

WORKPLACE WELLNESS INITIATIVES AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The increasing prevalence of workplace stress, burnout, and employee turnover has heightened the need for organisations to invest in employee wellness programmes that promote workforce stability. Workplace wellness initiatives were measured using physical wellness and mental wellness, while employee retention was measured using retention intention and job embeddedness. The study was anchored on the Social Exchange Theory and supported by the Job Embeddedness Theory. A correlational research design was adopted. The study population comprised 800 employees of selected telecommunication firms in Rivers State, from which a sample size of 267 was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. From the 267 questionnaires administered, 251 were retrieved, while 240 valid questionnaires were used for the analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at the 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that physical wellness had significant positive relationships with retention intention ($r = 0.736$) and job embeddedness ($r = 0.752$), while mental wellness also had significant positive relationships with retention intention ($r = 0.768$) and job embeddedness ($r = 0.781$) ($p < 0.05$). The study concludes that workplace wellness initiatives significantly enhance employee retention by strengthening employees' retention intention and job embeddedness. It recommends that telecommunication firms strengthen physical and mental wellness programmes to improve long-term employee retention.

Keywords: Workplace Wellness Initiatives, Physical Wellness, Mental Wellness, Employee, Retention Intention, Job Embeddedness.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations increasingly recognize that employees are valuable strategic assets whose health and well-being directly influence organisational success. In today's competitive business environment, particularly in service-oriented industries such as telecommunications, organisations are under continuous pressure to improve productivity, service quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction while simultaneously retaining skilled employees. Consequently, workplace wellness initiatives have become an important human resource strategy designed to promote employees' physical and psychological well-being, reduce work-related stress, improve job satisfaction, and strengthen employees' commitment to their organisations (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2022).

The telecommunication industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally and plays a significant role in economic development by facilitating communication, digital transformation, and technological innovation. In Nigeria, the sector has experienced remarkable growth following market liberalization, increasing mobile penetration, internet expansion, and rapid technological advancement. Telecommunication firms such as MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom, and 9mobile operate in highly competitive environments characterized by demanding customer expectations, continuous technological changes, long working hours, performance targets, and increasing operational complexities. These conditions expose employees to physical fatigue, occupational stress, emotional exhaustion, and work-related health challenges, thereby making workplace wellness an essential organisational priority (Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC], 2024).

Workplace wellness initiatives refer to organisational policies, programmes, and practices intentionally designed to improve employees' overall health and quality of work life. Such initiatives typically include physical wellness programmes that encourage healthy lifestyles through fitness activities, medical screenings, ergonomic work environments, and preventive healthcare, as well as mental wellness programmes that support employees' psychological well-being through stress management, counselling services, mental health awareness, and employee assistance programmes (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2022). These initiatives are increasingly viewed not merely as employee benefits but as strategic investments capable of enhancing organisational performance and sustaining a productive workforce.

Physical wellness has attracted growing attention because employees' physical health significantly affects attendance, productivity, and organisational commitment. Healthy employees generally experience lower absenteeism, fewer occupational injuries, improved energy levels, and higher job performance. Organisations that invest in physical wellness programmes often experience improvements in employee morale and reductions in healthcare-related costs (WHO, 2022). Within the Nigerian telecommunication sector, where employees frequently work under demanding schedules and extensive customer interactions, maintaining good physical health has become increasingly important for sustaining workforce effectiveness.

Similarly, mental wellness has become a major concern due to rising levels of workplace stress, anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion associated with modern work environments. Mental wellness initiatives seek to create psychologically healthy workplaces by providing counselling services, promoting work-life balance, encouraging supportive leadership, and reducing psychosocial risks. Research has consistently shown that mentally healthy employees demonstrate higher engagement, stronger organisational commitment, improved creativity, and greater willingness to remain with their organisations (ILO, 2022; WHO, 2022).

Employee retention remains one of the most important challenges confronting organisations worldwide. Retaining competent employees enables organisations to preserve institutional knowledge, reduce recruitment costs, enhance operational continuity, and maintain competitive advantage. However, employee retention extends beyond simply preventing

turnover; it encompasses employees' willingness to remain with an organisation because they perceive continued employment as personally and professionally rewarding. Two important indicators of employee retention are retention intention and job embeddedness.

Retention intention reflects an employee's conscious willingness and commitment to continue working with an organisation over time. Employees with high retention intention are less likely to seek alternative employment because they perceive satisfaction, growth opportunities, supportive work environments, and favourable organisational practices (Maertz et al., 2022). On the other hand, job embeddedness explains why employees remain in organisations by emphasizing the extent of their organisational connections, compatibility with organisational values, and perceived sacrifices associated with leaving the organisation. Employees who are highly embedded develop stronger interpersonal relationships, greater organisational attachment, and higher resistance to voluntary turnover (Holtom et al., 2022).

Several recent studies have demonstrated that workplace wellness initiatives positively influence employee retention across various industries. For example, research indicates that organisations providing comprehensive physical and mental wellness programmes often experience increased employee commitment, reduced turnover intentions, improved engagement, and stronger organisational loyalty (Grawitch et al., 2021; WHO, 2022). Nevertheless, many existing studies have focused on developed economies, healthcare institutions, manufacturing firms, or educational organisations, with relatively limited empirical evidence from the Nigerian telecommunication sector, particularly within Rivers State.

Rivers State serves as one of Nigeria's major commercial and industrial centres, with a significant presence of telecommunication firms supporting both corporate and individual customers. Employees in these firms frequently encounter demanding workloads, performance pressures, technological changes, and extended customer service responsibilities. Despite organisational efforts to improve employee welfare, concerns regarding employee turnover, talent retention, work-related stress, and declining organisational commitment continue to attract scholarly and managerial attention. Understanding whether workplace wellness initiatives contribute significantly to employee retention within this context therefore becomes both practically and academically important.

Against this background, this study investigates the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria, by examining physical wellness and mental wellness as dimensions of workplace wellness initiatives and retention intention and job embeddedness as measures of employee retention.

Statement of the Problem

The telecommunication industry in Nigeria has become increasingly competitive due to technological advancement, rising customer expectations, digital transformation, and continuous market expansion. To remain competitive, telecommunication firms depend heavily on skilled, experienced, and committed employees capable of delivering high-quality

services and sustaining organisational performance. However, retaining competent employees has become a growing concern as organisations continue to experience voluntary employee turnover, declining organisational commitment, increasing workplace stress, and talent mobility.

Employees in telecommunication firms are often exposed to demanding performance targets, prolonged working hours, customer complaints, technological changes, and continuous connectivity. These workplace demands may negatively affect employees' physical health and psychological well-being, resulting in fatigue, burnout, emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and increased intentions to leave the organisation. Although many organisations have introduced various workplace wellness initiatives, questions remain regarding whether these programmes adequately address employees' wellness needs and contribute meaningfully to employee retention.

Recent global evidence suggests that comprehensive workplace wellness programmes improve employee well-being, organisational commitment, engagement, and retention (ILO, 2022; WHO, 2022). However, empirical findings remain inconsistent regarding which dimensions of workplace wellness contribute most significantly to employee retention, particularly in developing economies. While some studies report strong positive relationships between workplace wellness and employee retention, others indicate that wellness initiatives alone may not sufficiently prevent employee turnover without complementary organisational support systems (Grawitch et al., 2021; Maertz et al., 2022).

Within the Nigerian context, many empirical studies have examined employee retention using variables such as compensation, leadership style, organisational commitment, work-life balance, and employee engagement. Comparatively few studies have investigated workplace wellness initiatives using physical wellness and mental wellness as predictors of employee retention measured through retention intention and job embeddedness, particularly within telecommunication firms in Rivers State. This creates a contextual and empirical gap requiring further investigation.

It is against this background that this study examines the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

- i. What is the relationship between physical wellness and retention intention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between physical wellness and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State?
- iii. What is the relationship between mental wellness and retention intention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State?
- iv. What is the relationship between mental wellness and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested:

- H01: There is no significant relationship between physical wellness and retention intention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.
- H02: There is no significant relationship between physical wellness and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.
- H03: There is no significant relationship between mental wellness and retention intention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.
- H04: There is no significant relationship between mental wellness and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

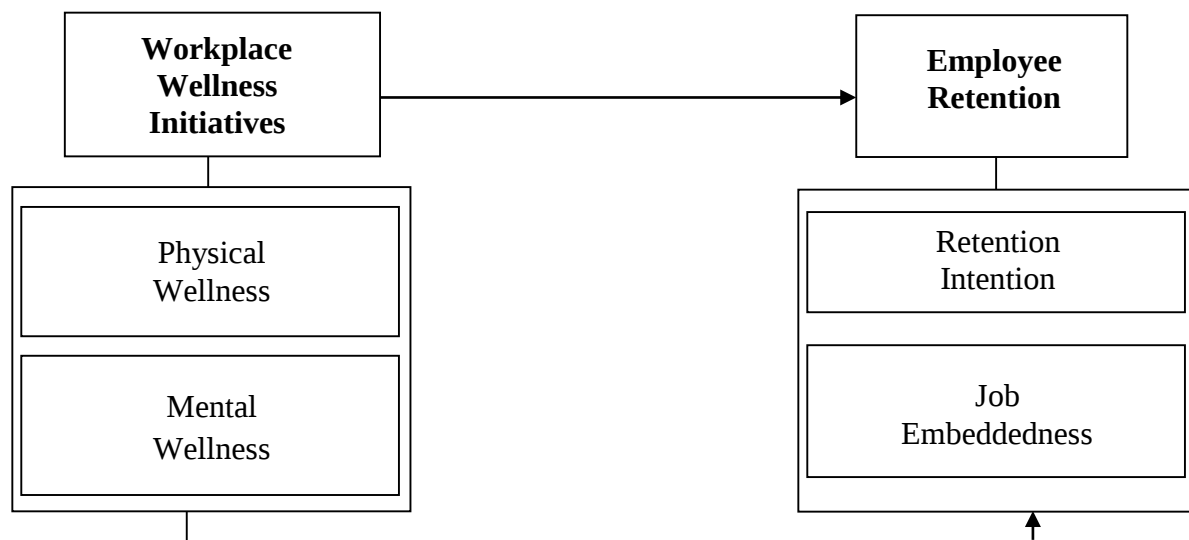


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Workplace Wellness Initiatives and Employee Retention in Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State

Source: The dimensions of Workplace Wellness Initiatives, comprising physical wellness and mental wellness, were adapted from the World Health Organisation (2022), Grawitch, M. J. et al. (2006), and Hassard, J. et al. (2021). The measures of Employee Retention, comprising retention intention and job embeddedness, were adapted from Hom, P. W. et al. (2020), Mitchell, T. R. et al. (2001), and Holtom, B. C. et al. (2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Concept of Workplace Wellness Initiatives

Workplace wellness initiatives refer to deliberate organisational programmes, policies, and practices designed to promote employees' physical, mental, and overall well-being while creating healthier and more productive work environments. Contemporary organisations increasingly recognize that employee wellness extends beyond the absence of illness to include the ability of employees to function effectively, cope with workplace demands, and maintain a satisfactory quality of life. Consequently, wellness initiatives have become an integral component of strategic human resource management because they contribute to

improved employee health, higher productivity, reduced absenteeism, and stronger organisational commitment (World Health Organisation, 2022).

The concept of workplace wellness has evolved from traditional occupational health programmes to comprehensive initiatives that integrate health promotion, disease prevention, psychological support, work-life balance, and healthy organisational practices. The International Labour Organisation (2022) emphasizes that organisations should create safe and healthy working environments by addressing both physical and psychosocial risks that may affect employees' well-being. Such initiatives not only improve employees' health outcomes but also enhance organisational sustainability through increased motivation, engagement, and employee retention.

Modern organisations implement workplace wellness initiatives through activities such as regular health screening, fitness programmes, ergonomic workplace design, stress management interventions, counselling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and employee assistance programmes. These initiatives demonstrate an organisation's commitment to employee welfare and strengthen the employment relationship by fostering trust, satisfaction, and organisational support (WHO, 2022). In this study, workplace wellness initiatives are examined through physical wellness and mental wellness, which represent two essential dimensions influencing employees' willingness to remain with their organisations.

Physical Wellness

Physical wellness refers to employees' ability to maintain good physical health through healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate rest, and safe working conditions. Within organisations, physical wellness encompasses employer-supported programmes that encourage healthy behaviours and minimize health-related risks. These programmes commonly include periodic medical examinations, workplace fitness initiatives, ergonomic workstations, vaccination campaigns, and occupational safety measures (WHO, 2022).

Physically healthy employees are generally more energetic, productive, and resilient in performing their work responsibilities. They experience lower absenteeism, fewer workplace injuries, and greater work effectiveness than employees with poor physical health. According to the WHO (2022), investments in workplace health promotion improve employees' physical functioning while reducing healthcare costs and productivity losses associated with illness.

In service industries such as telecommunications, where employees often work under demanding schedules and continuous customer interaction, physical wellness programmes help employees maintain the energy and stamina required to perform effectively. Consequently, organisations that prioritize employees' physical health are more likely to develop committed employees who are willing to remain with the organisation.

Mental Wellness

Mental wellness refers to an individual's psychological and emotional ability to cope with workplace demands, manage stress effectively, maintain positive relationships, and function productively. It extends beyond the absence of mental illness and reflects employees' emotional resilience, psychological safety, and overall well-being (WHO, 2022).

Growing workplace demands, technological changes, heavy workloads, and performance pressures have made mental wellness a major concern for employers globally. Recognizing this challenge, the WHO (2022) and the ILO (2022) jointly advocate organisational interventions that promote psychologically healthy workplaces through stress management programmes, counselling services, supportive leadership, flexible work arrangements, and mental health awareness.

Employees with good mental wellness generally demonstrate higher motivation, stronger organisational commitment, greater engagement, and improved job performance. Conversely, prolonged stress, burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion may reduce employees' productivity and increase their intention to leave the organisation. Therefore, organisations that invest in employees' psychological well-being are more likely to foster a stable and committed workforce.

Concept of Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to an organisation's ability to attract and keep competent employees over time by creating favourable working conditions that encourage continued employment. It involves organisational strategies that reduce voluntary turnover while promoting employees' long-term commitment to the organisation. Employee retention has become increasingly important because retaining experienced employees preserves organisational knowledge, reduces recruitment and training costs, and enhances organisational performance (Hom, P. W. et al., 2020).

Employee retention is influenced by several organisational and individual factors, including leadership support, career development opportunities, organisational culture, employee well-being, compensation, work-life balance, and workplace relationships. Organisations that invest in employee welfare create favourable employment experiences that strengthen employees' attachment and willingness to remain with the organisation (Hom et al., 2020). This study conceptualizes employee retention using retention intention and job embeddedness, which collectively explain employees' willingness to continue working with their organisations and the organisational factors that discourage voluntary turnover.

Retention Intention

Retention intention refers to an employee's conscious willingness and desire to continue working with an organisation for the foreseeable future. It reflects employees' evaluation of their work experiences and their decision to remain rather than seek employment elsewhere. Employees with strong retention intentions are generally satisfied with their work environment, perceive organisational support, and expect future career opportunities within the organisation (Hom et al., 2020). Retention intention is widely regarded as an important predictor of actual employee retention because individuals who express a strong intention

to remain are less likely to voluntarily resign. Organisations that provide supportive work environments, opportunities for growth, and wellness programmes are more likely to strengthen employees' intentions to remain.

Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness describes the extent to which employees become connected to their organisations and communities through interpersonal relationships, organisational compatibility, and the perceived sacrifices associated with leaving their jobs. Employees who are highly embedded develop strong social and professional ties that make voluntary turnover less attractive (Holtom, B. C. et al., 2022). The concept explains employee retention beyond job satisfaction by recognizing that employees often remain because of their organisational relationships, compatibility with organisational values, and the benefits they would lose if they resigned. Organisations that promote supportive work environments, employee well-being, and positive workplace relationships strengthen employees' embeddedness and reduce turnover intentions (Holtom et al., 2022).

Workplace Wellness Initiatives and Employee Retention

Workplace wellness initiatives are increasingly recognized as strategic human resource practices that enhance employee retention by improving employees' physical and psychological well-being. According to the WHO (2022), organisations that invest in employee wellness create healthier workplaces characterized by higher morale, improved engagement, lower absenteeism, and stronger organisational commitment.

Physical wellness initiatives improve employees' health, energy, and work capacity, thereby increasing their willingness to remain with the organisation. Likewise, mental wellness initiatives help employees manage occupational stress, prevent burnout, and improve psychological well-being, resulting in stronger organisational attachment and reduced intentions to leave (ILO, 2022; WHO, 2022).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees are likely to reciprocate organisational investments in their well-being with greater loyalty and continued organisational membership. Similarly, employees who experience supportive wellness programmes are more likely to develop stronger organisational connections and become more embedded in their jobs, thereby enhancing employee retention. Consequently, workplace wellness initiatives are expected to positively influence both retention intention and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory was developed by George C. Homans (1958) and expanded by Peter M. Blau (1964). The theory explains that employees reciprocate favourable organisational treatment with positive work attitudes and behaviours. When organisations invest in employees' welfare, employees are more likely to respond with loyalty, commitment, and a willingness to remain with the organisation. In the context of this study, workplace wellness initiatives such as physical wellness and mental wellness programmes demonstrate organisational concern for employees' well-being. These initiatives encourage

employees to reciprocate through stronger retention intention and greater job embeddedness. Recent studies continue to identify Social Exchange Theory as a useful framework for explaining employee retention because organisational support promotes favourable employee behaviours (Hom, P. W. et al., 2020).

Job Embeddedness Theory

Job Embeddedness Theory was developed by Terence R. Mitchell et al. (2001). The theory explains that employees remain with an organisation because of their links with colleagues, fit with the organisation, and the sacrifices they would make if they left. Recent literature suggests that supportive organisational practices strengthen employees' job embeddedness by improving workplace relationships and organisational attachment (Holtom, B. C. et al., 2021). Workplace wellness initiatives therefore enhance employees' connection with their organisations and reduce their likelihood of leaving.

Social Exchange Theory is adopted as the principal theory because it explains how employees reciprocate organisational investment in their well-being through increased retention intention. Job Embeddedness Theory complements this explanation by showing how wellness initiatives strengthen employees' organisational links, fit, and perceived sacrifices, thereby increasing job embeddedness. Together, the theories provide an appropriate foundation for explaining the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention.

Empirical Review

Recent studies generally indicate that workplace wellness initiatives contribute positively to employee retention. Hom, P. W. et al. (2020) found that supportive organisational practices and positive work experiences significantly reduce employee turnover and improve retention. Similarly, Holtom, B. C. et al. (2021) reported that employee-centred human resource practices strengthen job embeddedness, thereby reducing employees' intentions to leave.

The World Health Organisation (2022) reported that workplace wellness programmes improve employees' physical and psychological well-being, resulting in healthier, more productive, and committed employees. Likewise, the International Labour Organisation and WHO (2022) observed that organisations implementing mental health programmes experience lower stress levels, reduced absenteeism, and improved employee well-being.

In Nigeria, Mashia, M. S. et al. (2022) found that supportive organisational practices significantly enhanced job embeddedness and reduced turnover intention among hotel employees. Similarly, Ramaite, M. et al. (2022) established that employees with higher job embeddedness demonstrated greater job satisfaction, stronger supervisor relationships, and higher work engagement.

Previous studies consistently show that workplace wellness initiatives and supportive organisational practices improve employee retention by reducing turnover intentions and strengthening job embeddedness. However, most studies have been conducted outside Nigeria or in sectors such as hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing, and education. Few

studies have specifically examined physical wellness and mental wellness as dimensions of workplace wellness initiatives in relation to retention intention and job embeddedness among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. This contextual and empirical gap justifies the present study.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the nature, strength, and direction of the relationship between the study variables without manipulating them.

The study population comprised 800 management and non-management employees drawn from four purposively selected telecommunication firms in Rivers State, namely MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom, and 9mobile. These firms were selected because they are the four major mobile network operators in Nigeria with an established operational presence in Rivers State. Collectively, they account for the dominant share of the telecommunications market and operate under similar regulatory and competitive conditions while maintaining distinct organisational cultures and human resource management practices. Their selection provided adequate representation of the telecommunication industry in Rivers State, minimized organisational bias, and enhanced the applicability of the findings across the sector. Respondents were drawn from departments including customer service, administration, human resource management, information technology, finance, marketing, operations, and technical support, as employees in these units are directly involved in the delivery of telecommunication services and organisational wellness programmes. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, while a stratified random sampling technique was employed by first classifying respondents into management and non-management categories, after which simple random sampling was used to proportionately select participants from each stratum.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized for the study. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, government publications, and other relevant scholarly materials. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B measured physical wellness, mental wellness, retention intention, and job embeddedness using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

The validity of the research instrument was established through face and content validation by experts in Management and Research Methodology. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha technique based on a pilot study conducted outside the study area and analyzed with SPSS. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above, as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), was considered acceptable.

Data were collected through the direct administration of questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants to improve the response rate and ensure accurate completion

of the instrument. Workplace wellness initiatives served as the independent variable and were measured using physical wellness and mental wellness, while employee retention served as the dependent variable and was measured using retention intention and job embeddedness.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) with the aid of SPSS. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was considered appropriate because it measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between continuous variables derived from Likert-scale responses. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level; therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected where $p < 0.05$ and retained where $p > 0.05$.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the management of the selected telecommunication firms. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured. All information provided by the respondents was treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. Participants were protected from coercion, discrimination, and any form of harm throughout the study.

Sample Size

The sample size for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for finite population:

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

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size (800)

e = Level of significance (0.05)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{800}{1 + 800(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{800}{1 + 2}$$

$$n = \frac{800}{3}$$

$$n = 266.7$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study is approximately **267 respondents**.

Population of the Study

Table 1: Sample Size Allocation and Questionnaire Distribution among Selected Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State

S/N	Telecommunication Firms	Population	Sample Size	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Questionnaire Used
1	MTN Nigeria	220	73	73	69	69
2	Airtel Nigeria	200	67	67	63	63
3	Globacom Nigeria	190	63	63	59	59
4	9mobile	190	64	64	60	60
	Total	800	267	267	251	240

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2: Variables Measurement/Operationalization

S/N	Variables	Dimensions/Measures	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Workplace Wellness Initiatives	Physical Wellness	5	0.842
		Mental Wellness	5	0.861
2	Employee Retention	Retention Intention	5	0.853
		Job Embeddedness	5	0.874
	Overall Reliability Coefficient		20	0.858

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026.

The reliability results indicate that all constructs are internally consistent and reliable, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.842 for physical wellness, 0.861 for mental wellness, 0.853 for retention intention, and 0.874 for job embeddedness, all exceeding the acceptable benchmark of 0.70. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.858 confirms that the instrument is reliable for data collection and analysis.

Table 3: Response Rate of Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Number of Copies Distributed	267	100.00%
Number of Copies Retrieved	251	94.01%
Number of Copies Not Returned	16	5.99%
Number of Copies Invalid	11	4.12%
Number of Copies Used for Analysis	240	89.89%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026.

The table indicates that 267 questionnaires were distributed to respondents across selected telecommunication firms in Nigeria. From the questionnaires distributed, 251 were retrieved, representing a retrieval rate of 94.01%, while 16 questionnaires (5.99%) were not returned. Among the questionnaires retrieved, 11 (4.12%) were found to be invalid due to incomplete or improperly completed responses. Consequently, 240 valid questionnaires, representing 89.89% of the total distributed, were used for the final analysis. The high

retrieval rate and substantial number of valid responses indicate that the data were adequate and reliable for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

DATA RESULTS

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Physical Wellness

S/N	Physical Wellness Items	N	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Employees are provided with adequate health and medical support services	240	1.0	5.0	995.0	4.146	0.7842
2	Workplace safety measures are effectively implemented in the organisation	240	1.0	5.0	1002.0	4.175	0.7725
3	Employees have access to routine medical check-ups and wellness programs	240	1.0	5.0	988.0	4.117	0.7983
4	Physical wellness initiatives improve employees' energy and productivity	240	1.0	5.0	997.0	4.154	0.7816
5	The organisation provides a healthy and safe working environment for employees	240	1.0	5.0	1005.0	4.188	0.7648
	Valid N (listwise)	240					

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Mental Wellness

S/N	Mental Wellness Items	N	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Employees receive adequate emotional and psychological support from management	240	1.0	5.0	991.0	4.129	0.7924
2	Stress management programs are available for employees in the organisation	240	1.0	5.0	999.0	4.163	0.7789
3	Counseling services help employees cope with workplace pressure	240	1.0	5.0	986.0	4.108	0.8031
4	Mental wellness initiatives reduce burnout and emotional exhaustion among employees	240	1.0	5.0	1001.0	4.171	0.7754
5	Employees feel mentally stable and motivated at work due to wellness support programs	240	1.0	5.0	1007.0	4.196	0.7597
	Valid N (listwise)	240					

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Retention Intention

S/N	Retention Intention Items	N	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Employees intend to continue working with the organisation for the foreseeable future.	240	1.0	5.0	996.0	4.150	0.7814
2	Employees have little desire to leave the organisation for another employer.	240	1.0	5.0	989.0	4.121	0.7956
3	Workplace wellness initiatives encourage employees to remain with the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	1003.0	4.179	0.7689
4	Employees are willing to build their long-term careers with the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	998.0	4.158	0.7773
5	Employees would recommend the organisation as a good place to build a long-term career.	240	1.0	5.0	1007.0	4.196	0.7548
	Valid N (listwise)	240					

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics on Job Embeddedness

S/N	Job Embeddedness Items	N	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Employees feel strongly connected to the organisation and its people.	240	1.0	5.0	998.0	4.158	0.7785
2	Employees believe that their values and career goals align with those of the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	992.0	4.133	0.7894
3	Employees would sacrifice valuable benefits and relationships if they left the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	987.0	4.113	0.8017
4	Employees have developed strong workplace relationships that encourage them to remain with the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	1002.0	4.175	0.7668
5	Workplace wellness initiatives strengthen employees' attachment to the organisation.	240	1.0	5.0	1006.0	4.192	0.7539
	Valid N (listwise)	240					

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents generally agreed that workplace wellness initiatives are effectively implemented in the selected telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Specifically, physical wellness recorded mean scores ranging from 4.117 to 4.188, suggesting that employees perceive their organisations as providing adequate health

support, workplace safety, wellness programmes, and healthy working conditions. Similarly, mental wellness recorded mean scores between 4.108 and 4.196, indicating that employees acknowledged the availability of psychological support, stress management programmes, counselling services, and other mental wellness initiatives.

Regarding employee retention, retention intention recorded mean scores ranging from 4.121 to 4.196, indicating that employees expressed a strong willingness to remain with their organisations and build long-term careers. Likewise, job embeddedness recorded mean scores between 4.113 and 4.192, demonstrating that employees felt strongly connected to their organisations through workplace relationships, organisational fit, and attachment.

Finally, all the study variables recorded mean scores above the benchmark value of 3.00, indicating respondents' agreement with the statements. The relatively low standard deviation values across all variables further suggest consistency in respondents' opinions, implying that workplace wellness initiatives are positively perceived and are associated with higher levels of employee retention in the selected telecommunication firms.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was employed as the inferential statistical tool for testing the hypotheses of this study. This statistical technique was considered appropriate because it measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between continuous variables obtained from Likert-scale responses. The analysis examined the relationship between workplace wellness initiatives (physical wellness and mental wellness) and employee retention (retention intention and job embeddedness) among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using SPSS Version 27.

Table 8: Physical Wellness and Retention Intention

Pearson Correlation		Physical Wellness	Retention Intention
Physical Wellness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	240	240
Retention Intention	Correlation Coefficient	0.736**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	240	240
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 9: Physical Wellness and Job Embeddedness

Pearson Correlation		Physical Wellness	Job Embeddedness
Physical Wellness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.752**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	240	240
Job Embeddedness	Correlation Coefficient	0.752**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	240	240
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 10: Mental Wellness and Retention Intention

Pearson Correlation		Mental Wellness	Retention Intention
Mental Wellness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.768**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	240	240
Retention Intention	Correlation Coefficient	0.768**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	240	240
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

Table 11: Mental Wellness and Job Embeddedness

Pearson Correlation		Mental Wellness	Job Embeddedness
Mental Wellness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	240	240
Job Embeddedness	Correlation Coefficient	0.781**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	240	240
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS (Version 27) Result, 2026.

The results presented in Tables 8 to 11 reveal a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between workplace wellness initiatives and employee retention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Specifically, Table 8 shows that physical wellness has a strong positive relationship with retention intention ($r = 0.736$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that effective physical wellness initiatives, such as health support services, workplace safety measures, and medical wellness programmes, significantly enhance employees' willingness to remain with their organisations.

Table 9 reveals a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between physical wellness and job embeddedness ($r = 0.752$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that employees who perceive adequate physical wellness support develop stronger organisational attachment, better workplace relationships, and a greater sense of compatibility with their organisations.

Table 10 indicates that mental wellness has a strong positive relationship with retention intention ($r = 0.768$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that mental wellness initiatives, including counselling services, stress management programmes, and emotional support, encourage employees to continue their careers with the organisation.

Finally, Table 11 shows a strong positive relationship between mental wellness and job embeddedness ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that employees who experience effective mental wellness support are more psychologically connected to their organisations, develop stronger workplace relationships, and are less likely to leave.

The findings therefore indicate that workplace wellness initiatives, particularly physical wellness and mental wellness, significantly enhance employee retention by strengthening employees' retention intention and job embeddedness in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 12: Summary of Findings

Hypothesis	Pearson Correlation Variables	r	p-value	Decision (H₀)	Interpretation
H₀₁	Physical Wellness & Retention Intention	0.736	0.000	Rejected	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship; physical wellness is significantly associated with employees' retention intention in telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.
H₀₂	Physical Wellness & Job Embeddedness	0.752	0.000	Rejected	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship; improved physical wellness significantly enhances employees' job embeddedness.
H₀₃	Mental Wellness & Retention Intention	0.768	0.000	Rejected	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship; mental wellness is significantly associated with employees' retention intention.

H₀₄	Mental Wellness & Job Embeddedness	0.781	0.000	Rejected	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship; mental wellness significantly enhances employees' job embeddedness and exhibits the strongest relationship among the study variables.
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Source: Researcher's Field Survey and SPSS Output (Version 27, 2026).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that workplace wellness initiatives significantly influence employee retention among employees of telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, physical wellness and mental wellness exhibited strong positive and statistically significant relationships with retention intention and job embeddedness. These findings suggest that organisations that invest in employees' physical and psychological well-being are more likely to retain competent employees by strengthening their willingness to remain with the organisation and their attachment to the workplace. The findings are consistent with previous studies which reported that workplace well-being initiatives enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Krekel, C. et al., 2021; De-la-Calle-Durán, M. C. & Rodríguez-Sánchez, J. L., 2021).

The study found that physical wellness had a strong positive relationship with retention intention ($r = 0.736$) and job embeddedness ($r = 0.752$). This indicates that initiatives such as health support services, workplace safety measures, medical check-ups, and healthy working conditions encourage employees to remain with their organisations and strengthen their attachment to the workplace. This finding aligns with the position of the World Health Organisation (2022), which emphasizes that healthy workplaces improve employees' well-being, productivity, and organisational outcomes. It also supports the findings of Song, Z. and Baicker, K. (2021), who reported that workplace wellness programmes positively influence employees' health and organisational performance.

Similarly, mental wellness demonstrated strong positive relationships with retention intention ($r = 0.768$) and job embeddedness ($r = 0.781$). These findings imply that counselling services, stress management programmes, emotional support, and other mental wellness initiatives help employees cope with workplace pressures, strengthen their psychological attachment to the organisation, and increase their willingness to remain. The findings are consistent with the joint report of the International Labour Organisation and the WHO (2022), which emphasizes that workplace mental health interventions improve employees' psychological well-being, work participation, and organisational outcomes. The results also agree with Falcon, R. et al. (2021), who found that employer-sponsored mental health interventions contribute to improved employee retention and organisational effectiveness.

Collectively, the findings support the propositions of Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees reciprocate organisational care and support with positive attitudes

and behaviours. By investing in employees' physical and mental well-being, telecommunication firms strengthen employees' retention intention and job embeddedness, thereby improving employee retention.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that workplace wellness initiatives have a significant positive relationship with employee retention among telecommunication firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Both physical wellness and mental wellness significantly enhance employees' retention intention and job embeddedness, indicating that employees are more likely to remain with organisations that prioritize their physical health and psychological well-being. The study further concludes that workplace wellness initiatives are strategic human resource practices that foster a healthier work environment, strengthen employees' attachment to their organisations, and reduce the likelihood of voluntary turnover. Consequently, organisations that continuously invest in comprehensive wellness programmes are better positioned to retain experienced employees, enhance workforce stability, and improve organisational performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Telecommunication firms in Rivers State should strengthen physical wellness initiatives by improving workplace safety, providing regular medical examinations, promoting healthy work environments, and expanding employee health support services to enhance retention intention and job embeddedness.
2. Management should invest more in mental wellness programmes, including counselling services, stress management training, employee assistance programmes, and psychological support systems, to improve employees' emotional well-being and strengthen their attachment to the organisation.
3. Human resource departments should develop and implement comprehensive workplace wellness policies that integrate both physical and mental wellness initiatives as key components of employee retention strategies.
4. Telecommunication firms should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their workplace wellness initiatives through employee feedback and periodic wellness assessments to ensure that the programmes continue to meet employees' needs and promote long-term retention.

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