, the importance of human resource management concerning organizational, commercial, and health sector performance is widely recognized. Despite active recruitment efforts and strong industry connections, there is a shortage of human resources to successfully manage projects and conduct business in critical areas.

The main goal of different project management strategies is to ensure the availability of adequate human resources. Therefore, this study will primarily focus on how a shortage of human resources can affect the management of various projects, specifically within the UK's healthcare systems. This study aims to enhance understanding of the impact of the current human resource shortage on project management in the UK's healthcare sector.

## **Literature Review**

Organizations are ineffective without people. In today's world, project management is seen as a vital function by most organizations. These projects often involve numerous internal and external stakeholders, and a diverse set of objectives, and span across various industry sectors. Human resources play a pivotal role in boosting an organization's efficiency. The term "human resources" was first coined by Peter in his 1954 book. In this book, under the section on employee and labour management, Drucker introduced the concept of the employee as "the human resource", equating it to all other resources.

Achieve Care Solutions Agency is committed to helping clients with all their corporate staffing, training, and service requirements, as stated on its official website (2022). The company prides itself on its highly skilled team of healthcare professionals who offer comprehensive care packages and bring a wealth of industry experience. The company's guiding principle is to provide outstanding service to its clients and the professionals it works with by leveraging the best technology, processes, and personnel. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) predicts that the health and social care sectors will need to create an additional 40 million jobs

by 2030. Therefore, it is crucial to have a health team capable of addressing epidemiological concerns and evolving needs (Ross and Drennan, 2019).

Studies by Anand and Bärnighausen (2004) and Preston and Bank (1994) provide further evidence that human resource-related factors significantly influence the effectiveness of project-oriented businesses in executing projects and programs. Given the transient nature of many businesses, which affects their human resource management (Turner and Müller, 2003), the human composition of an organization must adapt whenever a new project or program is initiated.

Specifically, Achieve Care Solutions (ACS), a healthcare-focused company, is expected to prioritize its human resources. Consequently, ACS is continually in search of skilled medical professionals, nurses, and support staff to manage its initiatives. The availability of human resources can pose a challenge to any project or business expansion. The human and intellectual capital of a workforce can provide a significant competitive advantage and is essential for business success. Effective utilization of human resources is key to achieving project management objectives and is a vital aspect of project management performance. When assessing the management or performance of any project, the availability of human resources is the first factor to consider, as they drive procedures and standards.

The success or failure of a project in today's modern companies depends on the adequacy of available human resources. They are not mere substitutes for other system components. Human resources are vital to achieving key performance indicators of any project management or organization, such as quality, profitability, and customer satisfaction, because there is always a need for people to manage a project and how those people operate.

For instance, Marzo and Mori (2012) assessed the impacts of various external shocks, including economic crises, pandemics, natural disasters, human resources, and conflicts, on local community projects in a report for the World Bank. An analysis of how natural disasters affect economic dynamics shows that disasters differ from other shocks and disturbances that impact personnel and the economy. The reconstruction process or the reshuffling of economic activity due to the disaster itself can significantly change the labor market (APEC, 2013). The standard "business as usual" approach to managing human resources may not be suitable following a major disaster, as the operating environment is often uncertain, complex, and dynamic (Chang et al., 2011a, b).

A shortage of human resources can negatively impact the completion of a project or the management of projects in major industries, due to the unique value they bring. The success of a project depends on various factors, including the project's context, strategic perspective, and several other elements influenced by stakeholders' expectations, despite each project having its unique characteristics (Fortune et al., 2013).

For a project to succeed strategically, procedurally, and performance-wise, it must maintain a competitive advantage. This advantage is often tied to the availability of human resources to carry out critical project processes over a sustained period. Therefore, it can be argued that ample human resources are essential for project management to maintain a competitive edge. A lack of human resources could potentially jeopardize any project's success (Shah and Burke, 2014; Sterchx and Cockbain, 2014).

Moreover, human resources significantly influence an organization's development and progress. The availability of human resources is vital for an organization to grow, set standards, and thrive. The enhancement of organizational performance, productivity, and satisfaction heavily relies on human resources. Also, a company's competitive advantage and success are interconnected. Prioritizing the recruitment of a skilled workforce is always at the forefront of a company's operational planning (Shah and Burke, 2014).

As countries progressively lift the lockdown measures initially implemented to combat the pandemic, this affects both the supply and demand aspects of the labor market. While many workers lost their jobs and income, others continued to work under hazardous conditions to provide essential goods and services to society (ILO, 2020b).

In particular, many healthcare workers continued to work, putting their health at risk, while others held precarious jobs with high risk of loss and reduced working hours (ILO, 2020c). The importance of healthcare staff to the healthcare system is undisputed. A robust healthcare system undoubtedly requires a sufficient number of medical personnel, especially doctors and nurses.

The demand for healthcare professionals is influenced by the financial capabilities of governments, household incomes, and changes in a population's demographic and epidemiological characteristics (Liu et al., 2016). There is also an urgent need to mobilize human resources for global health, seize timely opportunities, and apply existing knowledge vigorously to save lives (Figure 1). This is crucial for meeting project management objectives that are essential for success in the UK health sector.

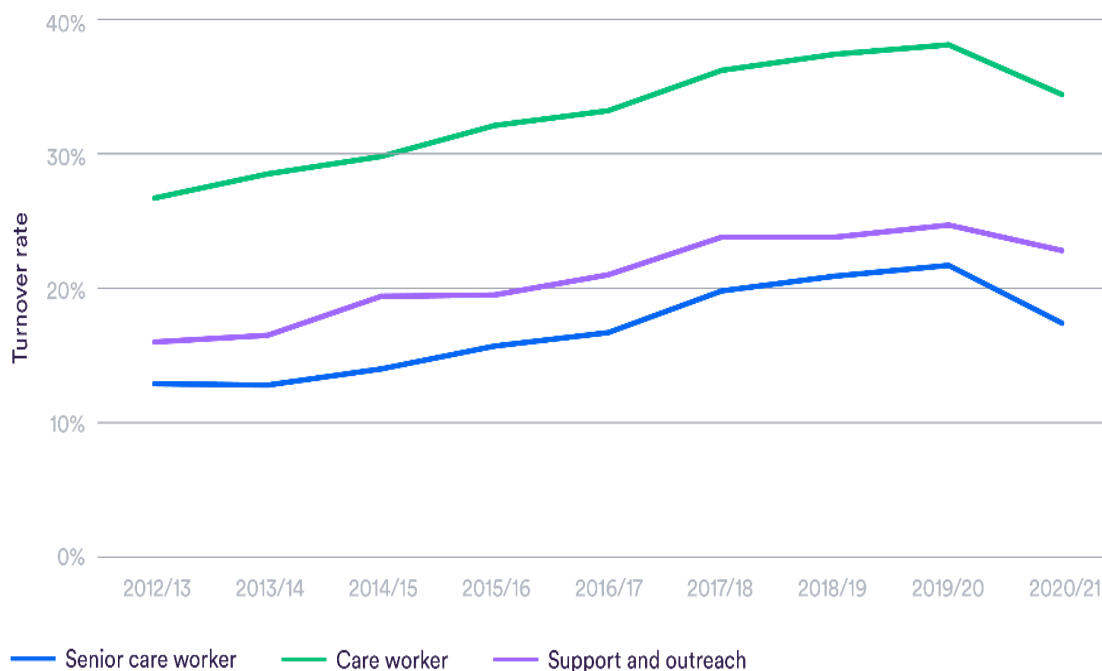


Figure 1 Source: Skills for Healthcare

A lack of human resources is a significant factor leading to job-related stress, which subsequently contributes to high employee turnover. In companies with a strong focus on project management, professionals may feel overwhelmed by their rapidly increasing workload. This chaotic environment can result in below-average work performance and negative impacts on the organization.

Industries such as healthcare, which have a history of consistent human resource shortages, may experience a higher incidence of workplace accidents. Healthcare workers, who often work long hours, are more susceptible to physical exhaustion, fatigue, and stress. Consequently, healthcare and project management professionals who are tired and distracted tend to be less productive.

## Methodology

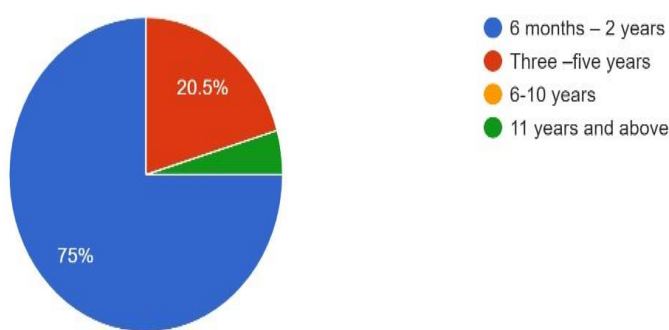
The research for this case study utilizes various data sources, including an online survey questionnaire, findings from previous literature, and a review of human resources management records and reports from Achieve Care Solutions.

This exploratory research study, with its focus on human resource shortages, aims to uncover several facts. These include the current project management methodologies and the state of project management within the UK healthcare industry. A thorough review of the literature was conducted to establish the framework for this research, and numerous participants from the healthcare and project management sectors were engaged. The preliminary research study's outcomes included a clearly outlined case study research approach, a detailed description of the firm, and a well-defined web survey using a questionnaire method.

## Results

The data presented in Figure 2 indicates that 75% of healthcare professionals have been employed by the Achieve Care Solutions agency for a period ranging from six months to two years. Meanwhile, 20.5% of the staff have been with the agency for three to five years, and a small fraction, 4.5%, have been employed for eleven years or more. The data suggests an increasing trend in the percentage of healthcare personnel who have recently joined the organization. However, there is a concerning decrease in the retention of professionals with six or more years of experience, who currently constitute a relatively small portion of the

1. How long have you worked with achieve care solutions agency organization?  
44 responses



workforce.

Figure 2 Duration of employment at Achieve care agency

Table 1: Condition of Workplace Context at Achieve Care Agency

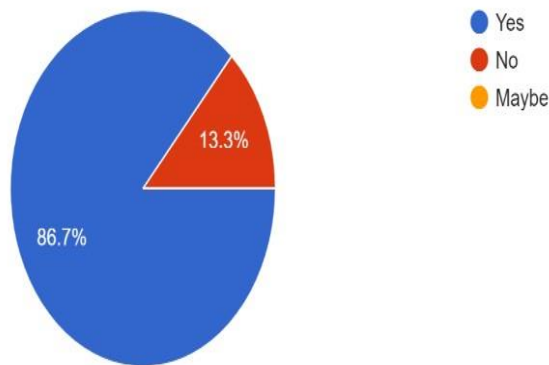
Condition of Workplace Context	Percentage %
Mesmerizing	9.1%

Motivating	63.6%
Uncertain	18.2%
Unsatisfying	9.1%

The information gathered from the respondents, which pertains to the preferred working and practicing contexts of the 44 professionals who responded, is presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated that their motivation is what sustains them in their jobs. Considering the increased workload during the pandemic, which heightened the passion and commitment towards the healthcare sector while also leading to worker exhaustion and stress, this finding is not surprising. Given the significant backlog in healthcare, it is anticipated that these demands will continue. This underscores the importance of the second research question, which seeks to assess the severity of the shortage of project management personnel in the UK's

3. Have you received any training since being assigned to this position?

45 responses



health sectors.

Figure 3: Training at the Achieve Care Agency

To ascertain if the shortage of human resources for managing projects in the healthcare sector can be attributed to training, demographic information of the respondents was collected. The data analysis presented in Figure 3 reveals that 86.7% of the respondents had received and continue to receive adequate on-the-job training from the agency, while 13.3% had not.

4. What kind of training have you had?

45 responses

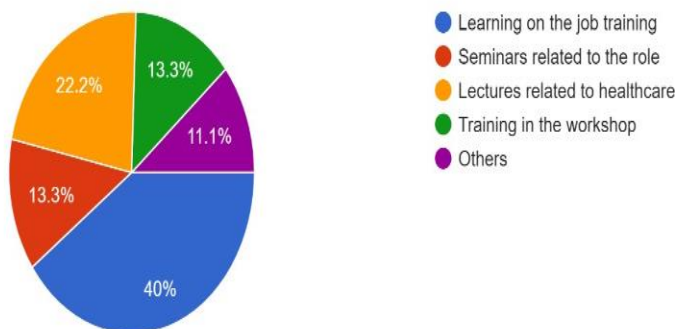


Figure 4: Training levels at the Achieve Care Agency

The statistics in Figure 4 indicate that 13.3% of the respondents have pursued ongoing training related to their roles and have attended scheduled healthcare workshops. Meanwhile, 40% of the respondents have broadened their knowledge based on the diverse positions they currently occupy at work. However, only 22.2% of the respondents reported having received training in all the primary healthcare-related fields at least once.

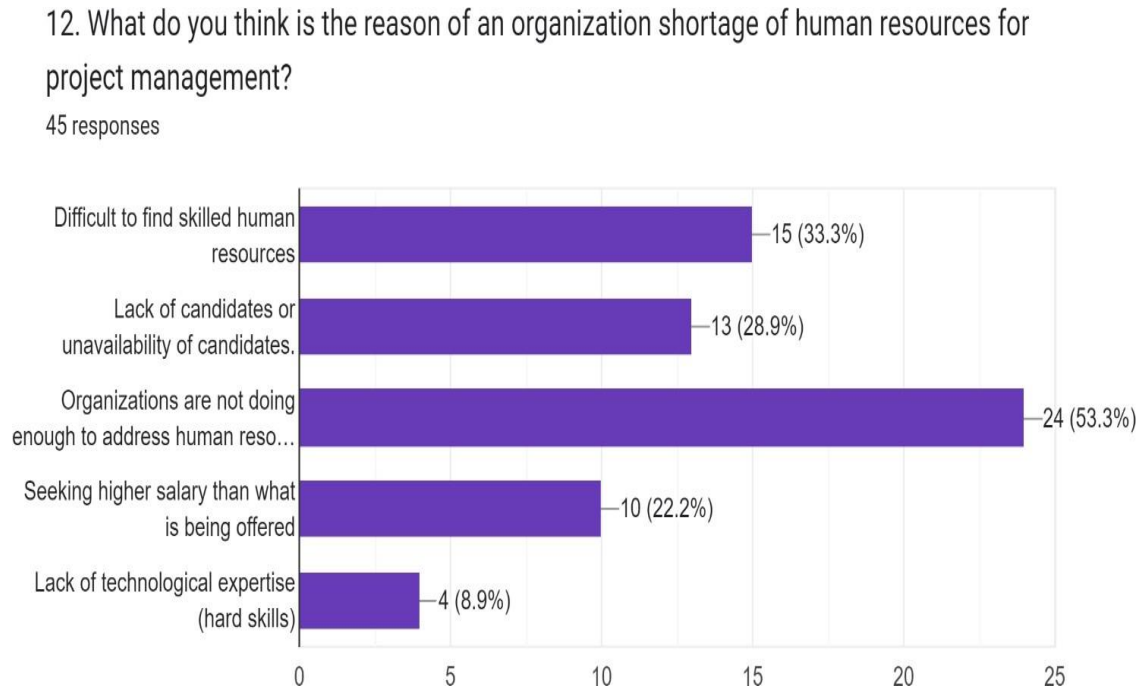


Figure 5: Reflection of respondents on the shortage of human resources

The research findings in Figure 5 above shows that:

- 53.3% of professionals believe that organizations are not doing enough to address the lack of human resources
- 33.3% of professionals believe it is challenging to locate qualified human resources.
- 28.9% of experts believe either a lack of candidates or an absence of candidates.
- 22.2% of professionals believe that seeking a higher income than what is being provided is an innovative idea.
- 8.9% of professionals believe they lack technological expertise (hard skills).



13. Which do you considered the impact of shortage of human resource will be project management in the UK health care system?

45 responses

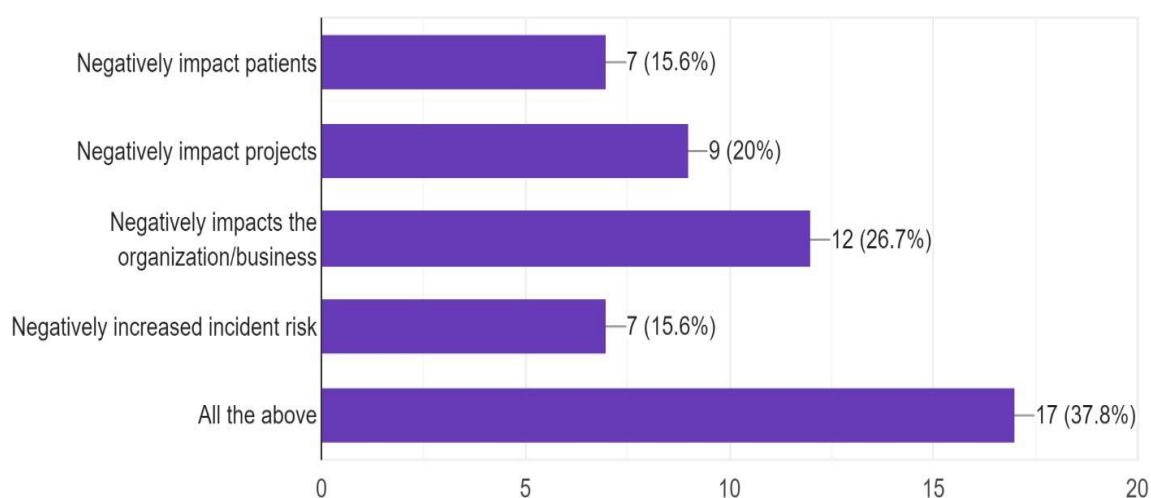


Figure 6: Impact on the management of UK healthcare projects in terms of human resources shortage

As depicted in Figure 6, 26.7% of respondents agreed that a lack of human resources would negatively impact the healthcare organization or business. Meanwhile, 37.8% of respondents concurred with all the potential negative effects presented. Furthermore, 20% of respondents believed that it would adversely affect daily tasks, and 15.6% felt that it would negatively impact patient care and increase the frequency of risk-related incidents.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Rewritten Text: According to a recent national study titled "The Future of NHS Human Resources and Organisational Growth" (Prerana, 2021), it is the responsibility of an organization and integrated care system to understand why individuals leave the NHS and take action to address these causes. This principle also applies to social care, as stated by Palmer and Rolewicz (2022). A deeper understanding of this issue is recommended to prevent services and environments from unfairly competing for limited human resources. It is crucial for management at all levels to quickly understand and address the reasons why employees have left or plan to leave.

The pandemic has been challenging for everyone, but particularly for health professionals and those who rely on their services. Despite these challenges, people in the UK and around the world have used their skills, creativity, and compassion to support their loved ones and community members during COVID-19. Statistics show that worker absenteeism levels have more than doubled from the previous year, indicating a workforce at risk of burnout and highlighting the difficulty businesses face in finding and retaining personnel.

Currently, there are more job opportunities in the UK than there were before COVID-19, despite more people entering the social care sector at the start of the pandemic. Market data suggests that this situation will likely worsen even after the finalization of the Brexit deal. This situation inspired the case study of Achieve Care Agency in this research, underlining the assumption that

the healthcare industry must improve job conditions to make them more professionally rewarding and attractive, especially to attract more foreign students.

Training not only improves employee productivity but also enhances overall organizational performance. It is argued that human resources training is crucial for a company's long-term success. Organizations need professionals who can quickly adapt to a global industry. Previous research has demonstrated the importance of professional development in achieving business objectives. With appropriate training, commitment, loyalty, and productivity of human resources can increase, thereby enhancing organizational success in sectors like healthcare.

In the field of healthcare, project management is a vital skill. The current service delivery crisis has highlighted the importance of NHS human resource experts and their skills. The existing strategy is not sufficient for the NHS's current growth, but Prerana Issar, the organization's Chief People Officer, believes that the NHS of 2030 and beyond will require a new strategy. This will involve a shift in how decision-makers and human specialists serve the users and staff of the UK National Health Service, including working beyond existing organizational boundaries, overcoming obstacles, and changing responsibilities. All of these can only be achieved with the effective use of human resources.

This study recommends the dissemination and general implementation of innovative approaches to create a caring, inclusive, and value-driven human resource. This will reflect the proper management of projects within healthcare, as anticipated, and fundamentally eliminate the impact of human resource shortages, as presented in this research.

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