This study investigated the relationship between talent retention and employee resilience of telecommunication companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Talent retention was conceptualized as the independent variable while interpersonal competence, adaptability, and pro-activeness were used as measures of the dependent variable. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. The primary source of data was generated through a self-administered questionnaire. A sample of one hundred and nine (109) respondents were drawn from a population of one hundred and thirty-four (134) respondents, using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The research instrument was validated through the supervisor's vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. Data generated were analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. Empirical findings revealed that talent retention positively and significantly influences employee resilience of telecommunication companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result of the findings further revealed that talent retention of telecommunication companies in Rivers State, Nigeria gave rise to interpersonal competence, adaptability, and pro-activeness. The study recommends that management of telecommunication companies should do their best to retain employees who have been a positive impact on the companies and use it to motivate other employees working within the designated department in the company.

Keywords: Talent Retention, Interpersonal Competence, Adaptability, Proactiveness, Employee Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Today's organizations are constantly struggling against revolutionary trends, accelerating technological and product changes, global competition, deregulation, demographic changes and, at the same time, striving to cope with trends in a society where knowledge is of utmost concern. Society now relies on knowledge where clearly and human capital was considered a key and indispensable resource for the supervision of companies. Increasingly, organizations compete for the best-talented employees (Fox, Byrne & Roualt, 2009). New paradigm companies recognize that an important element in business management practices is the need to motivate successful resumption of highly talented employees who survived organizational restructuring, downsizing, consolidation, reorganization, or brand change of the initiatives. (Storey, 2005). These trends have increased dramatically with the degree of competition in industries. Within this competitive organizational context, human resource management practices have gained greater importance. More specifically, human resources are relocated with a major of productivity, customer service, marketing performance and organizational oversight in general (Fox et al., 2009). The administration must not only face current problems of human resources, but also the implementation mechanisms that retain their employees.

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It is imperative that firms create employee retention practices and adopt them to increase employee's performance (Gayathri, Sivaraman & Kamalambal, 2012). According to Rawat (2013) organizations face many problems when they have a high turnover due to employees leaving the organization for reasons such as job dissatisfaction, poor working conditions, not having a decent salary package among others. A significant loss of personnel leads to a decrease in the performance of the organization. As a result, organizations must develop employee retention policies and practices to ensure that employees remain in the organization longer and have a positive impact on their performance. Most business leaders understand that having the right people in the right place at the right time to maximize business opportunities has become the most important factor in ensuring the continued success of the organization. Effective management of employees is essential as it includes the process of employee acquisition, allocation, development, retention, and succession. Also that value adding employees can best create higher competitive advantage for organizations (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). It is no surprise therefore that some survey shows that effective management of organization employees is one of the challenging issues faced with leaders of organizations. The aim of this study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between talent retention and employee resilience of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This study was also guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the relationship between talent retention and interpersonal competence of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?

ii. What is the relationship between talent retention and adaptability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?

iii. What is the relationship between talent retention and proactiveness of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The baseline theory to be used in this research is the social exchange theory also known as exchange theory, Ahiauzu, and Asawo (2016). The social exchange theory posits that human relationships are of cost-benefit rewards and as such talent retention and organizational growth fall in the domain of social baseline theory because it characterizes an employer and employee relationship. Accordingly, Joseph Martocchio (2001), asserts that employee needs from an organization is mainly monetary and non-monetary rewards while organizations seek to maximize revenue through the utilization of the employee's talent.

Homans, (1961) in Ahiauzu and Asawo (2016) explains that social exchange theory holds that human actions and social relations is fundamentally an exchange of both tangible and intangible action while Pfeffer (1982) in Ahiauzu and Asawo (2016) opines that in social exchange, “behavioral compliance is in exchange for either extrinsic or intrinsic reward which is perceived to be conditional on the individual’s behavior”. However, social exchange is intended for the exchange of benefits, most importantly employers are in the habit of giving employees bait in exchange for something that is more valuable to the employee. Thus, it can be said that employees in organizations engulf in an egocentric exchange process with their business organization and in this kind of relationship they strive to utilize the gains derived from such exchange process.

In line with the above assumption the social exchange theory is embedded in the rational man model, according to Zafirovski (2005) in Ahiauzu and Asawo (2016) describes social exchange theory "as one that is derived from the rational choice model." He went further to explain that players in social exchange relationship voluntarily make their choices in respect to the different course of action while taking into considerations the cost-benefit implications. The essential assumption of this theory is that organizations should ensure they institute and maintain a social relationship with their employees on the criteria of rational cost-benefit choices.

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Talent Retention

Talent retention is a systematic approach used by media organizations to encourage employees with high potential skills and competencies to remain with the organization for the maximum period of years. It involves human resource career development, maintenance, motivation, integration and compensation functions. Talent retention strategies are critical factors for the survival and growth of any organization. Lockwood,(2006), characterize talent retention program as the application of integrated strategies or scheme planned to enhance workplace productivity by developing improved processes for mentoring, nurturing, retaining, coaching and succession planning of people with the required skills and propensity to meet current and future business needs.
Consequently, the definition above is important to media organizations because it suggests that talent management programs should be tailored to those who are most responsible for the organization’s image and success. Ashton and Morton, (2005), argued that talent retention policies in the areas of employee’s remuneration, motivation, maintenance, compensation, and separation would bring about good employee performance; also policies that bring about low talent turnover and retention strategy in the organization should be encouraged by talent managers. They further explained that talent retention policies in the areas of career development, succession planning, employee work-life balance between office and private life, employee safety. That it needs, the provision of employee sense of recognition and respect, adequate remuneration and compensation and separation will enhance employee commitment and build the organizational capacity which in turn will facilitate the organization's success in the long run.

According to Joseph Martocchio (2001), employee’s expectation from the organization can be classified into two basic retention incentives: Extrinsic incentive and intrinsic incentive. The extrinsic incentives include monetary (cash) rewards that will satisfy employee’s physiological needs and employees often consider monetary reward and benefits as very important means to talent retention while the intrinsic incentives are the non-monetary rewards (employee work-life balance, employee safety needs, employee self-belongingness) that can satisfy employees psychological needs.

Given the above, media organizations should presently focus on talent retention programs; this is because most talented employees have been moving from their organization to another looking for better talent retention organizations. Lockwood et al., (2006) and Kontoghiorghes et al., (2009), emphasized that organizations need to invest in employee retention programs in order to be successful. They opined that although monetary benefits at the outset attract employees, a good retention policy is more vital in retaining employees. Elements such as life insurance, work-life balance and flexible working hours, which will serve as motivating tools for employees to be committed to the organization are more crucial than monetary benefits. Talent retention programs at the first instance may look expensive in the short run, but if conscientiously managed in the long run the organization will be of competitive advantage.

Employees’ Resilience

Some publications have been made on the concept of resilience in management literature. It gained prominence in the field of organizational behavior in the early 1980s, where it was referred to as an individual ability to withstand and rebound from crisis (Watsh, 1996). It was first subjected to the organizational context by Wildavsky in 1988. Since then, the concept has been a subject of progressive attention due to its implications on organizational and employees’ effectiveness. For example, Petak (2002) researched resilience in the face of disasters like earthquake, Mallak, (1998) also discussed resilience about the healthcare system. While Comfort et al., (2001) examined it using information systems, Jeffery and Linda Russell, (2006) defined resilience as the ability of a body to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change. Luthans, (2002) defines resilience as a developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure, and increased responsibility. The strained body also can recover its size and shape after being subjected to adversity or stress. However, to us, it is the ability and tenacity of a body to persevere in the face of adversity. Reivich & Shatte,(2002) and Books & Goldstein, (2004) investigation on resilience in adults dealing with stressful situations shows that resilience behavior enables someone to bounce back in the face of adversity and stress. The implication of the existence of this type of rare behavioral tendency in the foundation of individual behavior is strategic. Thus, it provides the organization with a competitive advantage since they have a remarkable tenacity to persevere in the face of adversity or stress. It, therefore, behoves on the Human Resource Development professionals to develop and sustain this type of behavior amongst its workforce. Hence, employees play an essential role in addressing change (Shin, Taylor & Seo, 2012).

Conner, (1991), while consolidating the work of Reivich et al., (2000) suggests that organizational development and human resource development professionals can guide and strengthen employees’ resilience through training, mentoring, coaching, etc. to maximize effective employee commitment bearing in mind that resilience has several conclusion such as:

1) Resilience is a mindset, i.e., a way of thinking – It is less about whom we are and more about how we view ourselves and the world around us. This “mental model” of how we perceive ourselves and the world around directly influence the way we experience threats and obstacles – viewing them as either devastating or as an opportunity in disguise.

2) Resilience is not a static quantity (that you either have or not). It is a dynamic quality that changes in response to environment and situation. This means that a person may demonstrate resilience at a certain context and not at others due to the variability of their resilience capacities and the degree of stress or change they are going through. Because resilient mindset is a moving target, even the people who tend to be highly resilient have their good days and their bad days.

3) Resilience can be developed and strengthened – because resilience is dynamic, it suggests that employees resilience mindset can be developed and enhanced by the organization’s human resource development through training, mentoring and coaching.
Measures of Employees' Resilience

Jeffrey and Linda (2012), identified eight (8) measures of employees resilience as self-assurance, personal vision, flexibility, and adaptability, organized, problem solver, interpersonal competence, socially connected and proactiveness. However, since they are not all captured in our study framework, we will only examine those in line with our study’s framework.

Interpersonal Competence

Interpersonal Competence – This concept is likened to Robert Katz managerial, interpersonal skill. Interpersonal competence is a salient aspect of a resilient employee. An individual who can understand and empathize with others within the organization has some level of interpersonal competence. Employees with interpersonal competencies demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence since they work well with others both individually and in groups (Robbins et al., 2011). This is because; they have a high level of self and social awareness and the ability to maximize this awareness to manage themselves effectively and their affinities with others (Golman, 1997). Considerable research has shown that resilience results from positive social relationships, the ability to control one’s own emotions, and feelings of competence (Doll, Zucker & Brehm, 2004). Schneider et al., (2013) opine that emotional understanding facilitates resilience and has a positive correction with positive effect.

Adaptability

Adaptability - Practically, resilient people are those who are usually aware of and sensitive to the changes and happenings in their environment. In Koontz and Weihrich, (1999) they succinctly put that organization does not completely isolate itself from its operating environment. Thus, there is a mutual reliance.

However, this mutual reliance presents the organization with opportunities and adversity of variable degrees. Hence, adversity is associated with strains and pressures; it requires a progressive adaptive capacity from the organization and its employees to synchronize such changes. This is because; adaptation is a major driver of a sustained resilient behavior. Specifically, studies indicate that resilient individuals are better equipped to cope with constantly changing workplace (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Therefore the employees must be influenced to act in favor of the organization’s objectives. Denison, (2007) define adaptability as translating the demand of business environment into action.

To survive and make profit, organizations and their employees need to continuously adapt to the different levels of environment uncertainty (Amah & Baridam, 2012) and Daft, (1998) puts it that environmental complexity is a vital contingency for organizational structure and internal policies. Leaning on these postulates that organization must have internal behaviors or policies embedded in its core culture that encourages adaptive behavior in the event of any adversity emanating from the environment.

Pro-activeness

Pro-activeness: Resilient people are die-hard fellows. They rather than simply reacting to a change, actively engage it. They respond and face adversity head-on. Rotter, (1966) conclude that resilient people tend to have an internal locus of control where they believe that they have the capacity and the responsibility to determine their fate. Robbin et al., (2011) described pro-activeness as a personality trait that describes people who are prone to take actions to influence their environment.

Given this assertion, resilient people focus on stabilizing their influence over through assertive behaviors and actions. Frankl, (1963) believes that proactive tendency enables resilient people to successfully preserve their self-efficacy in the face of change.

Various items on the proactive personality scale were found to be good indicators of a person’s likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur, including gender, education and possessing a proactive personality (Robbins et al., 2011). This further buttress that proactive work behavior contributes to entrepreneurial ventures.

From the preceding point of view, we at this moment hypothesized thus:

H01: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and adaptability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

H02: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and interpersonal competence of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

H03: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and proactiveness of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

**Fig. 1: Operational Framework for the hypothesized relationship between Talent Retention and employee resilience.**

**Source:** Author’s Desk Research, 2018
METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional design. The population comprises of all the senior and supervisory staff drawn from the main branches of six (6) different mobile network operators in Rivers State. A total of one hundred and thirty-four (134) employees thus selected from the four telecommunication operators, therefore, formed the total population for this study. The study sample size would be arrived at using the Taro Yamen’s 1970 formula:

\[ n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \]

Where:
- \( n \) = sample size
- \( N \) = population size
- \( 1 \) = constant
- \( e \) = level of significance at 0.5

\[ n = \frac{134}{1 + 134(0.05)^2} \]

\[ n = \frac{134}{1 + 134(0.0025)} \quad n = \frac{134}{1.34} \]

\[ n = 100 \]

The sample size for the study, therefore, was 100. The sampling technique applied in selecting a sample in this study was the purposive sampling in which every member has an equal chance of being selected — descriptive statistics and Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient for data analysis and hypothesis testing with the help of the SPSS version 23 package.

Table 1: Reliability statistics for the instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Dimensions/Measures of the study variable</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Talent Retention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interpersonal Competence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pro-activeness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Research data, 2018**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Bivariate Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover a H01 hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We have based on the statistic of Spearman Rank (rho) to carry out the analysis. The level of significance 0.05 is adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in (p> 0.05) or rejecting the null hypothesis in (p <0.05). We will begin by presenting first a test of existing relationships.

![Fig. 2: scatter plot relationship between adaptive capacity and cooperate reputation](image)

The scatter plot graph shows at \( R^2 \) linear value of (0.457) depicting a moderate relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in talent retention simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of employee resilience. The scatter diagram provides a vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship between the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

Table 1: Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copies of Questionnaire Administered</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved/Returned</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed but Unusable Copies of Questionnaire</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed and Usable Copies of Questionnaire</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, it is observed that 100 questionnaires were administered to respondents. 95 questionnaire representing 95 percent were returned. However, 6 of the 95 copies of the questionnaire representing 6.32 percent were completed but unusable, while 89 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and thus suitable for analysis.
The above table illustrates the test for the previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for:

**H01**: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and interpersonal competence in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between talent retention and interpersonal competence. The \( \rho \) value 0.579 indicates this relationship, and it is significant at \( p < 0.05 \). The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is at this moment rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between talent retention and interpersonal competence in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

**H02**: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and adaptability in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between talent retention and adaptability. The \( \rho \) value 0.637 indicates this relationship, and it is significant at \( p < 0.05 \). The correlation coefficient represents a very high correlation indicating a solid relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is with this rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between talent retention and adaptability in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

**H03**: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and proactiveness in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between talent retention and proactiveness. The \( \rho \) value 0.825 indicates this relationship, and it is significant at \( p < 0.05 \). The correlation coefficient represents a very high correlation indicating a very strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship with talent retention and proactiveness in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between talent retention and employees’ resilience in Telecommunication Industry in Rivers State.

The findings revealed that a significant relationship between exists between talent retention and employees’ resilience in telecommunication Industry in Rivers State using the Spearman Rank Order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that employees’ resilience has an effect on talent retention of telecommunication in Rivers State. It implies that it is in the interest of management of telecommunication firms and the entire employees of same, that adherence to the proper policies aimed at the retention of talent among the employee, should be built to attract more customers.

The finding reinforces previous studies by Kasim and Minai (2009) talent retention strategies are critical factors for the survival and growth of any organization. Furthermore, Lockwood (2006), characterize talent retention program as the application of integrated...
strategies or scheme planned to enhance workplace productivity by developing improved processes for mentoring, nurturing, retaining, coaching and succession planning of people with the required skills and propensity to meet current and future business needs.

Consequently, in line with Martocchio (2001) findings that show that adequate retention will satisfy employee’s physiological needs, and employees often consider monetary reward and benefits as very important means to employee resilience while talent retention in the form of non-monetary rewards (employee work-life balance, employee safety needs, employee self-belongingness) that can satisfy employees psychological needs and boost his/her resilience.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Katou and Budhwar (2007) opine that organizations should pay proper attention to the processes that is involved in talent retention of on-air and off-air personality as is a panacea to employees’ competence of any organization. Also, Hartley (2005) attributed talent retention is a key indicator of the organizational growth, and it is therefore important to note that good talent retention strategies adopted by the organization are a precursor to market flexibility, adaptability and company’s competence of prospective organizations.

Based on the findings obtained from the summary of discussion and empirical findings the following recommendations are made:

i. Management of telecommunication companies should do their best to retain employees who have been a positive impact on the companies and use it to motivate other employees working within designated department in the company.

ii. Employees should be innovative and adaptable to every kind of situation, most especially economical constrained ones. Management, on the other hand, should encourage inter-personnel competition with reward and sanction system.

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