



Talent Management and Workforce Commitment: A Telecom Sector Perspective

Francis Monyei^{*1}, Wilfred Ukpere²

^{1,2}Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

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ABSTRACT

Challenges associated with talent management in contemporary business have been a recurring subject of discussion among scholars; nonetheless, empirical evidence on the subject is lacking. Hence, this research examines talent management's relationship with workforce commitment. Using the descriptive survey approach, data was evaluated quantitatively to conduct the study. Results show a statistically significant and positive correlation between workforce commitment and talent management in the telecom sector ($R^2 = 0.959$; F-statistics = 1180.390; P-value = 0.05). Several factors affect employee commitment and ensure workplace sustainability, including the workforce's involvement in decision-making, training and development initiatives, intentional reduction of technology-induced stress, and objective succession planning.

Keywords: Commitment, Environment, Survival, Talent, Telecom sector, Workforce, South Africa

JEL Classification: M12, M51, M52

INTRODUCTION

Practitioners created the phrase "talent management" to refer to a range of formal processes designed to place competent workers in appropriate roles at appropriate times. These consist of career progression, employee engagement, succession planning, and workforce design. Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, and Michaels (1998) quoted a McKinsey study from 1998 that found that a significant portion of the variable in total firm success is attributable to variations in employee performance. This is where the phrase "talent management" first appeared. Recently, it has assumed a central role in conversations about the development of human capital (Agbaeze, Monyei & Agu, 2017; Cascio & Aguinis 2008). This interest is confirmed by almost all analyses by human resource specialists, and to offer talent management solutions, the majority of highly regarded HR consulting businesses have either created new strategic areas or evaluated ones that already exist. This is consistent with several clarifications bemoaning the attention disparity between practitioners and scholars (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008; Rynes, Giluk & Brown, 2007). Evaluations of scholarly literature utilising the keywords, workforce commitment and talent management, provide intermittently unusual findings. Remarkably, there has been a recent surge in the recognition of workforce commitment, as well as a focus on research that examines precise ways in which workforce commitment requires a variety of essential workplace procedures and results (Kramer, 1999; McAllister, 1995). Moreover, Guchait and Cho (2010) reiterate a rise in empirical studies that represent increasing evidence of the numerous advantages that result from greater staff commitment levels in any given social system. It has been determined that workplaces with sufficient confidence in their talent management plans see higher levels of workforce commitment (Jan-Willem & Reinout, 2016). Furthermore, companies and business proprietors frequently alter their operational methods, which is harmful to employee loyalty (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir & Hasan, 2019). Therefore, even a small amount of uncertainty or anxiety in the workforce results in a lack of commitment because there is always a chance that a change in HR strategy may be interpreted incorrectly, which could cause extreme anxiety and inevitably lead to a decline in workplace commitment (Agarwala, 2003). According to empirical data, efforts to manage talent in any workplace by providing opportunities for employees to assume leadership roles or work on projects that align with their skill sets are likely to foster employee commitment and long-term productivity (Jain & Jain, 2014). According to James and Clark (2002), a company's productivity can take many different shapes, depending on the context, type, and relationship of

talent management to workforce commitment. The workforce's perception or interpretation of these processes is likely to be impacted by how well, without bias, and consistently they are carried out, even though the results may vary in some instances. Unquestionably, the telecom sector and its operators, in particular, have made great strides to foster the expansion and advancement of a nation's economy. Telecom companies have contributed significantly to advanced economies' social, economic, and environmental well-being. According to NBS (2018), the industry currently boasts the highest number of subscribers and is among the top employers of highly skilled workers, accounting for roughly 38% of the total workforce. Ironically, though, the majority of this workforce group has either left the sector or is exploring other opportunities, making this assertion absurd. This situation is concerning, since it is reducing the sector's viability and ability to deliver services (Ugochukwu, 2017). More pressure has been placed on telecom industry stakeholders by the growing need to diversify and offer a wide range of services to suit the growing needs of consumers. This calls for a deliberate strategy that seeks to create a talent management plan that is regarded as consistent, objective, and successfully implemented since it promotes high levels of commitment and general productivity; thus, encouraging high levels of staff commitment to achieve predetermined goals (Cappelli, 1999; Singh, 2004). According to the aforementioned, empirical data has shown a scarcity and lack of studies that analyse workforce commitment and talent management, as well as a gap in research in the telecom industry. Despite the abundance of research on talent management, it has not been possible to address problems that are specific to the variables, industry, and geographic scope of this study. The results, therefore, cannot be generalised or applied in their whole (Jan-Willem & Reinout, 2016; Agbaeze et al., 2017; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Thus, the current study is required to close this current empirical gap.

Research Aim

The study sought to investigate the relationship between workforce commitment and talent management in the telecom industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Person-Environment Fit

Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005) posit that from Kaplan's initial 1950 proposal, researchers have expanded upon the Person-Environment Fit concept. The compatibility of an individual with the components of their environment is the central idea of the P-E Fit theory. The contextual qualities are narrowly focused on a set of elements such as expectations or societal standards, whereas an individual's attributes encompass abilities and preferences. Precise matching between an individual's attributes and those of their surroundings produces favourable outcomes, as Ostroff and Schulte (2007) and Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) emphasise when discussing the P-E Fit theory. A mismatch, conversely, will result in undesirable outcomes and dysfunctional habits. P-E Fit can take several forms; however, prior research showed that a workforce's commitment and job performance are likely to be correlated with business strategies that meet or align with industry expectations (Lee & Jamil, 2003; Cascio & Aguinis 2008; Majumdar 1998). This study limits itself to talent management to match the possible P-E Fit requirements of the workforce in the telecommunications sector in terms of commitment. The study's underpinning is the P-E Fit principle, which holds that the extent to which talent management satisfies individual and job expectations determines workforce commitment. As a result, the P-E Fit theory is generally acknowledged as a suitable assumption to research a company's workforce and their commitment to the company's objectives (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

Talent Management

The term "talent management" lacks a commonly agreed-upon meaning, and almost all research on the subject starts with a handwringing about what it implies. For example, Lewis and Heckman (2006) highlight the worrying ambiguity around the definition, application, and ultimate objectives of talent management. Collings, Scullion, and Dowling (2009) state that there is disagreement on the definition, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical evidence supporting the idea of talent management. Moreover, talent seems to mean anything that a researcher or business executive wants it to signify, as suggested by Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz (2013), since everyone has a different definition of what talent is and is not. Scholars have long criticised talent management, arguing that it is a mere repackaging of numerous traditional human resources (HR) initiatives and procedures (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). This is possibly the most well-known critique. While most practitioner literature is subject to objective criticism, academic literature has had trouble differentiating between talent management and the analysis of particular HR practices within the broader field of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) (Cappelli, 2008a, Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010).

Dries (2013) has presented several theoretical perspectives on the notion of talent. The most notable feature, though, is that it continues to place a strong emphasis on strategies or approaches linked to lifetime careers in organisations, even though layoffs and external contracting at all organisational levels have become more commonplace as a means of workforce management over time (Cappelli, 1999). Similar arguments are made by Cappelli (2008b), who contends that even in situations where traditional personnel management

techniques are no longer suitable because of the necessary assurance, the core elements of talent management still involve forecasting workforce needs and creating plans to meet them. New approaches are needed because of this uncertainty and the expanding significance of external workforces. From this perspective, the problems that talent management seeks to solve are not new, but the answers are. The process by which businesses anticipate and satisfy the needs of employees in strategic positions is one definition of talent management that is in line with conventional knowledge and accurately sums up the work done by academic researchers (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). As mentioned, a novel concept in academic literature is the obvious emphasis on strategic jobs. The conceptualization aligns well with the academic requirement of stimulating theoretical progress and satisfying the needs of practitioners. These practitioners perceive that talent management concentrates mostly on a limited number of roles, namely executive and top-ranked management positions.

Talent Management Techniques that are both Exclusive and Inclusive

The inclusive methods contend that talent management should involve every aspect of the workforce. All employees are considered to have something fresh or different to contribute to the organisation. Conversely, the workforce or the division of labour yields an uneven value, according to Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013), when using exclusive approaches. Is development appropriate for everyone, or should the company spend resources differently for certain individuals or positions? The practical ramifications of these two approaches for allocating limited resources bring them to light. The notions of equal opportunity from the 1960s and 1970s, along with labour regulations requiring workers to be treated fairly and equally in areas like retirement planning and health benefits, seem to have prompted the relatively recent development of inclusionary approaches. Special tactics are said to have originated from military operations that assume hierarchical systems and have a long history. These methods are consistent with theories of resource optimisation that are prevalent in sociology and strategic management literature (Majumdar, 1998; Bothner, Podolny & Smith, 2011). These theories postulate that uneven investments lead to higher cumulative rewards. Expert discussion surrounding talent management is starting to draw attention to employee diversity, indicating that exclusionary tactics are becoming progressively more prominent (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Huselid & Becker, 2011; Lepak & Shaw, 2008). Businesses should allocate their limited resources to employees or jobs from which they anticipate the highest returns by applying the notion of workforce segmentation or differentiation. It is not the same as previous methods, which only considered the relationship between an employee's power and where they sit in the organisational structure.

Succession Strategy as a Talent Management Plan

Certain theories have claimed succession management to be a dynamic, continuous procedure, which entails talent identification, evaluation, and development done with great care. Additionally, it is employed to assess, cultivate, and pinpoint significant people who can fulfil strategic and functional demands in the future (Ahsan, 2018). The notion of succession, according to Akinyele, Ogbari, Akinyele, and Dibia (2015), is the procedure that company owners request be used to identify, assess, and develop employees' potential so that they may complete strategic duties inside a company. It comprises identifying and assessing possible successors, preparing them for opportunities both now and in the future, and deciding, which internal organisation roles are critical.

In the quest to guarantee a workplace's top employees' long-term dedication to the firm's objectives, succession planning also entails locating and hiring them (Dauda, 2013). The successful training and development needs of the successor, the enterprise management's acceptance of the successor, and the replacement of that particular employee with the pre-requisite competencies required to complete the new assignment, are the three main areas that succession management should consider. According to Syeda and Abida (2014), if a succession of talent is implemented properly and successfully, it will guarantee that the workforce's expectations are met and the business may continue to exist. It is asserted that the processes or initiatives are intended to have a positive, and substantial impact on managerial operations, if properly integrated.

Workforce Commitment

In the modern world, any company needs employees who are dedicated to performing at their best and reaching their goals. For the benefit of the company, it is, therefore, crucial that the concept of commitment is understood and rightfully required of personnel (Whitener, 2001). Developing the right mindset and fit to drive employee satisfaction within the company is another aspect of workforce commitment, according to Armstrong (2009). This is true to the extent that the company can encourage pro-social behaviour and creative thinking amongst its employees (Piyasena & Kottawatta, 2018). According to Singh (2004), talent management practices inside a company have the potential to increase workforce commitment. To guarantee that workforce commitment is maintained, the organization's initiatives must be aligned with corporate objectives. In a similar vein, Cohen (2007) asserts that a group seeking to make a positive impression should prioritise dedication. As a result, it is thought that highly devoted personnel are unlikely to want to leave their positions or the company (Whitener, 2001).

Creating Commitment through Engagement Strategy

One of the main issues that the literature raises is that there is not a single, accepted definition of commitment. According to Kahn (1990), commitment is the process of directing employees towards their job's goals. Employee engagement is characterised by high performance and emotional, cognitive, and physical expression of self, while performing tasks or acting out roles. Employee perceptions about the company, its executives, and the working environment are all important for the cognitive style of engagement. In an emotional sense, it describes how workers feel about all these aspects, as well as how they feel about the company at which they work and its leaders. The physical inputs or efforts made by employees to fulfil their job descriptions determine the physical mode of engagement. According to Kahn (1990), engagement is, therefore, defined as the ability to be present and available, both physically and psychologically, when working and carrying out organisational tasks.

Even though it is acknowledged and understood, engagement is a complex idea. The two most commonly used definitions of it are: an employee's intellectual and emotional commitment to a company (Shaw, 2005); or their degree of free will and effort during their work (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004). "Desire for work" is how Truss, Soane, Edwards, Wisdom, Croll, and Burnett (2006) characterise engagement. This mental state includes the modes or aspects that Kahn (1990) previously discussed, and it is thought to capture a collective theme that pervades all previous categories. It is challenging to determine whether there is a single, consistent body of research because there are numerous methods to apply engagement to commitment and each study approaches these differently. Furthermore, even if efforts to advance the concepts are deliberately worked, they cannot be created or controlled unless they are generally implemented and measured (Truss et al., 2006). This demonstrates the challenges to uniformity brought on by variations in application. Engagement then seems to be just another paradigm, or "old wine in a new jar," as some may posit. Furthermore, while it is acknowledged that many approaches are taken to foster engagement, there is disagreement over the fact that these approaches or their applicability frequently bear similarities to other well-established categories such as pro-social behaviour and commitment (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004). Hence, engagement, according to Robinson et al. (2004), is a step above commitment.

Empirical Insight

Akinyele, Ogbari, Akinyele, and Dibia (2015) examined the impact of a firm's commitment to a succession plan for its survival. The study considered the role that succession planning has in a workplace's ability to survive over time, using data from Covenant University. Questionnaires and in-person interviews were used to gather the required information for this study, while Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was performed on the hypotheses. The results showed that investing in succession planning increases a company's chances of survival greatly. For the business to remain sustainable over the long run, employees should view professional development as a prerequisite for progress and to fulfil succession planning criteria. Additionally, the company's management placed more of a focus on talent management to support organisational longevity.

Maguta (2016) evaluated how Kenyan NGOs' talent routines are impacted by advancement strategies. The best way to accomplish this was to adopt a descriptive research design targeted at Nairobi's recognized non-governmental organizations. A total of 15 NGOs provided both qualitative and quantitative data for the study, which then used illustrative frequency distributions to illustrate the data once it had been processed. In summary, the findings showed that NGOs seeking long-term routines continued to have concerns about progression plans. The application of succession planning in Nairobi contrasted with traditional NGO management. Since staff competencies are crucial to the NGOs' continued operations, they were advising CEOs of non-governmental organisations to stay up to date and develop them.

In their 2015 study, Sowunmi, Eleyowo, Salako, and Oketokun investigated the relationship between Ogun State's bank productivity and talent development. The study's primary data was provided by bank employees, while the secondary data was sourced from the banks' financial statements that were made public between 2012 and 2013. The data was analysed by using chi-square and ordinary least squares. The study discovered a significant relationship between talent development and bank productivity. Consequently, it was suggested that bank stakeholders should support employee training to raise productivity and to increase opportunities for career growth.

Souleh (2014) investigated how talent management and human capital affected the dedication and inventiveness of Algerian research companies. Between 2011 and 2013, a questionnaire and interviews were used to gather data for the study. SPSS 18.0 was used to evaluate the data and to ascertain how the different components interacted. The results showed that the dedication of the research firms correlated positively with talent management and human capital.

Hairudinor (2014) evaluated talent pay and its impact on psychological commitment in Indonesia. A total of 216 respondents were chosen for the sample, using an area proportionate random sampling technique. The data was gathered by using questionnaires and in-person interviews. Generalised structured component

analysis was used to analyse the data, which was recommended to examine the link between an ordinal and a latent variable such as attitudes or behaviours. The study's findings suggested that commitment was impacted significantly by talent pay. It was advised that South Borneo's private hospitals in Indonesia should design advantageous pay packages because they enhance employee commitment and output.

Aslam, Ghaffar, Talha, and Mushtaq (2015) investigated how Pakistani enterprises performed with their talent reward strategies. The hypothesis was analysed using SPSS. Reward had a considerable detrimental effect on performance, even though the research indicated that it was the study's most crucial component. However, the least amount of influence on performance came from incentives and motivation.

Critique of Reviewed Related Literature

Our analysis revealed the resulting lacuna in the literature on workforce commitment and talent management. The first is that while personnel management has been extensively studied, little to no study has been done to consider how it influences workforce commitment, especially in the telecom industry (see: Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Cappelli & Keller, 2014). The 4IR is affecting business operations, in general, as well as how a company administers and manages its staff. The abundance of research on talent management concerning factors like organisational performance, job attitude, and practical challenges (see: Agbaeze et al., 2017; Dries, 2013; Cappelli & Keller, 2014) is another area of complaint in the literature. Conversely, there is a research gap regarding workforce commitment when compiling information from South Africa's telecom industry.

METHODS

A descriptive survey methodology was employed in this investigation. The choice was deemed to be the most appropriate in light of the study's approach, which included sending multiple questionnaires to the sampled respondents. The demographic that was examined comprised 210 employees from the telecom business who were selected from Johannesburg, South Africa. A total of 136 populations were sampled, which was determined by applying the 1970s Krejcie and Morgan formula. The standard questionnaire that was used to gather the data was approved by experts in the academic and telecom fields. The questionnaire was also assessed, using a split-half reliability test, and the findings revealed a good level of reliability (coefficient of 0.8912). The surveys were distributed and collected by the researchers. The results of the questionnaire were analysed for the 105 copies (77% of the sample size) that received positive responses. Utilising the regression tool in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, the gathered data was examined at a significance level of 5%.

RESULTS

Table 1: Questionnaire Responses for the Study

S/N	Elements in the Questionnaire	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Talent Management								
1	Staff are actively involved in decision-making processes.	40	30	-	20	15	3.57	Accept
2	Educational qualifications impact staff competencies.	12	57	9	17	10	3.42	Accept
3	Human capital developmental programmes are consistent.	19	42	-	35	9	3.26	Accept
4	Succession plans are developed strategically.	22	39	-	17	27	3.11	Accept
Workforce Commitment								
5	Management provides incentives in exchange for staff competencies and loyalty.	19	20	1	26	40	2.55	Reject
6	Engaging high-performing talent is critical for firm sustainability.	38	34	2	18	13	3.63	Accept
7	Staff responds timeously to consumer demands.	12	24	2	27	40	2.44	Reject
8	Technology-induced stress is curtailed to improve staff wellbeing.	59	34	7	15	-	4.21	Accept

Note: Strongly agree - SA, Agree - A, Undecided - UD, Disagree - D, Strongly disagree - SD.

Source: Field Outcome, 2024

The participants' responses about talent management and workforce commitment are shown in Table 1 above. A 3-point acceptance criterion was used to conduct an analysis based on the mean of each questionnaire item. This means that items with a mean of 3 or greater would be approved, whilst those with a mean of less than 3 would be disapproved. All the questionnaire items were approved, except questions 5 and 7, as seen in the table

above.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀: Talent management does not relate significantly to the commitment of the workforce.

H₁: Talent management relates significantly to the commitment of the workforce.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.959 ^a	.920	.919	1.479

a. Predictor: (Independent variable), Talent Management

Source: Statistical Outcome, 2024

The model summary of the regression analysis for talent management and workforce commitment is shown in Table 2 above. A 96% shift in commitment is the result of changes in talent management, according to an R² of 0.959. Hence, a key element in the workforce's commitment to the telecom company is the thoughtful, intentional, and strategic application of talent management. A correlation value of 0.920 further indicates that the study's variables exhibited a positive and statistically significant correlation.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2581.642	1	2581.642	1180.390	.000 ^b
	Residual	225.272	103	2.187		
	Total	2806.914	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Workforce Commitment

b. Predictor: (Independent variable), Talent Management

Source: Statistical Outcome, 2024

The hypothesis regression analysis's ANOVA results are shown in Table 3 above. According to the table, 1180.390 is the statistically significant F value in this instance at the 0.05 level of significance (p-value 0.05). Therefore, we adopt and conclude that the alternative hypothesis, which holds that workforce commitment and talent management in the telecom industry have a positive and statistically significant relationship.

DISCUSSION

Before this study's hypotheses analyses, it was suggested that talent management and workforce commitment were not strongly linked in the telecom sector. The regression statistical technique was used to analyse the collected data for this empirical investigation. The findings demonstrate that a company's talent management is a key component of a workforce's sustained commitment, particularly for employees working at the telecom company under investigation. This correlation was both statistically significant and positive. Consequently, this proves that the study's alternative hypothesis is viable. The study's conclusions imply that talent management can strengthen a firm and its staff's long-term commitment if it is effectively implemented, and consistent. The telecom company and its workforce will be more engaged, efficient, and sustainable in the business environment if its leaders are more likely to make strategically intelligent decisions about the management of its human elements. The findings of this inquiry have called into question the findings of the Aslam et al.'s (2015) study, which asserts that the performance of Pakistani businesses was not considerably impacted by the talent compensation strategy. Their study suggested a negative significant impact on performance, even though the research revealed that pay/reward is the most relevant variable. The results of Souleh (2014) and Maguta (2016), whose studies analysed the growing influence of human capital management on the commitment and inventiveness of research organisations in Algeria, are, nevertheless, corroborated by the present investigation. The study's conclusions posit that human capital management has a positive relationship with firms' level of commitment. Moreover, it also supports the idea that Kenyan NGOs' talent routines are impacted by succession techniques. Therefore, this indicates that organisations seeking long-term beneficial outcomes consistently have concerns about their development plans. Akinyele et al. (2015) revealed that there exists a substantial effect of commitment on the planning of a firm's succession strategies and continued survival in their study, which considered the relationship between commitment to succession strategies and company survival. While examining talent management and its growth in the productivity banks in both Lagos and Ogun States, Agbaeze et al. (2017) and Sowunmi et al. (2015) found a robust and significant correlation.

CONCLUSION

Survival is one of the main objectives of any workplace. Thus, given the pivotal position that human resources hold, it is imperative to execute certain strategic human development principles to achieve these organisational

goals. Although survival is a primary objective, this study suggests that the underlying issue that most workplaces face is that talent management is seen as a massive task that is difficult to begin with and maintain over time. Two aspects of workforce commitment, as shown by the survey instrument, have a negligible response rate, suggesting a negative relationship with the respondents. They contend that management does not offer rewards for the loyalty and competence of its workforce, while simultaneously rejecting the idea that the telecom industry's management team promptly satisfies customer needs. However, the other high positive response rates in the talent management and workforce commitment categories showed general agreement among the respondents. This gives the management and industry stakeholders in South Africa's telecom sector additional strategic insight that they can utilise to make their workplaces profitable and sustainable within the sector, while also motivating their workforce to be more productive and efficient. It is also possible for talent management to lower employee attrition and desire to quit while simultaneously promoting greater loyalty and the persistence of the firm in the long term. The current study found that the following factors influence employee commitment levels and assure workplace survival: workforce involvement in decision-making; training and development programmes; deliberate reduction of technology-induced stress; and impartial succession planning.

Practical Implications

Certain talent management techniques can be comparatively ineffectual even with rigorous evaluations and successful deployments. This inefficiency can be attributed to vague and inconsistent objective definitions, which frequently lead to non-expense additions rather than intended value additions. When the commitment path diverges from the one that is required by the company, this might result in commitment misinterpretation. Because of the inadequate definition of objectives, managers in this situation mistakenly think that talent management has been executed correctly, even if all decision-making procedures are based on inaccurate information. Objectives in organisations that continue to function as closed systems are typically established only based on available resources and capabilities to enforce services provided to the market. These kinds of views are incompatible with the realities of global competitiveness. In this situation, balancing the demands of the workforce with the competitive resources available at work should lead to the goals of talent management. This study's significance is in its attempt to clarify the connection between talent management and workforce commitment. As stated in the survey instrument, it aimed to minimise the ambiguity and complexity of talent management by exposing potential novel and straightforward approaches. Ultimately, these research-supported strategies have clear strategic ramifications for telecom companies, particularly those with global ambitions, as they pursue best practices from a dedicated and engaged staff, which inevitably boosts their competitiveness. This study makes a modest contribution to the re-engineering of crucial systems like talent management. It has significant real-world ramifications for telecom companies that want to function profitably in the global market area by providing strategic service offerings.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Francis Monyei.
 Data curation: Francis Monyei.
 Formal analysis: Francis Monyei.
 Investigation: Francis Monyei.
 Methodology: Francis Monyei.
 Project administration: Wilfred Ukpere.
 Resources: Wilfred Ukpere.
 Supervision: Wilfred Ukpere.
 Validation: Wilfred Ukpere.
 Writing – original draft: Francis Monyei.
 Writing – review & editing: Wilfred Ukpere.

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