

Effect of Employee Engagement Strategies on Employee Job Satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria

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Abstract

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria, a rapidly growing and competitive sector, faces considerable challenges in employee retention, productivity, and job satisfaction. This study examined the effect of employee engagement strategies on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design whereby structured 5-point likert scale questionnaire was administered to a sample of two hundred and eight (208) junior and senior employees of Airtel Telecommunications in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Partial Least Square (PLS-SEM) statistic was employed to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings of this study reveals that flexible work schedule has a positive and insignificant effect on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, while recognition programs have positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria. The study concludes that while flexible work schedules offer convenience and support work-life balance, they do not significantly influence job satisfaction at Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, whereas recognition programs have a strong positive impact, highlighting the importance of acknowledging employee contributions in enhancing overall job satisfaction. The study recommends that Airtel should consider reassessing how flexible schedules are currently implemented to identify areas for improvement. This might involve allowing greater choice in work hours, increasing the availability of remote work options, or aligning flexibility options with specific employee roles and responsibilities.

Keywords: Training, Performance, Apprenticeship, Job rotation, SMEs

Introduction

Employee job satisfaction is a critical factor in achieving organizational success and stability. Globally, businesses acknowledge that maintaining high levels of job satisfaction reduces employee turnover, boosts morale, and enhances overall performance (Anitha, 2014). Beyond financial compensation, job satisfaction is influenced by the work environment, interpersonal relationships, growth opportunities, and recognition (Huang et al., 2016). Modern organizations adopt strategic employee engagement approaches, recognizing that engaged employees are more satisfied, motivated, and committed to their responsibilities (Saks, 2019).

Employee engagement is particularly vital in competitive industries like telecommunications, where rapid changes and high demands challenge talent retention (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Developed nations implement initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, professional development programs, and recognition schemes to foster employee satisfaction and loyalty (Chhetri, 2017). Prioritizing personal growth, inclusivity, and supportive leadership has been shown to positively affect employee morale and satisfaction across different sectors (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016).

In Nigeria, the rapid growth of the telecommunications sector has intensified competition among major providers like Airtel, MTN, and Glo, increasing the need for effective engagement strategies to boost job satisfaction and retain talent. Airtel Nigeria faces challenges and opportunities in managing employee satisfaction within the country's socio-economic landscape. To address these, the company has introduced career development programs, leadership training, and wellness initiatives (Agwu, 2020). Studies indicate that well-executed engagement strategies in Nigeria's telecommunications sector significantly improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance organizational resilience and service quality (Omoniyi, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria, a rapidly growing and competitive sector, faces considerable challenges in employee retention, productivity, and job satisfaction. As one of the leading telecom providers, Airtel Nigeria continually invests in talent management and engagement initiatives to maintain a competitive edge. However, despite these efforts, employee job satisfaction remains suboptimal, evidenced by high turnover rates, reduced morale, and declining productivity levels. This issue may be attributed to engagement strategies that do not fully address employees' specific needs and expectations in Nigeria's unique socio-economic context. Employee disengagement not only impacts individual performance but also affects overall organizational outcomes, including customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Previous studies on employee engagement in Nigeria largely focus on banking and manufacturing, with little research specifically examining the high-pressure telecom environment (Ojiabo et al., 2021; Omoniyi, 2019). Existing studies (Yalabik et al., 2017, Audu et al., 2016) also often isolate engagement strategies without addressing comprehensive approaches tailored to the telecom workforce's specific needs in Nigeria. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the effect of tailored employee engagement strategies on job satisfaction within Airtel Nigeria, providing actionable insights for fostering a more satisfied, committed workforce in the face of competitive and operational challenges.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the Effect of Employee Engagement Strategies on Employee Job Satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria. the specific objective are to;

- i. Examine the effect of flexible work schedules on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.
- ii. Investigate the effect of recognition programs on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Employee Engagement Strategies

Employee engagement strategies are well-planned initiatives aimed at promoting employee commitment, satisfaction, and productivity. These strategies emphasize key aspects such as effective communication, recognition, and growth opportunities, fostering a positive workplace culture. As a result, they contribute to improved morale and stronger organizational loyalty (Empuls, 2023).

According to Harter et al. (2023), employee engagement strategies involve practices that align employees' roles with organizational goals, ensuring they feel valued and supported. This alignment includes providing regular feedback, ensuring employee well-being, and cultivating strong connections among employees, which enhance organizational performance and reduce turnover.

Flexible Work Schedules

According to Market Business News (2024), flexible work schedules refer to arrangements that allow employees to set or modify their start and end times or work outside of a traditional nine-to-five schedule. This approach provides employees with autonomy over their work hours, which can lead to higher morale and a more balanced work-life integration.

The U.S. Department of Labor defines a flexible schedule as an alternative to the traditional 40-hour work week, allowing employees to adjust their arrival and departure times. This flexibility may also involve teleworking or remote work, which has become more feasible with technological advancements (Time Doctor, 2024). Flexible scheduling models include formats like part-time work, job sharing, and hybrid arrangements, all designed to support a healthier work-life balance. These models have proven effective in boosting productivity and improving employee retention by aligning work schedules with individual needs and personal responsibilities (Indeed, 2024).

Recognition Programs

Recognition Programs as Formalized Incentive Structures: These programs are organized efforts by companies to formally acknowledge and reward employees for their accomplishments, with the goal of enhancing engagement and morale. They often involve various types of rewards, such as "Employee of the Month" titles, spot bonuses, and peer-to-peer recognitions, all aimed at encouraging positive behaviors that align with organizational values (HubEngage, 2023).

Recognition Programs and Employee Well-being: In organizational behavior, recognition programs are structured strategies aimed at improving employee well-being and

engagement by appreciating their efforts, achievements, and contributions. These initiatives positively influence workplace morale, strengthen employee retention, and enhance productivity by creating a supportive environment that values individuals (Empuls, 2023).

Employee Job Satisfaction

Achievers (2024) defines employee job satisfaction as the positive emotional state that arises when an employee's work and work environment align with their personal values and goals. This satisfaction is influenced by factors such as organizational culture, work-life balance, recognition, and opportunities for career growth. When employees feel appreciated, see a clear path for career development, and operate in a supportive and inclusive workplace, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

Employee Satisfaction Guide (2024) describes job satisfaction as the sense of fulfillment employees derive from their job and workplace, which fosters greater motivation and loyalty. Factors such as fair compensation, recognition, work-life balance, and opportunities for professional development are key contributors. Creating a positive work environment and actively seeking employee feedback are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction.

Methodology

The study adopts a survey research design. The population consists of 433, which included 336 junior and 97 senior employees of Airtel Telecommunications in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Purposeful sampling technique was adopted for this study. The study employed Taro Yamane (1967) formula for determining the minimum sample size. Thus, minimum sample size is 208.

The study utilized primary source of data to collect data for the study. The choice of the method was the need to gather reliable information using simple approach that is time saving and efficient. The study employed the use of well-structured five-point likert scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree), close-ended questionnaire was used to obtain data from employees of Airtel Telecommunications in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The data collected was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPls3.

Model specification

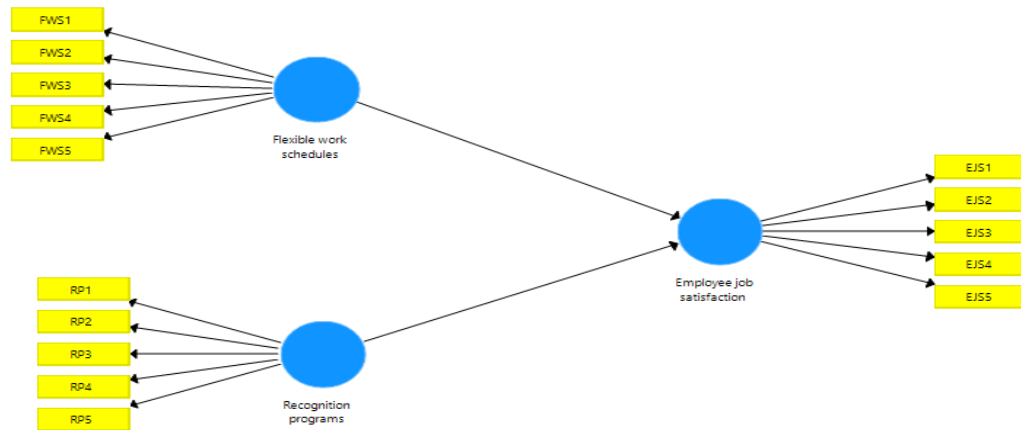


Figure 3.1 Structural model for direct relationship between Employee Engagement Strategies and Employee Job Satisfaction

Data Presentation And Analysis

A total of 208 copies of questionnaire distributed, only four hundred and sixteen (198) was retrieved giving a response rate of 95%. 10(5%) were not properly filled but returned. All further analyses were carried out using 198 responses.

Test of Hypotheses

The table below showed the path coefficients, t-values and p-values used to test the first four null hypotheses of the study:

Table 5: Path Coefficient of the Model

Variables	Beta	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision	F ² Value
Flexible work schedules -> Employee job satisfaction	0.286	5.213	0.200	Accepted	0.126
Recognition programs -> Employee job satisfaction	0.657	12.348	0.000	Rejected	0.667

Notes: ***($P < 0.01$), **($P < 0.05$), *($P < 0.1$)

Source: SMART-PLS Output, 2025

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Flexible work schedules has no significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.

The result of the test as shown in table 5 revealed that flexible work schedules positively and insignificantly affected employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, with $\beta = 0.286$ and $p = 0.200$. Thus, hypothesis one was supported and therefore accepted at 5% level of insignificance. There is adequate evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis and the study therefore conclude that flexible work schedules has positive and insignificant effect on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Recognition programs has no significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.

The result from table 5 shows that recognition programs has positive and significant effects on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, with $\beta = 0.657$ and $p = 0.000$. Thus, hypothesis two was not supported and therefore rejected at 5% level of significance. There is adequate evidence to reject the null hypothesis and the study therefore conclude that recognition programs has positive and significant effects on employee job satisfaction of Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria.

Table6: R-square Statistics

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee job satisfaction	0.473	0.470

Source: Researcher's computation in Smart-PLS (2024)

The r-square statistics shows the level of determinism of the dependent variable by the independent variables of the study. Table 6 show that the study has an r-square value of 0.473 which indicates that the variables used for the study account for about 47.3% of the variability in the dependent variable. Other factors not captured in the model may account for the remaining 52.7%.

Discussion of Findings

Flexible work schedules have a positive but insignificant effect on employee job satisfaction at Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, indicating that while such schedules contribute to a better work-life balance and offer employees greater autonomy, they do

not strongly influence overall job satisfaction levels. The finding was supported by the finding of Nwekpa et al. (2023), who found insignificant and positive relationship between Flexible Work schedules and Employees' job satisfaction in Nigerian Breweries PLC. Enugu, while it was disagree with the finding of Obisi (2021), who found that there is a significant relationship between flexible work schedules and employees' job satisfaction in Public Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

Recognition programs have a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, implying that acknowledging employees' efforts, achievements, and contributions plays a crucial role in enhancing their satisfaction levels. This suggests that when employees feel valued and appreciated, they are more likely to experience a sense of fulfillment, motivation, and commitment to the organization, which ultimately boosts their overall job satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Olanipon et al. (2024), who found financial incentive reward system has positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction among casual workers at the Distilled companies in Lagos State, however, the finding disagree with the finding of Sam-Eleyi and Josiah (2024), who found that recognition programs has positive insignificant effect on employee job satisfaction of teachers in public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Flexible work schedules have a positive but insignificant effect on employee job satisfaction at Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, concluding that while such schedules may enhance work-life balance and offer employees some level of convenience, they do not substantially impact overall job satisfaction. This may suggest that other aspects of the job, such as recognition, career advancement, or compensation, have a stronger influence on employee satisfaction than flexible scheduling alone.

Recognition programs have a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at Airtel Telecommunications in Nigeria, concluding that acknowledging employees' contributions and achievements is essential for enhancing job satisfaction. This finding suggests that when employees feel recognized and valued, their sense of fulfillment, motivation, and loyalty to the organization increases, leading to higher overall satisfaction with their job roles.

Recommendations

- i. Airtel should consider reassessing how flexible schedules are currently implemented to identify areas for improvement. This might involve allowing greater choice in work hours, increasing the availability of remote work options, or aligning flexibility options with specific employee roles and responsibilities.

- ii. Airtel should formalize recognition programs to ensure consistency and inclusivity. This might involve structured awards, monthly employee highlights, and peer-recognition platforms that celebrate accomplishments across all departments.

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