MEANINGLESSNESS AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION OF MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between meaninglessness and employee retention in mobile telecommunication companies in South-South, Nigeria. The methodology for the study is the quantitative method, the design is cross-sectional design while data was collected using the questionnaire from 201 staffers within the telecommunication companies in South-South, Nigeria. The Spearman's rank order correlation and the partial correlation test were applied as inferential statistical tools in the test for the bivariate (Spearman's rho) and multivariate (partial correlation) hypotheses of the study. All relationships were observed to be significant and thus all null hypothesis were rejected. The results showed that meaninglessness relates negatively on work outcomes and relationships and thus reduces the possibility and chances of employee retention for the organization. In findings, Meaninglessness is found to have big results in particular on businesses. Workers are tormented by social, mental, economic and organizational factors at some

point of their work existence. As such, the researcher concludes amongst others that manifestations and experience of meaninglessness by workers negatively impacts on their decisions to stay or remain with the organization – thus negatively influencing outcomes of job security, welfare management and working conditions of mobile telecommunication companies in South-South, Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that management of the mobile telecommunication firms should incorporate structures and emphasizes on work features that enrich workers roles and functions in ways that advance meaning and improve their sense of placement within the workplace or organization. Secondly, That the culture of the organization should be emphasized in such a way that workers are integrated and effectively oriented about the values, expectations and norms of the organization especially as regards ethical actions and practices within the workplace as that will make their jobs more meaningful.

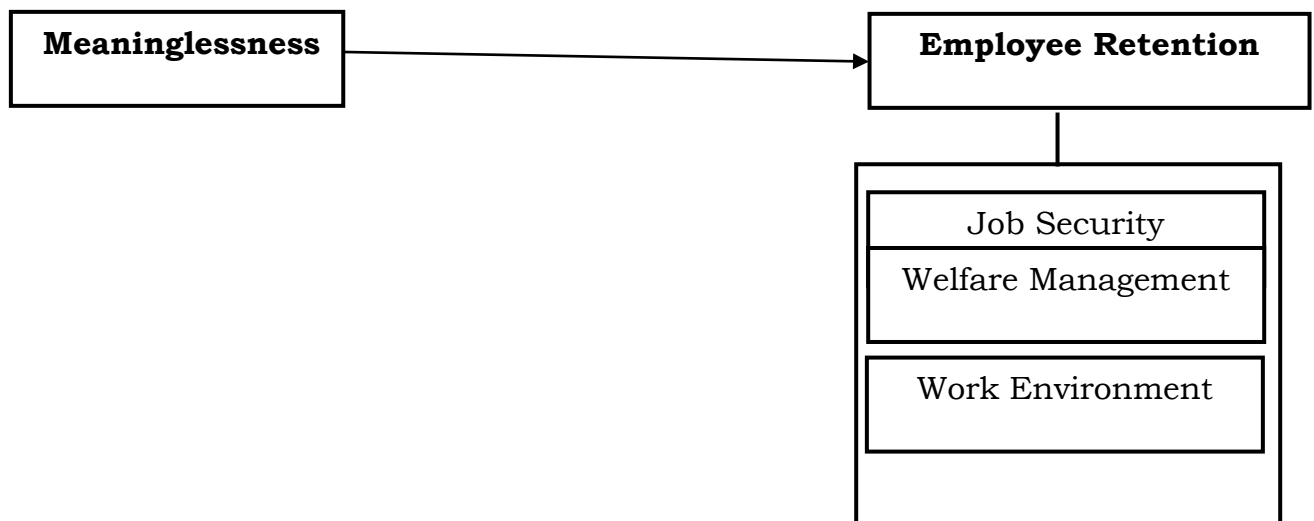**Key Words:** Meaninglessness, Employee Retention, Job Security, Welfare Management, Work Environment.

Introduction

Meaningless can be traced to the work of Karl Marx as this is affirmed by Lindsay and O' Duonohue (2006) as they quote that Marx described meaninglessness as the importance of the work and its product, hence the worker feels at home only when it is his vacation time but feels homeless when he is at work. That is to say that his work is not voluntary but obligatory (forced labour). It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but a way of satisfying other means. In the workplace meaninglessness is the immediate importance the work operation or product is for the worker; thus, it is based on this that the work can be basically punishing to the point of depression.

Harvard Business School (2016) stated some factors that destroy the fragile sense of meaninglessness in which employees find in the place of work that make them ask why am I doing this work as a result of a function of the way employees are treated by managers and leaders such as to disconnect employees from their values, take employees for granted, give employees pointless work to do, treat them unfairly, override employees' better judgment, disconnect employee from supportive relationship and put employees at a risk of physical and emotional harm. Below is the purpose of the study and questionnaire.

1. To examine the relationship between meaninglessness and employee retention of mobile telecommunication companies in South-South Nigeria.

1. What is the relationship between meaninglessness and employee retention of mobile telecommunication companies in South-South Nigeria.

Conceptual framework

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│     Meaninglessness     │ ─────────────────▶ │   Employee Retention    │
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                                               │ │      Job Security       │ │
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                                               │ │    Work Environment     │ │
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Review of Literature

Concept of Meaninglessness

From Sonia (2016) meaninglessness is the feelings employees have that their work is not considered to be significant or useful, due to the fact that it has no value to the environment in which they operate or the society at large. The author added that meaninglessness refers to a situation in which an individual does not have the sense of how their own work contributes to the whole job. A meaningless world presents psychological dangers to the individual, while meaningfulness represents sense of autonomy, creativity and above all, the choice of an individual to create a meaningful world. However, a world with meaninglessness pushes the individual into a place of insanity. According to job characteristics model (JCM) of Hackman and Oldham, the core job dimensions like skill variety, task identity and task significance are directly related to the experience of meaningfulness of work. Nevertheless, even after more than two decades of empirical research on the JCM, the hypothesized associations between job dimensions and critical psychological states are yet to be fully established. Other substitutes of work design methods have been developed for the same purpose, for instance the socio-technical systems approach and others. Although, they still remain imperfect tools for dealing with the meaninglessness aspects of estrangement. However, a world with meaninglessness pushes the individual into a place of insanity.

According to Amanda, Kerstin, Catherine and Emma (2015) task variety is defined as the extent at which a job requires completion with a variety of task, rather than the opposite. Empirical studies have proven that when jobs are repeated it leads the job holders to experience psychological distress, which may in turn cause them to reasonably disengage themselves from work. Individuals who feel that they are engaged in a variety of tasks, believe that their work is interesting and motivational. While in task identity, he explained that the value of a person is when the person has the ability to know the ends of actions as purposeful idea and intelligible at all points in time when making a product or idea. Within the context of a job, task identity is defined as the extent in which a job involves completion from beginning to the end of an identifiable and visible piece of work. For instance, a job that involves the completion of a piece of work in a manufacturing assembly line has low levels of task identity.

He explained that Meaninglessness is a situation where an employee experiences some challenges in understanding his works, what the organization does, job processes, what his unit does, how other units are interrelated and what the employees in such units do (Mahiyat, 2019), and that is what Laura (2019) discovered to be the inward absence of understanding oneself, the personal ability to make out solutions for a particular condition or situation which is hindered by lack of understanding the environment or workplace he finds himself as a result, such person can undergo some level of anxiety and crises because of the uncertainty of his or her job outcome.

On the part of Wayne and Lindsay (2014) meaninglessness refers to a situation where an individual does not have the knowledge of how his or her job contributes to the entire work in the workplace. They also said that it is the immediate importance a work operation or product is to the employee. This is as a result of how a job can be basically strenuous or punishing to the extent of turning to be a source of depression; and that is why the issue of meaningful work has been the focus of organizational psychologists especially in the area of job design and motivation. Job design is in connection with activities of employees, their duties, the required responsibilities to perform their job and the manner in which those responsibilities and duties are arranged and scheduled (kevin, Cigdem, David, Antonina & Oluwafunmilayo, 2017). Similarly, job design is seen as the content, structure and one's task in an organization. Which is mostly regarded in terms of job characteristics. So, whether work is useful or harmful is dependent so much on the way job is designed (Anja & Sharon, 2017).

According to Miebiaka and Chibuike (2021) meaninglessness occurs when employees are not able to comprehend the diverse systems of goals within the workplace and how it relates with their own job. On the other hand, when workers are expected to perform a simple task that does not attach a responsibility always makes the workers to lose their sense of direction and therefore makes the job becomes meaningless. As Lars and Laura (2011) noted that meaninglessness refers to the individual's sense of understanding the events in which he or she is engaged in. In the work

settings, meaninglessness may occur when workers are not able to understand the complex system of goals in the organization and how it relates with their own work.

Employee Retention

Employee retention according to Gul, Fariha and Kiran (2018) who hails from USA, Europe and Asia, said the effect of labour movement in the 1990s occurred when the owners of organization started having the impact of labour turnover that changed the performance on the job. This therefore led to organizations to pay attention on employee retention with an effort to make them successful.

On this note, Bodjrenou, Bomboma and Ming (2016) state that employee retention are the ways organizations plan to keep or encourage employees to remain with them for maximum period of time and/or it is a systematic effort that is adopted or put in place to create and nurture an environment that will encourage employees to remain engaged by having policies and practices that are in cognizance of their diverse needs. Another scholar Raminder (2017) on his part defined it as an effort by an organization in sustaining working environment that will support the new employees to remain in the job. This two definitions appear to go in one direction of thought, therefore seems vague in terms of understanding the needs, objectives and goals of an organization in making efforts to retain her employees; considering the negative effect of cost of employee retention in an organization (Supriya, 2016), this cost of employee retention is affirmed by Satpal and Manju (2016) that organizational echelon and the Human Resource Department sacrifice a lot of times, efforts and money to explore how to retain their employees. Then it is important to adopt the definitions that highlight or talks about achieving result for the purpose of workers retention with reference to Zinger Model adapted by (Supriya, 2016), such as goals and objectives (Revenio, 2015). Drawing from that of Munish and Rachna (2017) employee retention is an employer effort to create good policies that will retain capable employees so that organizational goals and success can be achieved. Goal is regarded as aim or purpose, or it is the final result that organizations particularly try to achieve (Osahon, 2018). Also, it is the object or aim that organizations want to achieve (Shane, 2018).

Job Security

In recent times several researchers have strived to discover the most important reason for employee's success in different areas. A lot of them talked about the importance to ensure that there is job security. So job security is defined and offered in various ways by distinguished researchers; which in their views is seen as the guarantee or confidence of an employee that his organization will keep his present job or it is a state in which one is aware that there is no likelihood of being dismissed or declared redundant in an organization (Shouvik, Mohammed & Zainab, 2018). Noraisha (2017) defined it as employees who continue to work for an organization without

making weak the seniority rights, salaries, retirements and others as he concludes that job security is necessary and vital for the purpose of retaining employees to enhance productivity. He said that the economic recession has attracted several changes in the workplace and in the workforce which job security has become a pervading issue in the business environment.

Burchell (2014) explained it as the feelings of employees that their job or a vital feature of their job is secured. This is considered as employees' own view in most research; which is referred to as subjective job security, however there are instances as contained in the literature to measure objective job security through the rate of redundancy, industry retrenchment rates, or where downsizing or closure programs have been announced. Measures of job security are obtainable in several large international studies and it is usually asked the possibility of job loss in a particular time period. To Esuh, Mohd and Hamzah (2013) job security is seen as the guarantee that an employee will remain in his/her job in spite of the economic conditions in the country. It is the opportunity or likelihood of an employee retaining his/her job. Job that are not backed by specified agreement or cannot be guaranteed for a good number of time are deemed to have no job security. He added that there are number of factors that play a significant role in identifying the need for employees' services and which influence their job security such as: employment contract, collective bargaining agreement, labor industry, work location and others.

Welfare Management

Dushar (2019) defined welfare management as the efforts made by employer to create within an organizational system working, living and cultural conditions of workers beyond what the law requires. Simon, John and George (2014) see welfare management as the policies, services, benefits and facilities that are established by an organization for the purpose of elevating the lives of employees and make them happy and comfortable. To Web Newswire (2020) welfare management is a system of creating, maintaining and managing welfare for workers in an organization. And such welfare include medical insurance, pension system or plans, individual retirement accounts, vacation time, sick time and maternity leave.

According to Supriya (2016) organizations offer welfare facilities to their workers so that their motivation level will be high. So many organizations offer both statutory and non-statutory policies to their workers to maintain their satisfactory level. When workers are provided with better canteen facilities, good water, hygienic restrooms, clean bathrooms, health insurances, regular medical checkups, employee assistance programs, complaint handling department, better facilities to sit or good working environment and others create a high level of satisfaction. He said that employees do not enjoy only the satisfaction they derive from their jobs but also the various facilities made available to them by their employer; to this effect, workers give all their support for the improvement of the company. Therefore the Human Resource Management should take

care of the total human resource in the company. They should provide all the health safety and welfares to the employees to enable them produce better performance in the organization.

Work Environment

Khaled and Haneen (2017) said that work environment is anything that exists around the employee and affects how he performs his duties. So, work environment is both internal and external conditions that can influence working spirit and result in an immediate finished job. A good working environment is a situation where individuals perform their jobs in a perfect, secured, healthy and comfortable way which many studies therefore classify work environment into toxic and conducive environments. Christabella (2014) defined working environment as the totality of forces, actions and other influential factors that currently and/or potentially contend with the employee's activities and performance. Again, Iqra, Zhu, Saba, Rafiq and Khaliq (2019) pointed out that workplace environment is a very important part in the work life of employees as they spend substantial part of their life time at work, and that affects them in one way or the other. It is therefore established that employees who are satisfied with their work environment leads to further positive work results.

Meaninglessness and Employee Retention

Lars and laura (2013) has proven that meaninglessness is negatively related to employee engagement in the workplace. It is important to understand that employee retention cannot be achievable without employee engagement and commitment in the workplace and that is why affective commitment is seen as the emotional attachment towards the organization. An employee who experiences affective commitment may want to remain with such organization rather than having intention to leave. Thus, meaninglessness is described as the feelings of employees that their jobs are not important or valuable even to the society or the person to whom the service is been rendered.

In affirmation to this is the thought of Catherine, Ruth, Adrian, Marc and Garry (2019) over meaningful of work because it has become an interesting topic within scholars and practitioners in recent years and within the human resource development field; as it has come to the forefront via its high level of association with employee engagement and striking around job design which creates the sense that meaningful of work will enhance high level of job satisfaction, motivation and performance that reduces the feelings of absenteeism and turnover or the willingness to leave. More so, it means the inclusive state of being an important contributor to employees' thought that they have realized their purposes in life which is pivotal not only for the employees' mental health but also for healthy and high performing organization. The argument in this is that if work is not meaningful it is meaningless; therefore if an employee experiences meaninglessness in his workplace it means that there is no sense of satisfaction, motivation and that lead to lack of

commitment, feelings of absenteeism and willingness to leave the organization hence affect employee retention negatively. On this note Irabor and Okolie (2019) concludes that research has revealed that employee retention is possible when organizations provides psychological condition of meaningfulness of job.

Methodology

This research applies a cross- sectional survey. Ulrik (2018) said that cross-sectional study is the collection of relevant data at a specific time. As such there is no length of time involved since all data are collected within a given period. From the information online there are about nine (9) mobile telecommunication companies operating within the South-South, Nigeria. The study population is 550 employees which is drawn from six (6) mobile telecommunication companies in South-South, Nigeria. Based on this population two hundred and twenty six (226) respondents were selected as sample size applying Krejcie and Morgan Table. The method of data collection was via the use of questionnaire containing structured questions on Meaninglessness and Employee Retention (MER) representing the primary data collection as out of 226 copies administered, only 201 were retrieved. To test the reliability of the study instrument Cronbach's Alpha was applied which reveals substantial levels of consistency – suggesting that all instruments are replicable and as such reliable. Also applied was frequencies and descriptive statistics like measures of central tendencies (which is mean scores) and dispersion (as standard deviation) to manage the primary data. Inferential statistics was applied using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. While in the validity the research instruments covers the whole experimental concept, and found if the results attained meet all of the requirements of the scientific research method. Secondly, the research instrument undergone proficient vetting, professional views and supervisors' endorsement**.**

Reliability Result for the study

Cronbach Reliability Result for the Study

Variables	No. of Items	Alpha Coefficient
Powerlessness	5	0.874
Meaninglessness	5	0.919
Isolation	5	0.797
Job Security	5	0.882
Welfare Management	5	0.809

Work Environment	5	0.891
Organizational Culture	5	0.846

The test for the reliability reveals substantial levels of consistency – suggesting that all instruments are replicable and as such reliable.

Data Analysis and Result

The first set of hypothesis that will be experimented is to examine the relationship between powerlessness and employee retention. For the purpose of accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis, the conclusive rule will be used which is centered on the application of the P value where $P > 0.05$ signify a non-significant relationship and thus an acceptance of the null and a $P < 0.05$ signifies a significant relationship and rejection of the null hypothesis.

Relationship between Meaninglessness and Employee Retention

			Meaninglessness	Job security	Welfare managem ent	Work Environm ent
Spearman's rho	Meaning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.735[**]	-.723[**]	-.623[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	201	201	201	201
	Job	Correlation Coefficient	-.735[**]	1.000	.715[**]	.740[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	201	201	201	201
	Welfare	Correlation Coefficient	-.723[**]	.715[**]	1.000	.774[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	201	201	201	201
	Work	Correlation Coefficient	-.623[**]	.740[**]	.774[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.

	N	201	201	201	201

Source: Field Survey, 2021 SPSS Output

Evidence from the test reveals that meaninglessness relate negatively on outcomes of employee retention. For question 4, the relationship between meaninglessness and job security is observed to be strong (where rho = - 0.735); this result indicates that meaninglessness relates negatively with job security in the sense that when it occurs the employee does not understand the goals of the organization and how it relates with their job or a situation when nothing matters anymore and when this is entrenched in the mind of the employee it can lead to lack of job commitment, isolation, depression and eventually quitting the job. For question 5, the relationship between meaninglessness and welfare management is also revealed to be strong (where rho = - 0.723). A state of meaninglessness in an organization means that there is lack of good welfare policies and that is why the result is not only strong but highly negatively correlated where (rho = - 0. 723) showing the strength at which they are negatively related.

When employees are taken care of it creates sense of job satisfaction and motivation as such makes the work meaningful but in the absence of good welfare policies, state of meaninglessness will occur. And for question 6, the relationship between meaninglessness and work environment is also revealed to be strong (where rho = - 0.623), with this development it also indicates that the relationship is not just strong but highly negative. Meaninglessness of job can also be influenced by the factors surrounding the environment; that is to say that when the environment is not conducive it creates some sense of hostility on the part of the employee but if there is good working environment it gives the employee sense of belonging and makes the work meaningful. That is why the relationship between meaninglessness and all three measures of employee retention is revealed to be strong (Rho ≥ 0.60), it is therefore affirmed that the relationship between meaninglessness and employee retention is not only a negative one, it is also a strong one.

Furthermore, it was observed that the probability levels for all three instances where at a $p < 0.05$ – indicating significant relationships; thus, it is affirmed that meaninglessness is a significant predictor of outcomes of employee retention. Thus all previous null hypothetical statements are rejected.

Discussion of Findings

In view of the relationship between meaninglessness and worker retention, it may be affirmed that meaninglessness impacts negatively on companies; especially on strategies and capabilities, making those methods turning into meaningless for individuals and contributing to a lack of concern in features. Moreover, meaninglessness also can be defined in a way that individuals working within companies experience excluded - they think they're discriminated and they experience estrangement first of all from their co-employees after which from themselves.

Meaninglessness is found to have big results in particular on businesses. Workers are tormented by social, mental, economic and organizational factors at some point of their work existence. The traits and styles of organizations wherein personnel work, the motives for choosing the process, the significance they give to their work, own family existence-styles are the determinants that have an effect on people meaninglessness from their companies. Since the phenomenon of estrangement perceived via instructors influence their mental state of affairs, their attitude on lifestyles and their performances inside the organizations, it is vital to determine the extent of their estrangement so as to enhance the best of organizational life (Bernardin & Russeil, 2012). Estrangement prevents teachers' creativity, their turning into a model for their college students and the society and enhancing themselves professionally. Furthermore, it's far an obstacle to their contribution to social improvement, to their impact at the procedure of functioning and working, to their productivity in their roles and to their collaboration with management and colleagues (Festing & Schafer, 2014). All types of workers dissatisfaction engender feelings of estrangement and that the oppressive nature of estrangement is the foundation motive of all the terrible outcomes related to teacher dissatisfaction (George, 2015).

Within organizational settings, self-estrangement is felt while the labour technique prevents people from feeling a sense of completeness and identity. Meaninglessness is basically a manifestation of self-estrangement, wherein the man or woman loses touch with the internal self and perceives that they are acting opposite to the significant, valued and salient self.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The finding from our analysis reveals a significant but negative correlation between meaninglessness and employee retention. The analysis also showed that the evidence or manifestation of meaninglessness was significant and related negatively on the functionality and wellbeing of the workers – negatively influencing employee retention. Consequent upon these observations and the outcomes of the hypotheses which exposed significant negative relationship between both variables; the following declaration and conclusion is hereby offered: That manifestations and experience of meaninglessness by workers negatively impacts on their decisions to stay or remain with the organization – thus negatively influencing outcomes of job security, welfare management and working conditions of mobile telecommunication companies in South-South, Nigeria.

Considering the above observation, the study therefore recommend as follows:-

1   That management of the mobile telecommunication firms should incorporate structures and emphasizes on work features that enrich workers roles and functions in ways that advance meaning and improves their sense of placement within the workplace or organization.

2   That the culture of the organization should be emphasized in such way that workers are integrated and effectively oriented about the values, expectations and norms of the organization especially as regards ethical actions and practices within the workplace as that will make their jobs more meaningful.

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