

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND WORK ATTITUDE IN POLYTECHNICS IN RIVERS STATE

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### ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to determine the relationship between employee engagement and work attitude in Polytechnics in Rivers State. This study, which was anchored on Herzberg Two-Factor Theory, adopted a correlational research design. The population of this study consisted of 978 academic staff of four (4) polytechnics in Rivers State, while a sample size of 284 was derived using Taro Yamene formula for sample size determination. The research data for the study was collected mainly from the primary source. The main data collection instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire. The research instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was adopted in assessing the reliability of the study instrument. Hypotheses were tested with Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient ( $r^o$ ). The result showed that employee engagement has a strong positive relationship with measures of work attitude in Polytechnics in Rivers State. It was concluded that employee engagement foster positive work attitude among staff in polytechnics in Rivers State. Based on the findings and conclusion, it was recommended that employees should be engaged in the organization's activities and decision making so as to enhance their job satisfaction thereby instilling positive work attitude in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, work attitude, job satisfaction, job involvement

### INTRODUCTION

Employees are the lifeblood of any enterprise, understanding their behaviors and attitudes towards works and organization is a critical tool towards enhancing their productivity. Employee's attitude at any given time has the tendency of affecting both their performance and that of the organization. Allport (2015) sees an employee's attitude as a mental state of readiness, organized through experiences, exerting directives or dynamic influences on the individual response to all object and situations to which it is related. Attitude is composed of affect (a feeling), behavior (an action) and cognition (belief). Extant researches have been conducted on work attitude using different predictor variables, for example; Chen and Lee (2021) studied the influence of students' working ability and work attitude on employers' satisfaction. Wiradana and Dew (2021) investigated organization culture and employee attitude and behavior: A test of social exchange theory. Noah and Steve (2012) examined the relationship between work environment and job attitude among employees in a Nigerian Work. This study examines how employee engagement predict work attitude in an organization.

Employees are the central point in the triumph of every organization. Managing employee relationship through engagement is imperative and precious in improving instill positive attitude in employees and achieving overall performance in an organization. Employee Engagement is the devotion, passion of employees and effective leadership skills with support from the top management to the employees. Employee engagement is integral in driving organizational success as engaged employees are motivated and strive to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Gruman & Saks, 2010). Employee engagement is defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their

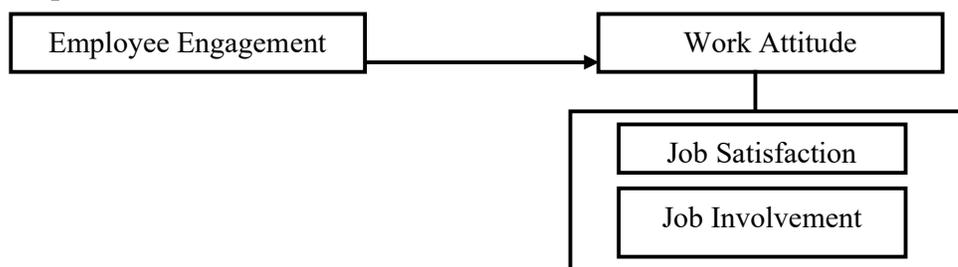
organization and its values. When an employee is engaged, he is aware of his responsibility in the business goals and motivates his colleagues alongside, for the success of the organizational goals.

Employee engagement is the employee's emotional commitment and attachment to the organization and its goals. This emotional commitment means that employees genuinely care about their work and their organization. They work not just for a salary or growth but the organization's goals. Each organization should strive for the maximum contribution of each employee to success, balancing with the employees' interest to find their goals and job satisfaction (Xu & Helena, 2011). Engaged employees will be fully motivated to utilize their whole capacity in an integrated and focused manner to enhance their participation. They are ready to do this because three conditions are met: employees feel psychologically protected in the presence of others so that they can apply themselves to their work role (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011).

Extant studies have shown a bidirectional relationship between employee engagement and organizational productivity (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2017). Another author found that there is a positive association between employee engagement and individual morale, task performance, extra role performance, and organizational productivity. Their investigation on relationship between employee engagement and organizational productivity reveals that it occurs at both team and organizational level (Bailey *et al.*, 2017). Other researchers also reported positive influence of employee engagement over organizational productivity based on the overlap in definitions (Bowling *et al.*, 2015). Employee engagement also support business outcomes of organizational productivity (Al-Khouri, 2014; Bailey *et al.*, 2017; Chowhan, 2016; Flink, 2015; Gupta & Sharma, 2016). The foregoing reviewed literature has shown that little or no research on employee engagement as it relates with employees' work attitude has been carried out. Actual empirical study and investigation is not yet available in Nigerian context and this ascertained that the relationship between employee engagement and employee work attitude is an area that has not been given much attention by researchers and academicians therefore lacking empirical evidence. This study therefore sought to fill the knowledge gap by examining the relationship between employee engagement and employee work attitude in Polytechnics in Rivers State. Specific objectives include:

- i. To examine the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State.
- ii. To investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State.

### Conceptual Framework



**Fig 1.1:** Conceptual Framework for employee engagement and work attitude

**Source:** Desk Research (2025)

### Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the following research questions guided the researcher:

- (i) What is the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State?
- (ii) What is the relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State?

### Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were given in null form so as to arrive at a logical conclusion and to achieve its stated objectives.

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State.

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

This study was anchored on Herzberg Two-Factor Theory. This theory was developed by Fredrick Herzberg (1966). This theory argues that managers should seek job improvements by planning personal and professional development of employees in order for them to be satisfied that they have significant personal and professional growth in future in their current employment (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg defined two sets of factors in deciding employees' working attitudes and levels of performance, named motivation and hygiene factors (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Herzberg et al. (1959) argues that motivation factors are necessary to improve job satisfaction. These motivators, according to Herzberg, are intrinsic to the job and lead to job satisfaction because they satisfy needs for growth and self-actualization (Herzberg, 1966). Examples or characteristics of the motivation factors are; advancement, the work itself, growth and responsibility, recognition and achievement. On the other hand, the Hygiene factors are those which decrease job dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors, rather than relating to the content of the job in itself, tend to relate to contextual factors example; interpersonal relations, salary, company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors and working conditions.

Herzberg's two-factor theory affects employee performance because when employees have high levels of both hygiene factors and motivators, they are more likely to be highly engaged and motivated in their work. The Herzberg's two-factor theory is a useful reminder that there are two important aspects of all jobs: what people do in terms of job tasks (job content), including the work setting in which they perform it (job context). As such, managers should attempt to always eliminate poor hygiene sources of job dissatisfaction in the workplace and ensure there are more satisfiers in job content to maximize opportunities for job satisfaction. This theory is relevant and significant to this study because it distinguishes between factors that prevent dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) and those that actively drive satisfaction and motivation (motivators). This distinction is crucial for organizations aiming to create a positive work environment that fosters both engagement and high performance.

### Conceptual Review

#### Concept of Employee Engagement

Various authors in previous literatures have adduced various definitions of employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the positive, affective psychological work-related state of mind that leads employees to actively express and invest themselves emotionally,

cognitively, and physically in their role performance (Rurkkhum, 2010; Margaretha, Widiastuti, Zaniarti & Wijaya, 2018; Budriene & Diskiene, 2020). Employee engagement is therefore a psychological facet that encompasses energy, enthusiasm, and engrossed effort. Employee engagement is the employee's emotional commitment and attachment to the organization and its goals. This emotional commitment means that employees genuinely care about their work and their organization. They work not just for a salary or growth but the organization's goals. Each organization should strive for the maximum contribution of each employee to success, balancing with the employees' interest to find their goals and job satisfaction (Xu & Helena, 2011). Engaged employees will be fully motivated to utilize their whole capacity in an integrated and focused manner to enhance their participation. They are ready to do this because three conditions are met: employees feel psychologically protected in the presence of others so that they can apply themselves to their work role (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011).

Employee Engagement is the devotion, passion of employees and effective leadership skills with support from the top management to the employees. Human resource leaders set the drive and creed of their company and spread that positive morale to the employees in the company. Employee engagement is integral in driving organizational success as engaged employees are motivated and strive to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Gruman & Saks, 2010). Employee engagement is defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. When an employee is engaged, he is aware of his responsibility in the business goals and motivates his colleagues alongside, for the success of the organizational goals.

### **Concept of Work Attitude**

The most visible behavior in any organization is the attitudes of the employees towards any situation or performance. Employees act and react to a particular way as a result of his satisfaction or dissatisfaction on a particular situation, object, process or even leadership. In organization, a worker tends to put up a positive attitude when they are happy and satisfied. An attitude is perceived as a positive or negative feeling or mental state of readiness, learned and organized through experience that exerts specific influence on a person's response to people, objects and situations. To managers, the definition of attitude has certain implications, first, attitudes are learned. Second, attitudes define one's predispositions toward given aspects of the world. Third, attitudes provide emotional basis of one's interpersonal relations and identification with others. And fourth, attitudes are organized and are closed to the core of personality.

Robbins and Judge (2017) defined attitudes as evaluative statements that can be either favorable or unfavorable concerning objects, people, or events. Therefore, they reflect how one feels about something. According to Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979), attitude is termed as a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for any behavior. The term attitude is often used as an umbrella expression covering such concepts as preferences, feelings, emotions, beliefs, expectations, judgments, appraisals, values, principles, opinions, and intentions (Onzima, 2011). According to Onzima (2011), attitudes form a mental set that affects how we view something else. It has an impact on how we view and judge our surroundings at work. Attitudes may be positive, negative, or neutral (valence); may vary in intensity (extremity); can be more or less resistant to change; and may be believed with differing levels of confidence or conviction (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005). A positive feeling implies satisfaction, readiness to do some work enthusiastically, while negative denote dissatisfaction and un-fulfillment which results to insubordination, lateness, absenteeism, low

performance etc. Employee work related attitudes are the feelings and beliefs that largely determine how employees will perceive their environment, commit themselves to intended actions, and ultimately behave (Velnampy, 2008). Based on definition of attitude, it makes sense to conclude that how the employee behave in their job (satisfy or not) depends on the result of a summary evaluation of the condition of their workplace. How people behave at work often depends on how it feels about being there. Attitude plays an important role in employee behaviour and it cannot be observed directly because they are mental positions and managers must try to determine them through research measures. Hence, the present study measured employee work attitudes using job satisfaction and job involvement.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been a topic of wide interest to both academic and practitioners for past four decades. In fact, it has been one of the most frequently studied variables in organizational behavior research and human resource theory and practices (Spector 2007). As stated by John Wiley and Sons (2001) Job satisfaction is an attitude emanated from employees' perceptions of their jobs or work environments and refers to the extent to which a person likes his/her job. Job satisfaction is one of the most important and significant variables in organizational behavior and in work organizations. According to Robbins (2000:10), "job satisfaction refers to an individual's general attitude towards his/her job". The higher the job satisfaction, the more likely workers will hold a positive attitude toward their jobs (Wang & Feng, 2003) and are more likely to be committed to the organization. Similarly, workers with higher level of job satisfaction would display a decreased tendency to search for a job and decreased inclination to leave the organization (Wright & Bonett 2007). In the same way, employees who perceive their needs as unmet grow in general dissatisfaction and become increasingly attracted to competing places of employment (Tziner 2006).

### **Job Involvement**

Job involvement is the degree to which employees immerse themselves in their jobs, invest time and energy in them, view work as a central part of their overall lives (Newstrom and Denis, 2017). The term of job involvement can also be described as "the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job" (Paullay, Alliger, & Stone-Romero, 2014:11). These kinds of employees can be recognized by the level they feel that the job is an important aspect of their self-definition. This statement and the construct is a popular term and widely used in the literature of employee performance (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004). Job involvement is grouped into four diverse categories. These categories: work as a central life interest, active participation in the job, performance as central to self-esteem, and performance compatible with self-concept.

According to Robbins and Judge (2017), job involvement is the degree to which people identify psychologically with their jobs and consider their perceived performance levels important to their self-worth. Employees with high job involvement strongly identify with and really care about the kind of work they do. Job involvement is thought of as the degree to which a person regards the work situation as important and as central to his/her identity because of the opportunity to make job decisions, to make an important contribution to company goals, and self-determination. Active participation in the job is thought to ease the achievement of such needs as prestige, self-respect, autonomy, and self-regard. In performance as central to self-esteem, job involvement implies that performance on the job is central to his/her sense of worth (Balay, 2000). Job involvement can also be defined as a function of individual difference and the work situation. This demographic and work experience variable is expected to relate to job involvement. Positive relationships are expected with age, tenure, years in occupation,

education, having children, and gender. There is no evidence for a strong relationship between job involvement and performance (Cohen, 2019).

### **Empirical Review**

Hembadoon, Mnena, Abdullahi and Tersoo (2020) examined the effect of employee engagement on the performance of Mikap Nigeria Limited, Makurdi. The study specifically examines the effect employee engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption) on the performance of Mikap Nigeria Limited, Makurdi. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and questionnaires were used for collection of data from employees of the company. The population of the study consists of 112 employees of Mikap Nigeria Limited, Makurdi and a census sampling approach was adopted for the study. The study used multiple regression analysis for data presentation and analysis and formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23). Findings revealed that vigor engagement has significant effect on organizational performance ( $\beta=.173$ ;  $P=.000$ ); dedication engagement has significant effect on organizational performance ( $\beta=.301$ ;  $P=.000$ ), and absorption engagement has significant effect on organizational performance ( $\beta=.237$ ;  $P=.012$ ). The study recommended amongst others that managers of organizations should improve vigor among employees since it improves staff performance and enhance organizational performance.

Rajendran and Doraisamy (2022) investigated the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance in a local pharmaceutical manufacturing company. Online survey method was employed for data collection and it was analyzed with IBM Statistics Version 26. The study reported that working environment and training and development contribute positively towards employee engagement and thus, to organizational performance. Meanwhile, it revealed statistically non-significant relationship between rewards and recognition with employee engagement. Also, a significant partial mediation effect of employee engagement was found between factors of employee engagement and organizational performance. In future studies, other factors can be studied with respect to local and international pharmaceutical organizations with broader sample size to confirm the casual relationship found in this study.

Juevesa and Castino (2020) determined the relationship of employee engagement and organizational performance among multigenerational workforce in a private non-sectarian school. The findings of the study served as the basis in the formulation of human resource development plan. The descriptive survey and correlational research design was used employing quantitative method. The data were gathered through the survey questionnaire and administered to the one hundred fifty (150) respondents composed of employees from teaching and non-teaching personnel. The data gathered were analyzed through frequency, percentage, weighted mean and pearson correlation. The findings of the study revealed that Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y “agreed” that their employee engagement has positive correlation to organizational performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement when grouped by generations and organizational performance is rejected.

Kazimoto (2016) analyzed factors on employee engagement and performance from selected retailing business enterprises in Wobulenzi-Luweero City, Uganda. A questionnaire was administered to 120 selected respondents, using purposive sampling technique. Measurement was done with the use of descriptive and inferential statistic approaches to consider responses from respondents and make decision accordingly. The study focused on measuring the employee engagement in relation with the organizational performance focusing on non-financial factors. The findings show that the degree of retail employee engagement and the

level of job satisfaction were very high in retailing enterprises in Wabulenzi-Luwero city. However, it was observed that in retailing organizations, employees were found it difficult to make equilibrium of work experience and house life with their employment. This study shows that despite the association between employee engagement and job satisfaction, there is no relationship between employee engagement and job assignment, which is an important key factor for organization performance. The results reveal that job assignment is critical for engaging employees to ensure organizations' longevity and profitability.

Debela and Desta (2016) carried out a study on the Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance in Ethiopian Manufacturing Organizations. The study used a quantitative research approach, specifically a survey design. The population of the study consisted of employees in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations, including textile, food, and beverage industries. A sample size of 300 employees was selected for the study. The study used a stratified random sampling technique to select the sample. The sample was stratified based on job level (senior, middle, and junior) and department (production, quality control, and administration). The study used a self-administered questionnaire to collect data. The study found a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations. The study concluded that employee engagement plays a significant role in shaping employee performance in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher utilized the correlational research design. The population of this study consists of 978 academic staff of four (4) polytechnics in Rivers State, while a sample size of 284 was derived using Taro Yamene formula for sample size determination. The research data for the study was collected mainly from the primary source. The main data collection instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire. The research instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was adopted in assessing the reliability of the study instrument. The hypotheses were tested with Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient ( $r^o$ ). All analyses were done through the application of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 27.0).

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The following results were obtained from the study:

#### **Relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State**

**Table 1: Test for Correlation between employee engagement and job satisfaction**

			Employee Engagement	Job Satisfaction
Spearman's rho	Employee Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.867**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	238	238
	Job Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.867**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	238	238

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 1 shows the result of Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation on the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State. The result showed that there is a very strong positive significant relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State ( $\rho = 0.867$ , at  $P-v = 0.000 < 0.05\%$ ). Based on this result the null hypothesis is therefore “Rejected” and “Alternate Accepted”. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State.

**Relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State**

**Table 2: Test for Correlation between employee engagement and job involvement**

			Employee Engagement	Job Involvement
Spearman's rho	Employee Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.477**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	238	238
	Job Involvement	Correlation Coefficient	.477**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	238	238

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 2 shows the result of Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation on the relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State. The result showed that there is a moderate positive significant relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State ( $\rho = 0.477$ , at  $P-v = 0.000 < 0.05\%$ ). Based on this result the null hypothesis is therefore “Rejected” and “Alternate Accepted”. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result showed that there is a very strong positive significant relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction in Polytechnics in Rivers State ( $\rho = 0.867$ , at  $P-v$

=0.000<0.05%). On the other hand, the result showed that there is a moderate positive significant relationship between employee engagement and job involvement in Polytechnics in Rivers State ( $\rho = 0.477$ , at  $P < 0.05\%$ ). The finding is in accordance with the work of Debela and Desta (2016) who carried out a study on the Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance in Ethiopian Manufacturing Organizations. The study found a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations. Specifically, the study found that employee engagement had a significant impact on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. The study also found that employee engagement was more effective in enhancing employee performance when it was characterized by high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The study suggested that employee engagement is essential for improving employee performance in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations. The study concluded that employee engagement plays a significant role in shaping employee performance in Ethiopian manufacturing organizations. In line with the findings, Khan et al. (2015) also found a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance in Indian technology organizations. Specifically, the study found that employee engagement had a significant impact on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. The study also found that employee engagement was more effective in enhancing employee performance when it was characterized by high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The study suggested that employee engagement is essential for improving employee performance in Indian technology organizations. The study concluded that employee engagement plays a significant role in shaping employee performance in Indian technology organizations.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the study concluded that effective employee engagement foster positive work attitude among staff in polytechnics in Rivers State. High levels of employee engagement are strongly linked to positive work attitudes and ultimately contribute to improved organizational outcomes. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, satisfied with their jobs, and committed to their organization, leading to increased loyalty and reduced turnover. Conversely, disengaged employees can negatively impact productivity, morale, and overall performance. Consequently, it is recommended that employees should be engaged in the organization's activities and decision making so as to enhance their job satisfaction thereby instilling positive work attitude in the workplace.

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