



ABSTRACT

There could be many ways to prevent employee defections while achieving employee retention in any given organization including hospitality firms. This study assesses employee recognition as a correlate of employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. The objectives of the study were to investigate the level of correlation between public recognition and employee retention; to examine the level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee retention; and to evaluate the level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. The study was guided by three research objectives, three research questions and three

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AS A CORRELATE OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN HOSPITALITY ENTERPRISES IN OWERRI

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Introduction

Background of the Study

It is an undeniable fact that every single employee desires to be acknowledged, appreciated, honoured and indeed recognized over exceptional and exemplary performance at work. McQuigge (2023) opines that employee recognition is the process of acknowledging a job that is properly done in an organization. Also, Hoory(2023) opines that employee recognition is done over accomplishments made by a worker in the workplace. Hoory believes that recognition entails the use of praise or any reward for accomplishing tasks at the workplace. It comes in the form of public praise or private praise, prizes, gifts, and tenure rewards, plaques and badges. In the context of this study, employee recognition is the use of public recognition, monetary recognition and promotional recognition to achieve employee retention in hospitality enterprises. Public recognition of employees comes in the forms of celebration of milestones and public praises. Celebration of milestones, in the view of Hansel (2023) includes service awards to workers over work anniversaries. Kester (2023) maintains that recognizing workers publicly could be very helpful to an organization. It can take the shape of a company-wide environment to bring to the knowledge of organizational members that management notices the contributions and efforts of the employee. Such is incredibly motivating. Indeed (2023) emphasized on using public praise for public recognition of employees; a situation whereby a job superior positively acknowledges another's effort. Praise triggers greater efforts by the workforce to perform above board. Frequent use of praise in the workplace builds trust while creating intimacy between superiors and subordinates.

Monetary recognition is another index of employee recognition which this study investigates. Nobes(2023) maintains that monetary recognition has an impact on business. Katreena(2023) opines that monetary recognition comes in the form of monetary or financial rewards and remains about the most popular method of formally recognizing employees. The financial rewards can take the form of salary increments and bonuses among others. Wai(2023



hypotheses. The Ken-C theory of Social Honour was used to show the relevance of the study. Empirical reviews were also used to beef up the study. The researchers employed the survey research design in the research. A five-point Likert Scale structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. The validity of the instrument was done by showing the questionnaire to research experts for their corrections and inputs. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used for obtaining 0.75 as the reliability ratio of the survey instrument. The study committed data analysis to descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Spearman's Product Moment correlation analysis was employed in testing the hypotheses. It was found that there is a significant level of correlation between public recognition and employee retention; monetary recognition and employee retention; and promotional recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. It was concluded that employee recognition was a correlate of employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. The study recommended that managements of hospitality enterprises should increase the rate at which they accord employees public, monetary and promotional recognitions so as to always retain them.

KEYWORDS: Employee recognition, Employee retention, Hospitality.

gives examples of the monetary options used to recognize workers to include stock options, profit-sharing, spot bonuses and lifestyle budgets. Bloznalis(2023) notes that monetary recognition is more effective than non-financial recognitions. Organizations must invest something to their recognition programme.

Another measure of employee recognition examined in this study is promotional recognition. McConnell (2023) opines that promotion is a recognition for an employee's contribution to an organization. It is characterized with higher job titles and greater responsibilities including decision-making powers and higher leadership duties. Promotion according to Leapsome (2023) is raising of an organizational member to higher position. Cooks-Campbell (2022) gives reasons for employee promotion to include rewarding of performance. This is promotional recognition. The indications that show that an employee should be promoted include high performance and ability to collaborate effectively with colleagues while showing initiatives. In fact, Heathfield (2019) states clearly that the promotion of a worker is a recognition of the worker's contribution to the organization.

Employee recognition may influence employee retention in a typical organization. Employee retention is the ability of an employer to prevent staff defections to other organizations. Herrity (2023) defines employee retention as the ability of an organization to retain its quality employees. In the context of this study, it is the ability to retain employees with the instrumentality of employee recognition competences. Crail (2023) asserts that to retain employees, there is need to offer competitive base pay; allow the workers to work from home when necessary and promote a balance of work and life among others. Abdi (2023) opines that to retain employees, management must appreciate and recognize them.

This study on employee recognition as a correlate of employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri is geared towards investigating how hospitality entities use the instrumentality of employee recognition to reduce employee turnover in the enterprises. This is with a view to bridging research gaps and contributing to knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

A motivated worker, they say, is a productive worker. Workers who are appreciated by their managements for work well done are often expected to contribute their own quota to what Henty Fayol in his fourteen principles of Management referred to as stability of tenure of personnel. Ideally, appreciation could predict or drive retention. The researchers have however observed that in many organizations, management finds it



difficult to recognize the sacrifices, efforts and commitment of workers to the survival and growth of the enterprises. This has been observed to breed employee turnover in such organizations. Also, empirical studies assessed by the researchers on employee motivation did not indicate how hospitality firms in Owerri used the motivational instrument of employee recognition to enhance employee retention in the corporate entities. The studies did not show how each of public recognition, monetary recognition and promotional recognition correlated with employee retention in the hospitality firms in Owerri. This exposed a wide research gap which called for this study.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is to assess employee recognition as a correlate of employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. The specific objectives are to:

- i. investigate the level of correlation between public recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises.
- ii. examine the level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises.
- iii. evaluate the level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises.

Research Questions

In alignment with the objectives of the study, the researchers developed the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?
- ii. To what level does monetary recognition correlate with employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?
- iii. To what level does promotional recognition correlate with employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?

Hypotheses

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher developed the following hypotheses:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

Scope of the Study

The study concentrates on selected hospitality enterprises in Owerri, the Imo State capital. This constitutes the geographical scope of the study. The content scope examined the correlation between public recognition and employee recognition; the correlation between monetary recognition and employee recognition; as well as the correlation between promotional recognition and employee retention. For the unit scope, the researchers focused on the workers who have worked for at least six months with the hospitality firms.

Theoretical Literature

The researchers used the Ken-C theory of Social Honour to handle the theoretical framework.



Ken-C Theory of Social Honour (2023)

The Ken-C theory of Social Honour is a 21st Century theory designed to encourage Managements of various kinds of organizations (especially in Africa) to always honour their employees given the level of social injustice most workers experience in the course of service to humanity in the continent. The theory is qualification-focused and postulates that workers who function in organizations and in the social space with good qualifications should be recognized with honorable titles so as to motivate them to increase their commitment and dedication to duty. Most Africans love titles and are motivated by same unto productivity. The theorist took time as an academic for over seventeen 17 years to observe that even in the most populous African nation which prides itself as the giant of the Continent namely Nigeria, the most educationally qualified people who can only ascend to the peak of their career with the highest educational qualification available on planet earth, namely Academic Doctors/Professors earn less than 0.002 of the monthly salaries of those who are required by law to only possess School Certificates to reach their peak in their own career namely Senators/Politicians in the nation. Ken-C noted with dismay, the level of social injustice that Professors and Academic Doctors were subjected to in the nation and such was not far from what was obtainable in other African countries. Yet these politicians and people that occupy allied offices are given the highest titular honours in the socio-political space in the Continent like 'His Excellency', 'Distinguished Senator', 'Right Honourable' and others.

Ken-C advocates that those who hold doctorates and work in any organization especially in Africa should be recognized in the social space as "His Doctorate". For instance, one whose name is Dr JOHN Vianney should be addressed as "His Doctorate, Vianney Dr John" because he is eminently positioned in academics and human development. Governments and organizations should design ways of giving titular social honours to those who though are the most educationally qualified, are still the most cheated in the social, economic and political spaces of life especially in Africa.

The theorist was particularly pained that people who occupy various positions of honour in the political, religious, traditional and social spaces are honoured and recognized by various social titles like His Excellency, His Holiness, His Lordship, His Grace, His Eminence, His Lordship, His Royal Highness, His Royal Majesty and these social titles and recognitions predict their value in and to the society. But it was only the class of individuals who worked as possessors of the highest academic qualifications in the universe but who found themselves in social structures that excluded them from critical opportunities to occupy hallowed social positions that were not socially honoured with social titles that equated those of the people that ruled the world politically, socially or religious despite the fact that they were Professors of Political Science, Sociology and Religion among others. Doctorate Degree holders were paid peanuts in most African ivory towers without any significant social value attached to these eminent members of the academia.

The theory was therefore a strategic model to give academic doctors and well qualified workers the social honour, prestige and relevance in the modern day society. The theorist believes that education makes a difference between man and man just like lack of it creates similarities between man and beast hence the social value of a human being should be directly related to the extent to which the human person is equipped with the formidable tool of education, the software of human training and development.

The assumption of the theory was that many nations especially African nations were blessed with huge natural resources which should be prudently used to boost and value human capital with the instrument of education. That corruption had remained a moral cancer in the Continent and had gone far blindfolding most African leaders against the recognition and increased social values of the educated resources available to them. That this kind of situation drives serious brain drain that would continue to ravage and destroy African economies. That the political class in Africa was yet to see governance as a sacred duty for the common good of all. That the situation was as if the Continent walked with its head and reasoned with its feet hence poor



remunerations for the most educated but very high and lavish rewards for the least educated. That qualified workers were very rarely accorded befitting social recognitions due to them hence high levels of industrial actions and litany of social consequences.

Ken-C theory was propounded by Kenneth Chukwudi Njoku, an Mbaise-born Academic Doctor, a Management Specialist, young Lecturer and seasoned Educationist. He studied at the Imo State University, Owerri where he also gained part time lecturing experiences for many years before joining Imo State Polytechnic and later University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences(UAES), Umuagwo.

Empirical Literature

The researchers used empirical literatures to beef up the study:

Evans-Osabuohien, Igbina, Osabohien, Ufua, Olajugba, daramola, Okeowo and Alake (2023) did a study to investigate recognition and employees' behavioural outcomes: a case of Covenant University, Nigeria. The survey research design was used in the study. The Heterotrait-monotrait discriminant(HTMT) ratio of correlation was adopted in determining the Partial-Equation Structural Equation Model(PLS-SEM) for data analysis. It was found that recognition significantly affected the behavioural outcomes of employees.

Yang and Jiang (2023) wrote on "When colleague got recognized: third-party's reaction to witnessing employee recognition". The survey research method was used in the study. Hypotheses were tested using SPSS 20.0 and its PROCESS macro module. The findings include that employees who witnessed leaders' recognition of colleagues perceived higher organizational justice and became more committed to their duties. Mahmood, Aziz, Ahmad, Mulyana, Fadzlina and Nasir (2023) investigated the motivational factors and employee performance: an empirical study in Malaysian Public University. The survey research method was adopted. The study committed data analysis to multiple regression. It was discovered that work factor, financial reward, security of the job as well as work environment boosted the performance of the workers.

Maket and Odenyo(2023) assessed the impact of employee recognition on their commitment to the organization: does job satisfaction matter? It was conducted in Nyanza region of Kenya. It was a survey research. Krejcie and Morgan statistics were used in the study. It was found that recognition and job satisfaction affected commitment of the employees.

Gap Identified in Literature

The gap identified in literature was that empirical studies accessed by the researcher did not show how each of public recognition, monetary recognition and promotional recognition influenced employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. This study fills the gap.

Methodology

Survey research method was adopted in this study. The population of the study was made up of the workers who had worked for at least six months in 10 hospitality enterprises randomly selected from each of the 9 Local Government Areas in Owerri Senatorial Zone. The total population of the study was 654. The researcher used the Taro Yamen's formula for sample size determination to obtain a sample size of 248 for the study. The sources of data included the primary and secondary sources. The questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection used for the study. The researchers used texts, journals and internet sources for secondary data. The researchers did the validity of the instrument by showing the instrument to some experts in research for their inputs. They also ensured that the study focused on the research questions. A pilot study was used to determine the reliability ratio of the instrument. The results of the pilot study were committed to Cronbach alpha statistic. The study obtained a ratio of 0.82 as the instrument reliability ratio. The instrument was therefore 82% reliable. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used



to handle the analysis of data. The study adopted the Spearman Product Moment Correlation analysis for testing the hypotheses. The rejection of null hypothesis was based on $P < 0.05$.

Questionnaire Analysis

Out of the 248 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 217 copies were properly filled and returned. This represents 87.5% return.

Research Question 1:

What is the level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?

Table 1: Respondents’ responses on public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises

Q/No	Item	SA	A	SD	D	UN	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Public recognition of employees in hospitality firms helps to defeat employee turnover.	88	77	13	15	24	217	3.88	0.773
2	Many employees remain in the organization when they are publicly appreciated with or without other benefits.	97	71	15	14	20	217	3.97	0.782

Field Survey (2023)

The table 1 above presents data from respondents under study. The result also disclosed a strong agreement by the respondents on their opinion on the relationship between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises. It accounted for a grand mean of 3.93. The results further show that the respondents agreed to the facts that: Public recognition of employees in hospitality firms helps to defeat employee turnover (with a $\bar{x} \pm S.D$ of 3.88 ± 0.773 ; many employees remain in the organization when they are publicly appreciated with or without other benefits (with a $\bar{x} \pm S.D$ of 3.97 ± 0.782).

Research Question 2:

To what level does monetary recognition correlate with employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?

Table 2: Respondents’ responses on the relationship between monetary recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises

Q/N	Item	SA	A	SA	D	UN	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	Monetary recognition is always used by management to influence employees over retention.	10 9	80	12	4	12	217	4.24	0.781
4	Many workers always expect management to appreciate them with money as a condition for remaining in the organization.	90	75	25	9	18	217	3.97	0.802

Field Survey (2023)



The table 2 above presents data from respondents on the relationship between monetary recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises. The results accounted for a grand mean of 4.11 which implies that majority of the respondents affirmed to the statements. There is a high level agreement by the respondents on the opinion that monetary recognition is always used by management to influence employees over retention as the result accounted for a mean of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.781. The result has indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed to the item statement that: many workers always expect management to appreciate them with money as a condition for remaining in the organization (with a $\bar{x} \pm S. D$ of 3.97 ± 0.802).

Research Question 3:

To what level does promotional recognition correlate with employee recognition in hospitality enterprises?

Table 3: Respondents' responses on the relationship between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises

Q/N	Item	SA	A	SA	D	UN	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
5	Management appreciates sound efforts with promotion of the employees.	106	83	9	6	13	217	4.21	0.779
6	Many workers make extra efforts to work hard so that they may be appreciated with promotion.	87	78	25	10	17	217	3.96	0.747

Field Survey (2023)

The table 2 above presents data from respondents on the relationship between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises. The results accounted for a grand mean of 4.09 which implies that majority of the respondents affirmed to the statements. There is a high level agreement by the respondents on the opinion that Management appreciates sound efforts with promotion of the employees as the result accounted for a mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.779. The result has indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed to the item statement that: many workers make extra efforts to work hard so that they may be appreciated with promotion (with a $\bar{x} \pm S. D$ of 3.96 ± 0.747).

Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested in order to find out whether the difference in opinion was significant to draw conclusion.

H₀: There is no significant level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

Table 4: Correlation analysis between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Public recognition	3.88	0.773	0.713	0.001
Employee recognition	3.97	0.782		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2023).



The result on table 5 presents the correlation analysis between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and correlation coefficient of 0.713. The result shows a p-value less than 0.05 being the level of significance; therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the correlation coefficient between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises is significant. As such, there is a significant level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

H₀₂: There is no significant level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

Table 5: Correlation analysis between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Monetary recognition	4.24	0.781	0.811	0.001
Employee recognition	3.97	0.802		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2023).

The result on table 6 presents the correlation analysis between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and correlation coefficient of 0.811. The result shows a $p - value \leq 0.05$ level of significance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative which states that there is a significant level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

H₀₃: There is no significant level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

Table 6: Correlation analysis between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprise

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Promotional recognition	4.21	0.779	0.809	0.001
Employee recognition	3.96	0.747		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2023).

The result on table 6 presents the correlation analysis between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprise. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and correlation coefficient of 0.809. The result shows a $p - value \leq 0.05$ level of significance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative which states that there is a significant level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis, the researcher found that:

1. There is a significant level of correlation between public recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.
2. There is a significant level of correlation between monetary recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.
3. There is a significant level of correlation between promotional recognition and employee recognition in hospitality enterprises.



Conclusion

The study concludes that employee recognition is a correlate and great driver of employee retention in hospitality enterprises in Owerri. Any hospitality firm that relegates employee recognition to the background does so at its own peril. The researchers therefore submit that with public recognition, monetary recognition and promotional recognition, hospitality firms stand greater changes of defeating employee turnovers in the highly competitive hospitality business environment like in Owerri.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that:

- i) Management of hospitality enterprises should increase the rate at which they accord employees public, monetary and promotional recognitions so as to always retain them.
- ii) Hospitality workers should not rest on their oars when they are appreciated with public, monetary and/or promotional recognitions but they should make more efforts to gain more benefits from management.
- iii) Customers of hospitality enterprises should advise managements of the firms through the instrumentality of suggestion boxes and allied avenues, to retain workers by expanding its recognition strategy to reach greater number of people.

Contribution to Knowledge

The research contributes to knowledge by providing empirical literature on the correlation between public recognition and employee retention. The study also provides empirical literature on the correlation between monetary recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises. In addition, this study provides empirical literature on the correlation between promotional recognition and employee retention in hospitality enterprises. The results add to the body of knowledge and they provide new insights into theory and practice.

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