

Effect of Retention Strategies on Employee Performance in Selected Pharmaceutical Firms in South East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to: examine the effect of employee recognition on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms and ascertain the effect of flexible working arrangement on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms. Research design was descriptive survey research. The population of this study covered 11 registered Pharmaceutical companies in South-East Nigeria with 2,455 total numbers of staff (Manufacturer Association of Nigeria, 2023). The study adopted the Freund and Williams's sampling technique to get sample size of 362 respondents. The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. The selected pharmaceutical firms for the study were Nemel Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, Pauco Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, A.C, Drug Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, Orange Drug Pharmaceutical Company Ltd and Juhel Nigeria Pharmaceutical Company Ltd. The research questions were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated were tested with single regression. The empirical results showed that employee recognition has significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$) and flexible working arrangement has significant effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms. (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$). The study concluded that retention strategies have positive and significant effect employee performance of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The study recommended that management of Pharmaceutical firms should be given to promotion opportunities and improvement in access to training and development programmes and job enlargement (increased responsibility) for deserving employees.

Keywords: Retention Strategies; Employee Recognition; Flexible working Arrangement

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The contemporary business environment is characterized by competition, with organizations encountering challenges related to employee retention, irrespective of their size or sector. Effective talent management is essential for organizations to acquire the requisite skills and expertise to fulfill their operational requirements. Retention of skilled employees is essential for maintaining competitive advantages (Igbinoba, Joel, Igbadumhe & Peter, 2022).

Employees are an asset of an organization. The more time an employee spends in an organization, the more experienced the employee gets and becomes more valuable to the organization. Companies make a great deal of investment in hiring an employee. This includes advertisements for the job vacancies, paying the recruiter, time and effort spent in conducting interviews and selection etc. Also, when an employee joins an organization, he is not as productive to the organization because he is not familiar with the systems and procedures of the organization and in full-time jobs it takes at least couple of months for the employee to get himself aligned with the organization (Dim, Udu, Arisi-Nwugbala & Uloh, 2023).

Employee retention is seen as a phenomenon which is increasingly getting the attention of many organizations as it leads to a serious problem when high performing employees leave the organization (Mgbemena; Enetanya, Nsofor & Ogbogu, 2022). Organizations faced with adverse outcomes when good talented workers opt to leave and these include decreased efficiency and productivity, increased costs and threat to the long-term survival and

sustainability of the organization (Shilpi, 2023). As such, talent retention has become more and more crucial for the management (Ejike, Ifeanyi & Chiekezie, 2024).

Employee retention is beneficial for the organization and the employees at the same time. Employees today have a lot of good opportunities in hand. The moment they feel unhappy or dissatisfied with the existing employer or the job they are holding; they will always hop to another employment. It is solely the accountability of the employer to retain their best employees. Failure of doing so may lead to the loss of talented employees. Good employers should realize what to be done to attract and retain their employees. Employees are the most vital resources of any organization. If employees are not able to use their full potential and not heard and valued, they would leave because of stress and frustration (Bhuvanewari, 2023).

Pharmaceutical companies are playing a vital role in maintaining the public health of people in society. Pharmaceutical companies have huge responsibility in the manufacturing of novel medicines to cure the new forms of diseases that emerges all over the world (Kirti & Karuna, 2020). Pharmaceutical companies also face many challenges such as competition, generic medicines and non-recoverable costs from failed approaches. These challenges continue until the drugs reach prospective patients. There are several drug substitution products on the market (Ikeagu, Okeke & Anah, 2023). The complimentary and substitute goods are higher for medicinal products when compared to the fast-moving consumer goods. These challenges are faced by these companies after huge capital investments in the pharmaceutical sector (Shreeshha & Gundlapudi, 2024). Companies also faces the challenges in the marketing of products which are performed by the representatives of the respective organization.

Regrettably, the retention management strategies of many pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria do not harmonise the interests of employees and employers. The performance of these firms is perceived to be diminishing which may be associated with a lack of proper career development plans for its employees, the level of service delivery is observed to progress at a slow pace which seems to be associated with inadequate compensation by the employers. The study examined effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria faces significant challenges, including heavy reliance on imported drugs and raw materials, leading to high costs and drug shortages. Other major issues are a weak regulatory system with inadequate enforcement, a chaotic distribution network enabling fake and substandard drugs to proliferate, poor infrastructure like unreliable power and transportation, and an unfavorable business environment characterized by policy discontinuity and foreign exchange volatility. These factors collectively hinder local production, deter investment, and threaten public health through lack of access to quality medicines.

The system of pharmaceutical industry is marred by irregular inspections, weak enforcement, inadequate funding, and pervasive corruption, which results in a market flooded with unregulated and illicit pharmaceuticals. The combination of a chaotic distribution system and weak regulation fuels the widespread prevalence of fake, substandard, and expired drugs, leading to treatment failures, increased costs, and public health risks. Volatile exchange rates, high import duties, stringent regulations, policy discontinuity, and bureaucratic hurdles create an uncertain and difficult environment for pharmaceutical companies to operate and invest. Unfair government policies and a lack of incentives for local manufacturers, along with price controls, further discourage investment and hinder the growth of domestic production.

There are several challenges faced by the pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria. The unfair competition by the imported products and multinational companies is one of the biggest challenges in the pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria. In addition to that, there is a need to standardize several herbal origin drugs circulating in the country. Even after so many years, the government is unable to control illegal importation and sale of fake substandard goods. The shortage of genuine drug products is also a big challenge. The major reasons behind that is the shortage of trained pharmacist and lack of production of pharmaceutical-grade raw materials in bulk.

Again, employees are seen not to be recognised for exceptional performance assumed to be the cause of their lackadaisical attitude to growing the firms (Igbinoba, Joel, Igbadumhe & Peter, 2022). There is a likelihood that

many of these pharmaceutical firms will continue to experience low levels of employee performance, high production costs, and low profit margins. Again, there may be conflicting interests between employees and employers resulting in high labour turnover with its associated cost effect. It is on this premise that this study sought to investigate the effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the effect of employee recognition on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria
2. Ascertain the effect of flexible working arrangement on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria,

Research Questions

This study sought to provide answers to the following research questions.

1. In what ways does employee recognition impact on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria?
2. To what extent do flexible working arrangement affects employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

The study would be of an immense significance to the following groups, entrepreneurship, general public, organization, and researchers.

Young Entrepreneurs: The study would be helpful for local entrepreneurship in the production of locally made goods with high price in the market and made profits in due season. It would also sensitize the entrepreneurship on how social capital can prove its superiority in the performance of their businesses. It is also expected that this study would be an eye openers for young, new school leavers and intrapreneurship who want to be self-reliance. Finally, this study is expected to provide reliable data for future research work.

Pharmaceutical SMEs owners: More so, the findings of this study would help improve the theoretical framework for business performance. In light of the contribution of the Pharmaceutical SMEs in Nigeria and Lagos State in particular, it is of significance to investigate factors that can improve their performance. Hence the findings of this study, if access will be useful to Pharmaceutical SMEs owners and organisations that assist Pharmaceutical SMEs to better understand factors that can be of immense help to improve the performance of Pharmaceutical SMEs.

Researchers: The study would benefit future researchers by providing huge knowledge on how to carry out research on the related topic. Also it would be of huge benefit to other researchers attempting to delve into effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria in Nigeria as a whole.

Conceptual Review

Employee Retention Strategies

Employee retention strategies entails strategies which organization use to sustain its valuable employees (Ndubuisi, Ubah & Ariwa, 2025). Similarly, Employee retention strategies is defined as a controllable components in which the right people are aligned to the right jobs in an organisation (Abbas, Majeed & Luma, 2021). Abdel-Monem (2012) is of the opinion that employee retention strategies lies in having the right culture

and understanding of what motivates staff. Barween, Muhammad & Tayseer (2020) in turn defined it as 'voluntary-dysfunctional-avoidable turnover'.

Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to retain its employees. Employee retention can be represented by a simple statistic (for example, a retention rate of 80% usually indicates that an organization kept 80% of its employees in a given period). However, many consider employee retention as relating to the efforts by which employers attempt to retain employees in their workforce. In this sense, retention becomes the strategies rather than the outcome (Chelangat, 2020).

Employee retention is attempts to keep employee in an organization for a reasonable period (Idowu, 2020), Such retention refers to the capability of the organization to keep employees serving in the job for a more extended period (Magaji, Akpa & Ogundiwin, 2021). This is often purposefully pursued with strategies and that was why Manthena and Ravi (2024) described the concept as strategic process of encouraging employees to stay with an organization for an extended period. Such strategies are in form of structured policies highlighted to forestall functional employees' attrition (Samuel & Chipunza, 2019; Shimelis & Mahesh, 2021). This was buttressed in the definition of Wisnefski, (2018) which refer to employee retention strategies to be the policies and practices that an organization have in place to prevent valuable employees from exiting their positions prematurely. The strategies are to make current employees who are assets to stay in the employment of the organization.

Employee Performance of Pharmaceutical Companies

Employee performance can be seen as the measure of an individual's effectiveness and ability to achieve organisational goals and objectives within the context of their role and responsibilities. It encompasses various aspects such as the quality and quantity of work produced, meeting deadlines, exhibiting the desired level of competence, displaying a positive attitude and behaviour, and actively contributing towards team and organizational success (Hafeez, Yingjun, Hafeez, Mansoor & Cheema, 2019). To evaluate employee performance accurately, it is important to establish clear performance expectations and objectives that are aligned with the organisation's overall strategy and mission. Performance expectations should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), providing a framework against which an employee's performance can be assessed (Omaliko, and Akwuobi, 2023).

Employee performance is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. In actual terms, performance is a component which directly affects the company's profits (Hosen, Hamzah, Ismail, Alias, AbdAziz & Rahman, 2024). Performance may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time. Typically, the performance of a given worker will be assessed relative to an average out for employees doing similar work. It can also be assessed according to the amount of units of a product or service that an employee handles in a defined time frame (Kariuki & Kiiru, 2021). As the success of an organization relies mainly on the performance of its employees, therefore, employee performance has become an important objective for businesses (Lee, Lim, Seo & Kwak, 2022).

Contextual Literature

Employee recognition and Employee Job Satisfaction

Recognition can be defined as appreciation with a show of gratitude. The principle of positive reinforcement is founded on the principle that the actions and activities that attract rewards are likely to recur. Hence, employees who are appreciated feel inspired to better their performance. Within an organization, status system is a vital tool for motivation. For this reason, recognition schemes should be founded on competence, skills and talents of employees in organizations (Ejike, Ifeanyi & Chiekiezie, (2024). Employee recognition may entail tangible and non-tangible items. It is usually characterized by appreciation programs (oral and non-oral), allowing staff to participate in decision making, delegation of authority, cash rewards, recognition certificates, recognition ceremonies, and others (Dahiru, 2023). Managers who appreciate that performing employees are harder to keep usually use recognition and reward program to steer their organizations to great success. Reward schemes can either be official or unofficial. Bhuvanewari, (2023) observes that motivation tool of rewards raise employee morale, lowers their stress and absenteeism; and further reduces employee turnover. As such, much as employees benefit from reward programs, the employer too benefits from increased employee productivity and minimized

costs related to turnover rates. Employee recognition means acknowledgment of the achievements, services, and contributions of workers in an organization. It is given to re-enforce desired behaviour thereby, strengthens the behaviour of workers and activates the potency of positive contributions to work. Odunukwe and Okeke, (2023) define recognition as the acknowledgment of employee participation and involvement in the organization.

Employee job satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction is the contentment or positive feeling an individual has towards their job, work environment, and the associated rewards, encompassing cognitive evaluations, emotional feelings, and behavioral components. It is influenced by factors such as the nature of the work itself, compensation, supervision, opportunities for growth, coworker relationships, and a healthy work-life balance (Shreesha & Gundlapudi, 2024). High job satisfaction is linked to increased productivity, creativity, employee retention, and overall well-being.

Nyame, (2024) opined that job satisfaction is a crucial aspect of an individual's work life, impacting their overall well-being and productivity. It refers to the level of contentment and positive emotions an employee experiences in their job role. When employees are satisfied with their work, they tend to be more engaged, motivated, and committed, which ultimately leads to improved performance and reduced turnover rates for organizations.

Flexible working Arrangement and Employee service delivery

Alternative work arrangements are program designed by organization to save cost and achieve additional benefits for the organizations. Ideally, alternative work arrangements can decrease facility and employee related costs and improve employee recruitment, retention, and morale (Ansari, Chimani, Baloch and Bukhari, 2020). According to Ayam and Darlane, (2020) the benefits of alternative work arrangement are: improved morale and reduced stress by giving staff more options to balance work and family demands; increased customer service by expanding department hours; retention of valued staff; increased staff productivity and better planning for staff absences. Typical alternative work arrangements include compressed workweeks, telecommuting, flexi-time, job sharing and part-time work.

As cited by Ayam and Darlane (2020), the employees are better able to balance competing demands if they are allowed to schedule their time. As workers have different preferences for integration versus segmentation of work and family roles revealed by boundary theory and role transition, so some of work life practices may not help in reducing inter-role conflict if they do not match employees' preferences for managing both roles. For example; on one hand work from home arrangements benefit some employees but on other hand they interfere with employee role if he/she has greater family responsibility. (Malik, Wan, Dar, Akbar and Muhammad (2021). Highlights that a 'virtual Office' study indicates if employees are given choice in the location and time of their work they exhibit greater job satisfaction. Along with increased job satisfaction, teleworkers also demonstrate less turnover and lower level of work-life conflict.

Self-Rostering involves writing down working time and working hour of which each employee among group of workers that carry out similar task rotate work in turns in order to maintain work balance organizational task and attending personnel tasks. The organization daily checks the number of staff and skills required and lets the employees decide which hours they would like to work. Employees are thus able to schedule their time conveniently between work and non-work activities. Furthermore there is Tele-working, flexible schedules option that employee's value tremendously and its popularity is increasing.

Job sharing is a technique in which two or more than two employee's work together sharing a single full time job. In this job, the employees not only share the job but they also share their responsibilities and their working time. Job sharing can advantage the employees in a lot of ways. It can help in managing their time more flexibly, it can help them to fulfill their commitments and can learn from others while working with them. Nayak and Sharma, (2018) opined that job sharing results in increasing productivity in many ways.

Employee service delivery

Employee service delivery is one of the most important aspects of running a business. It provides the opportunity to impress customers and show them what the business can do and the value it offers. This can create an excellent

relationship with the customer and lead to good reviews and word-of-mouth marketing (Mgbemena; Enetanya, Nsofor & Ogbogu, 2022). Employee service delivery simply refers to the delivery of a service from a business to a customer. The service a business provides is something that the customer is unable to perform themselves, so there are a lot of elements to good service delivery. It encompasses all aspects of providing a service to a customer, including the initial interaction, onboarding, set up, conclusion of the service and follow-up provisions.

The quality of service delivery depends on clean, clear processes that work smoothly and are under continuous review. It is important that all systems work perfectly together and processes flow, and this starts right at the beginning with the first contact from the customer (Shilpi, 2023). Even the website is to lead the customer smoothly through the sales funnel or flywheel. Customers want seamless and frictionless service without working for it. Getting the systems and processes right is the basis for good service delivery.

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory, Expectancy Theory and Two-Factor Theory. The study was anchored on the Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory.

Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory

The drive to pursue and achieve a given goal is a consequence of their desire to satisfy needs higher up in the hierarchy (Armstrong, 2009). Abraham Maslow (1943) identifies five levels of needs that people seek to satisfy, ranging from low-level needs to self-actualization. Once the needs at one level are met, there is a rebirth of fresh determination to satisfy the needs in the next (Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley, 2011). Needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs are arranged in a pyramidal manner (Kouloubandi, Jofreh & Mahdavi, 2012). Physiological needs fall at the bottom of the pyramid and self-actualization at the top of the pyramid. Employees seeking the fulfilment of physiological needs will not find the energy to pursue the needs in the next level of the hierarchy. However, good remuneration is critical to the attainment of the lower-level needs requires among employees of an organization (Udechukwu, 2009). According to Udechukwu (2009), Maslow's hierarchy of needs is fundamental in management and psychology studies. The theory reinforces the need for constant reassessment of people's needs since needs change over time. For instance, depending on their remuneration, employees in any given organization happen to be pursuing attainment of needs at different levels on the Maslow's hierarchy. Money as a motivation works best for employees seeking lower level needs rather than those pursuing needs of a higher level. Lower level needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs are applicable in matters of physical comfort and reasonable work hours in places of work. Better working conditions, security of tenure, remuneration and other non-monetary benefits constitutes the safety needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, while collegiate relations, good customer care services and good supervisor-supervisee relations comprise the social needs. Esteem needs are usually met through praise, recognition by supervisors and promotion of employees to coveted job positions. Opportunities to participate in companies' decision organs, training and engaging in challenging and sophisticated assignments are what fulfil the self-actualization needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is relevant to this study since it supports the non financial incentives in the sense that employees tend to fulfill certain needs maybe at the workplace or outside their work. When employees find the flexibility of attending to their personal commitments as they fulfill their career obligations, they get the motivation to pursue the next need in line. If the employees are able to achieve these needs while still at work, they are more comfortable staying in such an organization to make sure they actualize themselves.

Two-Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg was a psychologist interested in the correlation between employee attitude and workplace motivation. He wanted to find out what made people feel satisfied and unsatisfied when it came to the workplace. After spending countless hours interviewing employees about what made them feel both good and bad about their jobs, Herzberg developed a theory of workplace motivation called the two-factor theory. The two-factor theory is based on the assumption that there are two sets of factors that influence motivation in the workplace by either enhancing employee satisfaction or hindering it. According to this theory, two factors decide employees' performance levels and working attitudes. These two factors are motivation and hygiene factors (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959). As described by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman, (1959) intrinsic factors

(motivation factors) increase employees' satisfaction on the job, whereas extrinsic factors (hygiene factors) are the factors capable of preventing employees from being dissatisfied. As noted by Robbins (2009), employers must put motivation or intrinsic factors into play to increase employees' performance or effectiveness. Therefore, to motivate employees, the motivation factors must be significant. To motivate and increase employees' effectiveness, organizations should emphasize providing intrinsic or motivation factors, as these factors improve employees' effectiveness and productivity (Yusouf et al., 2013).

The theory posited that certain factors in the workplace cause job satisfaction while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction. The theory further stated the independence of satisfiers and dissatisfiers. That satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on a continuum but independent in their effect. The theory suggested that managers must recognize and attend to both sets of job characteristics, which are satisfiers and dissatisfiers, to improve job attitude and productivity at work, and not assume that increase in satisfaction leads to decrease in dissatisfaction. The findings of his investigation were that the job characteristics relating to nature of work performed by a worker can make him happy and satisfied, as well as satisfy needs like recognition, status, personal worth, and self realization. However, the absence of such job characteristics may not necessarily lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction arises from an unfavorable assessment of job-related factors like organizational policies, working conditions, supervision, and job security. Therefore, to increase satisfaction on the job, the management should be focused on the nature of work itself, that is, how employees can gain status, taking responsibility and attaining self-realization. At the same time, to minimize dissatisfaction, managers should focus on job environment factors like policies, working conditions and so on. Nevertheless, management should give concern to both.

This theory is relevant to this study because it mentions two factors that affect work performance. That is, extrinsic which include salary and promotion and intrinsic factors which include praise and recognition. Therefore, in this research, rewarding employees' in terms of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards would be expected to have effect on work performance of employee work which when aggregated and collectively their performance are extrapolated at company level measures overall organisational performance.

Empirical Literature

Ndubuisi, Ubah and Ariwa, (2025) examined the effect of ascertain the effects of talent retention on employees' customer service delivery quality. A study of selected Deposit Money Banks in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design using primary source of data through the administration of questionnaire. Descriptive statistic were used to analyze all the objectives of the study while the simple regression analysis was used to test all the hypothesis with the aid of statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. The findings revealed that talent retention had a positive and significant effect on employee's customer service delivery quality on the selected Deposit Money Banks in South-east Nigeria. The study concluded that talent retention had a positive and significant effect on employees' performance in Deposit Money Banks in South-east Nigeria. However, the study recommended that Deposit Money Banks need to sustain their talent retention talent retention talent retention talent retention talent retention talent retention since it has a positive significant effect on employees' customer service delivery quality.

Tanko, Gambo and Abubakar (2025) examined the nexus between employee retention and organization performance of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. This is with the view of examine the impact of training program, reward system and work environment on organization goal of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed survey research design. The target Population for this study comprised of 501 staff of Federal Inland Revenue Service, Abuja. The data collected was analysed using multiple regression. The outcome of the study indicates that training program, reward system as well as work environment has a positive and significant impact on organization goal of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. That is, training programs, the reward system, and a conducive working environment play crucial roles in enabling the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to retain its best employees. It is therefore recommended that Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) should institutionalize continuous professional development programs and align reward systems with employee performance metrics to foster a supportive work environment, enhance job satisfaction, and improve employee retention rates.

Nyongesa and Westhuizen, (2025) investigated the impact of talent management practices on employee retention in pharmaceutical companies located in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to: examine the effect of employee recognition on employee job satisfaction of in pharmaceutical companies located in Nairobi County, Kenya and ascertain the effect of flexible working arrangement on employee service delivery of pharmaceutical companies located in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research focused on 58 agrochemical firms registered with the Agrochemicals Association of Kenya, specifically targeting management-level employees, amounting to a total of 324 individuals. The sample size of 179 respondents was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan formula, employing stratified random sampling. Correlation analysis evaluated the relationship between talent development and employee retention, whereas multiple regression determined the effect of talent management practices. The research indicates that talent development has a positive impact on employee retention within pharmaceutical firms located in Nairobi County. Recommendations involve enhancing talent development strategies and cultivating a supportive work environment to improve employee retention rates.

Ngaina and Nambuswa, (2023) examined the effect of employee retention strategies on organizational performance. The study was guided by the following specific objective: to examine the effect of employee empowerment on organizational performance in TransNzoia County, Kenya. The study used descriptive research design. The target population of the study was 100 employees in human resource department within County government of TransNzoia. Census was adopted since the target population is small. The method of data analysis was multiple linear regression analysis. The empirical result showed that employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.670$) was found to be positively related organizational performance in the County Government of TransNzoia, Kenya. From t-test analysis, the t-value was found to be 4.330 and the p-value 0.000. The study recommends that the county government of TransNzoia should empower employee to perform highly since it plays a significant role in the success and survival abilities of the organization and as it encourages better connection amongst workers and their administrators as well as cultivation of innovation, to offer more thoughts and critical thinking arrangements.

Uyiekpen, Emeh and Onah, (2024) examined the effect of Talent Management Strategies on Employee Productivity in Manufacturing Firms in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives are to; examine the effect of recruitment practices on employee performance in Manufacturing Firms and evaluate the effect of training and development programs on employee performance in Manufacturing Firms in Southeast Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. A simple random selection of 20 staff or employees from each firm, consisting of both junior and senior cadre staff from the (12) firms in Nigeria. The statistical tools used are exploratory data analysis (respondent demographic statistic) and Chi-square. The result revealed that recruitment practices have a significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in southeast Nigeria (Given that $X^2 = 201.6253$ table = 9.488, df = 4); training and development statistically and significantly affect employee performance in manufacturing firms in southeast Nigeria (Given that. $X^2 = 86.3398$, table = 33.0528, df = 2). The study recommended among others that manufacturing firms in Southeast Nigeria should prioritize the development of streamlined and efficient recruitment processes.

Ejike, Ifeanyi and Chiekezie, (2024) investigated the relationship that exists between reward management and employee performance in pharmaceutical firms of Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, it determined the relationship that exists between flexible work hours and job satisfaction in pharmaceutical firms as well as the relationship that exists between compensation system and quality service delivery in pharmaceutical firms of Anambra State. This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 549 out of which 231 was the sample size derived using Taro Yamane Technique. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Hypothesis one revealed that flexible work hours had a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction in the studied pharmaceutical firms with $r = 0.874$ $n = 202$ and p-value of 0.031 ($p < 0.05$). Hypothesis two also indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between compensation system and quality service delivery in the pharmaceutical firms with $r = 0.923$, $n = 202$, and p-value of 0.026 ($p < 0.05$). It was therefore recommended that pharmaceutical firms give employees flexible work hours as a reward to boost job satisfaction which will lead to client satisfaction. Again, pharmaceutical firms need to constantly adhere to a compensation system that can motivate employees to deliver effective and efficient services.

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Ikeagu, Okeke and Anah, (2023) examined effect of employee retention strategies on organizational performance of mission secondary schools in Onitsha Archdiocese, Anambra State. The specific objectives of the study was to: determine the effect of flexible schedule on organizational performance of teachers in mission secondary schools in Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha, Anambra state, Nigeria; Ascertain the relationship between work environment and organizational performance of teachers in mission secondary schools in Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha, Anambra state, Nigeria. The study adopted survey method of research. Percentage tables were used to analyse the questionnaire, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The population of the study was 1745, the sample size of the study were three hundred and thirty-five (335) using Borg and Gall Formula. The findings of the study revealed, Flexible schedule has significant impact on organizational performance of teachers in mission secondary schools in Onitsha Archdiocese of Anambra, $T=3.511$, $p=0.000$, Work environment has significant impact on organizational performance of teachers in mission secondary schools in Onitsha Archdiocese of Anambra. $T=2.899$, $p=0.008$. The study recommended that collaborative decision making and problem solving should be geared towards career development, rotation decisions should be made by the employee' opinions and taken together.

Gaps in Empirical Review

There exist research gap between this study and past researches. The research gap covered subject gap, gap on geographical location of the study, gap on the variables and contents of the study, gap on literature and gap on methodology.

Subject gap: The subject matter of this work and some reviewed empirical studies has some differences. There are limited studies on effect of retention strategies on employee performance in selected Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The study is geared to bridge the time gap in literature.

Gap on geographical location of the study: This work covers manufacturing firm in Nigeria and specifically Pharmaceutical Industry in South East Nigeria . None of the past studies used the firms mentioned above and most of the past studies were done outside South East Nigeria .

Gap on the variables of the study: The study identifies the following proxies for retention strategies namely: employee recognition; flexible working arrangement, employee career development and favourable work environment (for independent variable) and employee job satisfaction, employee commitment, employee commitment and employee productivity (for dependent variable) were not used by past researches.

Gap on literature: For the fact that the dependent and independent variables in this work differs with what were covered in past studies, the literature reviewed were never the same; hence there are differences on the conceptual and theoretical reviews. This study would bridge the gap by providing clear explanation as regards to cause-effect relationship between retention strategies and employee performance.

Gap on methodology: The data analytical techniques used in this work in some ways differ from what was employed from past researches. The data analytical technique of the study was single regression method. The statistical technique was chosen because of its basic properties of best Linear, unbiased and efficient (BLUE) estimators. It is best for impact analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research design was descriptive survey research. Study Area was South East, Nigeria. The population of the study was 2,455 total numbers of staff of 11 registered Pharmaceutical companies in South-East Nigeria (Manufacturer Association of Nigeria, 2023). The choice for only staff of the registered Pharmaceutical companies in South-East Nigeria was because of homogeneity nature of production function. The sample size of 362 respondents arrived by Freund and Williams’s statistical formula. The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. The selected pharmaceutical firms were Nemel Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, Pauco Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, A.C, Drug Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, Orange Drug Pharmaceutical Company Ltd and Juhel Nigeria Pharmaceutical Company Ltd. The data was analyzed using single regression analysis and hypotheses tested at a 5% level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS].

Data Presentation

Table 1: Comprehensive Demographic distribution of the Respondents

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire Distributed	362	100%
Returned Questionnaire	358	98%
Not Returned Questionnaire	04	02%
Gender		
Female	213	59.5%
Male	145	40.5%
Age Bracket		
20-30 Years	153	42.7%
31-40 Years	111	31.0%
41-50 Years	66	18.4%
51 Years – above	28	7.8%
Marital Status		
Married	223	62.3%
Single	125	34.9%
Widow/widower	7	1.9%
Divorce	3	0.8%
Educational Qualification		
HND/B.sc	230	64.2%
MBA/M.sc	125	34.9%
Ph.D	3	1.10%

Sources: Field Survey, 2026

Three hundred and sixty two (362) copies of questionnaire were designed and distributed to the respondents. Out of the 362 Questionnaires distributed, 358 (98%) were completed and returned while 4 (02%) were not returned. Therefore, 98 percent respondents were a good representation. The table showed the respondents profile in frequency and percentage distribution of gender, age bracket, marital status and educational qualification..

Data Analysis

Question One: In what ways does employee recognition impact on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of responses of respondents on in what ways does employee recognition impact on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria?

S/N	Question Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	compensation strategy motivates employee to be trustworthy in their works so as to be promoted hence increase employee productivity	900 180 50%	400 100 30%	144 48 13%	46 23 6%	7 7 1%	1497 358 100%	4.18	0.0030
2	Employee recognition instills a sense of purpose and belonging makes business more value-oriented. It sets a positive example and encourages others to strive for excellence	630 126 35%	632 158 44%	192 64 18%	40 20 5%	10 10 2%	1504 358 100%	4.20	0.0030
3	Employee recognition increases their responsibility thereby enhancing employee performance	1000 200 59%	404 101 28%	135 45 13%	18 9 2%	3 3 0.8%	1560 358 100%	4.36	0.0033
4	Employee recognition reward strategy motivates employee to work harder for a better position hence improving employee productivity	950 190 53%	444 111 31%	105 35 9%	24 12 3%	10 10 2%	1533 358 100%	4.28	0.0032
Grand Mean								4.255	0.0031

Source: Field Survey, 2026

This table showed the opinion of respondents on what ways does employee recognition impact on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

The research items 1,2,3,4,5 have mean score of above 3.5 point respectively and it was rated great extent by respondents. The study thereby revealed that employee recognition has significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria since employee recognition instills a sense of purpose and belonging makes business more value-oriented. It sets a positive example and encourages others to strive for excellence (The grand mean 4.255 was greater than the cutoff point 3).

Question Two: To what extent do flexible working arrangement affects employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean rating of responses of respondents on what extent do flexible working arrangement affects employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

S/N	Question Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	Tele-working work arrangement allows employees to attend to family and workplace exercise without physical restrictions of their offices	630 126 35%	632 158 44%	192 64 18%	40 20 5%	10 10 2%	1504 358 100%	4.20	0.0030
2	Job-sharing help employee to fulfill their commitments and can learn from others while working with them	580 116 32%	632 158 44%	222 74 21%	26 13 3%	17 17 2%	1477 358 100%	4.13	0.0029
3	Job-sharing allows more balanced life in terms of giving time to family and gives leverage in taking days off	900 180 50%	400 100 30%	144 48 13%	46 23 6%	7 7 1%	1497 358 100%	4.18	0.0030

4	Flexitime work arrangement helps to enhance team skills as well as leadership and gives employee an opportunity to work and learn from other experience	985 197 55%	416 104 29%	111 37 10%	24 12 3%	8 8 2%	1544 358 100%	4.31	0.0032
Grand Mean								4.205	0.0030

Source: Field Survey, 2026

This table showed the opinion of respondents on what extent do flexible working arrangement affects employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The research items 1,2,3 and 4 have mean score of above 3.5 point respectively and it was rated great extent by respondents. The study thereby revealed that flexible working arrangement has significant effect on employee service delivery of SMEs in South-East Nigeria since flexitime work arrangement helps to enhance team skills as well as leadership and gives employee an opportunity to work and learn from other experience (The grand me 4.205 was greater than the cutoff point 3).

Test of Hypotheses

The two hypotheses were formulated for this study and were tested and a decision taken is based on the rule below. **Decision rule: the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted when P-value is less than significant level at 0.05**

Hypothesis One

H₂ = Employee recognition has no significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.931 ^a	.866	.865	.26055
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee recognition				

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	57.077	1	57.077	18.604	.000 ^b
	Residual	1095.276	357	3.068		
	Total	1152.353	358			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee recognition						

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.614	.089		18.111	.000
	Employee recognition	.529	.082	.931	6.446	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms						

Employee job satisfaction = 1.614 + 0.529 Employee recognition

In testing this hypothesis, employee recognition was regressed against employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms. The result of the single-regression analysis showed the model to examine the effect of

employee recognition on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The empirical result showed that the coefficient of employee recognition has positive effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms; it means that employee recognition has positive and direct effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms. The results of the t – statistic denoted that the coefficient of employee recognition was statistically significance. This is because observed values of t – statistic (6.446) was greater than its P-values (0.000). The results of the F – statistical test showed that the overall regression of the hypothesis two was statistically significance. This was because observed value of the F – statistic (18.604) was great than its P-value (0.000). Again, our empirical result showed that the Pearson product moment correlation analysis (r) was 0.931. The strength of relationship between the two variables was high. However, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that employee recognition has significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₂ = Flexible working arrangement has no significant effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.931 ^a	.866	.865	.26055

a. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible working arrangement

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.789	1	43.789	9.184	.000 ^b
	Residual	1702.176	357	4.768		
	Total	1745.965	358			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee service delivery of Pharmaceutica firms
b. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible working arrangement

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.418	.075		5.568	.000
	Flexible working arrangement	.201	.017	.969	11.826	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee service delivery of Pharmaceutica firms

Employee service delivery = 0.418 + 0.201 Flexble working arrangement

In testing this hypothesis, flexible working arrangement was regressed against employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms. The result of the single-regression analysis showed the model to ascertain the effect of flexible working arrangement on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The empirical result showed that the coefficient of flexible working arrangement has positive effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms; it means that flexible working arrangement has positive and direct effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms. The results of the t – statistic denoted that the coefficient of flexible working arrangement nefits was statistically significance. This was because observed values of t – statistic (11.826) was greater than its P-values (0.000). The results of the F – statistical test showed that the overall regression of the hypothesis three was statistically significance. This was because observed value of the F – statistic (9.184) was greater than its P-value (0.000). Again, our empirical result showed that the Pearson product moment correlation analysis (r) was 0.931. The strength of relationship between the two variables was high. However, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that flexible working arrangement have significant effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Effect of employee recognition on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria

The findings of the study revealed that employee recognition has significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria since employee recognition instills a sense of purpose and belonging makes business more value-oriented. It sets a positive example and encourages others to strive for excellence (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$).

The outcome of the study is in line with the study of Ndubuisi, Ubah and Ariwa, (2025) who examined the effect of ascertain the effects of talent retention on employees' customer service delivery quality. A study of selected Deposit Money Banks in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design using primary source of data through the administration of questionnaire. Descriptive statistic were used to analyze all the objectives of the study while the simple regression analysis was used to test all the hypothesis with the aid of statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. The findings revealed that talent retention had a positive and significant effect on employee's customer service delivery quality on the selected Deposit Money Banks in South-east Nigeria. The study concluded that talent retention had a positive and significant effect on employees' performance in Deposit Money Banks in South-east Nigeria.

Effect of flexible working arrangement on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria

The findings of the study revealed that flexible working arrangement has significant effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria since flextime work arrangement helps to enhance team skills as well as leadership and gives employee an opportunity to work and learn from other experience (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$).

The outcome of the study is not in line with the study of Tanko, Gambo and Abubakar (2025) who examined the nexus between employee retention and organization performance of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. This is with the view of examine the impact of training program, reward system and work environment on organization goal of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed survey research design. The target Population for this study comprised of 501 staff of Federal Inland Revenue Service, Abuja. The data collected was analysed using multiple regression. The outcome of the study indicates that training program, reward system as well as work environment has a positive and significant impact on organization goal of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. That is, training programs, the reward system, and a conducive working environment play crucial roles in enabling the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to retain its best employees.

Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

1. The study showed that employee recognition has significant effect on employee job satisfaction of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria since employee recognition instills a sense of purpose and belonging makes business more value-oriented. It sets a positive example and encourages others to strive for excellence (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$).
2. The study revealed that flexible working arrangement has significant effect on employee service delivery of Pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria since flextime work arrangement helps to enhance team skills as well as leadership and gives employee an opportunity to work and learn from other experience (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; $0.000 < \text{Sig-value}; 0.05$).

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that retention strategies have positive and significant effect employee performance of Pharmaceutical firms in South East Nigeria. The major retention strategies were employee recognition; flexible working arrangement, employee career development and favourable work environment. Retention strategies

serve as motivation that encourages employees to perform better. Performance will also increase if the employees are well rewarded non-financially. Therefore, non-financial rewards highly impact employee performance. Given the study's findings, financial service managers are urged to foster an environment that will generate good employee performance. The key to improving employee performance is an appropriate and structured reward system. It means that a different approach to rewarding employees in organisations and measuring employee performance should be employed to increase control, thereby using a reward system to positively impact employee performance. The results of this study may be integrated into the teachings of scholars and management practitioners. Employers who work by prioritising the interest of their employees and their organisations would do much better in developing a peaceful society with less worry about employee unrest and industrial action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- i. Management of Pharmaceutical firms should be given to promotion opportunities and improvement in access to training and development programmes and job enlargement (increased responsibility) for deserving employees. Managers should recognise employees who do well on the job more frequently with special employee performance recognition schemes to keep them focused and motivated/engaged.
- ii. Management of Pharmaceutical firms should control overburden and extended working hours that cause imbalance between work and life by dividing work activities, provision of freelancing, compressed workweeks and bendy work time beneficial for employees to adjust their working time to manage more time for demanding situations of different life roles.

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