

Perceived Impact and Employee Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between perceived impact and employee engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The cross-sectional and correlational research designs were employed in the study. A structured questionnaire for impact and employee engagement with Chronbach alpha reliability of .876 was used to generate primary data for the study. The respondents to the research instrument involved 312 public secondary school teachers out of a sample of 363 drawn from 144 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State cutting across all 8 local government areas with the aid of the Taro Yamane technique and data generated were analysed with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The results showed a significant relationship between impact and employee engagement r values of .498, .453 and .622 for vigor, dedication and absorption. Given these findings, it was concluded that: there is a significant empirical relationship between perceived impact and the measures of employee engagement among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. Based on this conclusion, it was recommended among that Enhancing teacher beliefs in felt impact should be a focus of school management for all staff. This is to ensure that staff are not only valued but also appreciated as this feeling of impactful work will enhance absorption.

Key words: *perceived impact, employee engagement, vigor, dedication, absorption*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Teachers work engagement is essential in fostering increased student learning results and the overall effectiveness of the school (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Given the relevance of teacher work engagement in schools, it is essential to maintain the well-being and health of teachers as the school environment is highly challenging. This is consequent on the fact that teachers are often required to man heavy workloads meet student's emotional demands and needs and perform based on prescribed performance metrics. The desire to meet all of these needs could lead to burnout, fatigue, stress and even a lack of engagement. All of these could thwart the teacher's ability to perform effectively and this is detrimental to students' learning outcomes (Wang et al., 2023; Ma, 2023).

Studies had shown that active employee engagement is essential and that it influences the mental health of the employee, fosters job satisfaction and better professional fulfilment (Cece et al. 2023; Geraci et al. 2023; Ma et al. 2023; Messineo & Tosto 2023). Work engagement represented by an employee's vigor, dedication and absorption in one's is found to be linked to teachers, organizational commitment and resilience in fulfilling their work roles (Ma, 2023). Ma (2023) further showed that engaged resulting from the experience of better psychological well-being can reduce exhaustion and burnout. Further, Cece et al. (2023) reported that teachers who perceive that their efforts have a significant impact on overall school outcomes experience higher engagement levels and could positively sway both student outcomes and the broader school environment.

Impact as one of the components of the psychological empowerment constructs reflects employee beliefs that his/her efforts contribute meaningfully to organizational achievements and thus the see their efforts in every bit of what the overall organization achieves. Conversely, a lack of organizational support, low levels of competence and efficacy beliefs could hamper perceived impact and this can in turn reduce engagement while increasing burnout (Geraci et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2023).

While the growing recognition of the link between perceived impact and employee engagement persists, there is a dearth of knowledge and research studies on how perceived impact sways employee engagement in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This study intends to fill this gap by examining the relationship between perceived impact and employee engagement of teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

1.1 Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived impact and engagement among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Find out whether impact relates with the vigor of public secondary school teachers in Bayelsa State.

2. Determine whether impact influences the dedication of public secondary school teachers in Bayelsa State.
3. Assess the relationship between impact and the absorption of public secondary school teachers in Bayelsa State.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions are raised in this study:

1. What is the relationship between impact and vigor among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
2. How does impact relate with dedication among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa state?
3. What is the relationship between impact and absorption among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses stated in their null forms are formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between impact and vigour among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
2. There is no significant relationship between impact and dedication among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.
3. There is no significant relationship between impact and absorption among teachers in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perceived Impact

One aspect of psychological empowerment is the idea of impact, which is defined as the degree to which workers feel their efforts significantly benefit the company (Lee et al., 2023). Their sense of purpose and importance is heightened, leading to stronger levels of engagement and motivation, thanks to this perspective. Employees' commitment, motivation, and performance in the workplace are all positively correlated with their perceptions of the influence of their work, according to recent studies (Lee et al., 2023). Impact mirrors an employee's sense of making a significant contribution in their work roles. This view of impact had been reported to be linked with employee's organizational commitment, sense of job satisfaction, and motivation (Albrecht et al., 2022). Schaufeli and Taris (2023) emphasised that impact could positively sway engagement, especially via increasing-vigor, dedication, and absorption-the key measures of employees' work engagement.

2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is multifaceted construct that comprises vigor, dedication, and absorption as its key measures (Schaufeli et al., 2017). These facets of engagement reflect the physical energy expended by and employee, his/her mental resilience, commitment, and the amount of concentration the employees puts in his/her work role and each of these components makes a

profound but unique contributions to both job satisfaction and performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2021).

Vigor is the extent of energy and mental resilience that an employee expends in carrying out his/her duties while at the same exhibiting willingness to exert more effort and persist even in highly challenging work situations. Bakker et al. (2023) reported that vigor is positively linked to employees' feelings of work meaningfulness and support as these factors could enable employees to sustain higher levels of energy. A study by de Lange et al. (2023) found that when employee perceptions of the impact of their work or efforts increase, they become more vigorous in their duties thereby implying a synergistic association between impact and the measures of employee engagement.

Dedication embodies a resilient identification with one's work, categorized by feelings of inspiration, pride and enthusiasm. Schaufeli and Taris (2023), showed that employees who are dedicated frequently find more meaning in their work, which leads to sustained engagement and commitment. Perceived impact therefore plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee feelings of meaningful contributions which makes them to be dedicated to achieving the goals of the organization (Albrecht et al., 2022).

Absorption demonstrates a state in which employees completely focused and blissfully immersed or engrossed in their work. When employee perceptions of impact increases, they become more absorbed in their tasks, loses track of time and are completely immersed in their tasks (Bakker et al., 2023). de Lange et al. (2023) established that impact is an essential driver of absorption as it enables individual employees to align organizational objectives with their ideals and goals which in turn raises their levels of absorption.

2.3 Perceived Impact and Employee Engagement

A study conducted by Spreitzer et al. (2023) examined the relationship between employees' impression of effect and their levels of engagement. The research indicates that employees who perceive their work as having a substantial influence on organisational results tend to express greater levels of engagement. This research emphasises that impact plays a crucial role in psychological empowerment, which subsequently improves engagement by increasing motivation and job satisfaction.

Rich et al. (2022) investigated the correlation between the level of perceived impact and employee engagement within educational environments. The results suggest that teachers who perceive their contributions as having a significant influence on student achievement shown higher levels of engagement in their professional duties. Especially in positions with substantial social influence, the study emphasises the need of acknowledging the results of employees' efforts to sustain high levels of engagement.

Hakanen et al. (2023) investigated the influence of the perception of impact on employee engagement within healthcare environments. Empirical evidence indicates that healthcare practitioners who view their job as influential demonstrate greater levels of involvement, namely in terms of commitment and immersion. The authors contend that acknowledging the influence of employees' job can strengthen their emotional attachment to their positions, thereby boosting their level of involvement.

Kahn (2022) investigated the wider consequences of perceived influence on employee engagement and workplace performance. This study presents empirical data indicating that individuals who perceive their work as having a substantial influence are more inclined to demonstrate elevated levels of engagement, therefore enhancing their overall performance and job satisfaction. The research indicates that employing a deliberate method to augment the perception of influence can effectively boost employee engagement.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Data for the study were generated through the questions. The variables for the study were measured using scales that were adapted from literature. The scales for impact were drawn from Spreitzer (1995) while the employee engagement scales were adapted from the ultra-short measures for work engagement (UWES-17) scales created by Schaufelli et al. (2017). The respondents to the questionnaires involved 312 secondary school teachers out of 363 teachers drawn from 144 public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The scales were tested for reliability and validity. The results of these tests are presented in the subsequent sections. Data generated were analysed using correlation analysis.

4.0 RESULTS

The reliability scores of the scales, the mean scores and the correlation results of the variables are presented in Table 1 below. The bold figures are the reliability scores of the scales. The results for the test of the first hypothesis is also found in the table below.

Table 1 Correlation outcome of the relationship between Impact and EE measures

	Mean	1	2	3	4
Impact	3.571	.86			
Vigour	3.635	.846**	.89		
Dedication	3.667	.602**	.460**	.92	
Absorption	4.042	.498**	.453**	.622**	.88

Source: Survey Data, 2024

In carrying out a reliability test, Nunally (1978) suggested that a reliability coefficient of .70 implies that the instrument is reliable. The reliability coefficients as shown in the table above show that all are above the Nunally (1978) benchmark. The instrument is thus found to be reliable. In terms of the mean scores too, all mean values are above the median score of 3.0., the implication

is that the respondents generally agree with the statements used in measuring each of the study variables.

Table 1 presents the correlation results of hypotheses 1 to 3 indicating the relationship between the impact dimension of PE and the three measures of EE. As indicated in the table, correlation between impact and vigour is positive and moderately strong @ $r = .846$ which is significant @ $p = .000 < .05$. This results implies that impact is significantly related to employees' vigour. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The results for hypothesis two (H_{02}) as displayed in the table reveal that correlation between impact and dedication is positive and moderately strong @ $r = .602$ which is significant @ $p = .000 < .05$. This results implies that impact is significantly related to employees' dedication. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (H_{011}) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The results for hypothesis three (H_{03}) as displayed in the table reveal that correlation between impact and absorption is positive and moderately weak @ $r = .438$ which is significant @ $p = .000 < .05$. This results implies that impact is significantly related to employees' absorption. Given this finding, the null hypothesis (H_{012}) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

5.0 Discussions, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussions

The results showed that at the .05 level of significance, correlation between impact and the three measures of engagement is positive and significant, showing that improvements in feelings of impact among staff members would result in a corresponding increase in overall EE.

Impact ensures that employees are made to trust that their efforts lead to positive organisational outcomes and that they translate into overall organisational goal achievement. That is to say that the goal of impact in PE is to offer recognition to employees for their efforts with a view to motivating them for enhanced engagement. This is corroborated by Thomas (2000) that managers who are able to cultivate a perception of relevance among employees – especially for the efforts of the employees are able to keep hold of such employees for a longer time in the organisation, thereby, encouraging dedication, involvement and commitment. This means that feelings of relevance among employees through perceptions of impact can greatly enhance EE. Consequently, managers shouldn't relent in cultivating such perceptions of impact in their employees given the detrimental effects of active disengagement among employees. This way impact encourages engagement which in turn encourages diverse individual and organisational outcomes. It is thus very imperative for executives of organisations to foster practices that will enhance impact perceptions among members of staff. Such beliefs in the impact of their efforts on organisational outcomes will greatly enhance vigour, dedication and absorption as indicators of active EE.

Impact enables the employee to see his/her efforts in every achievement of the organisation irrespective of the volume or size of such achievement. Thus employees believe that their efforts could be traced even in small wins. These feelings enable them to be vigorous by exerting all necessary physical efforts in an attempt to complete tasks. They become even more dedicated and absorbed in their duties.

The significance of employees feeling that their work makes a meaningful difference is underscored by the empirical evidence that supports a positive and significant relationship between

perceived impact and employee engagement. This perception is a critical factor in the cultivation of high levels of engagement, which include vigour, dedication, and absorption.

Research has consistently demonstrated that employees are more likely to experience increased levels of vigour and vitality when they perceive their work as impactful. This is due to the fact that the tangible outcomes of one's endeavours serve as a source of motivation and accomplishment (Kuvaas et al., 2023). Employees who are convinced that their work is significant are more enthusiastic and energised about their responsibilities, which in turn enhances their overall engagement.

Increased commitment to one's occupation has been associated with perceived impact. Employees who perceive their contributions as significant are considerably more inclined to experience a robust sense of commitment and involvement in their occupations (Gorgievski et al., 2023). This increased commitment frequently results in increased effort and a propensity to exceed the fundamental job requirements, thereby contributing to the overall success of the organisation.

Absorption is found to be swayed by a heightened sagacity of impact, thereby making teachers to be actively engaged and focused on their responsibilities. There is a higher probability for such teachers to lose track of time when delivering lessons by exhibiting deep focus and concentration as they contribute to meaningful students and school outcomes (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2022). This will increase the overall productivity level of the school and improved job satisfaction for the teacher.

Consequently, school administrators should focus on creating work environments in which teachers could openly acknowledge their impact which will heighten their levels of engagement. It is in view of this that Van Wingerden et al. (2022) suggested that organizations should be able to communicate their objectives openly and transparently while at the same time provide mechanisms for feedback. It is also important to develop programmes that acknowledges the contributions of teachers to school success, such programmes would be useful tools for raising teacher impact perceptions. In general, employees who perceive their work as impactful are more committed and motivated in their positions. This discovery is consistent with the research conducted by Kuvaas et al. (2023), which indicates that employees who perceive their contributions as valuable demonstrate elevated levels of engagement. This underscores the strategic significance of ensuring that employees comprehend and value the importance of their responsibilities, as it results in tangible advantages for the organisation, such as increased productivity and reduced employee attrition (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2022).

Van Wingerden et al. (2022) have also suggested that job crafting mediates the relationship between perceived impact and employee engagement. The engagement levels of employees who perceive their work as impactful are further augmented by their propensity to engage in job crafting, which involves modifying their employment to improve their fit and satisfaction.

5.2 Recommendations

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

1. To ensure vigour, school administrators should enhance feelings of impact in their staff through recognition and praise for every outstanding performance. This will make the employees to ensure that at every meeting they are referred to as outstanding performers

- and are applauded. This show of recognition for the employee will motivate them to be more vigorous.
2. To ensure increased employee dedication school administrators should look for avenues to reward good performance and recognize such ones for every bit of achievement. This will even encourage less performing staff to perform better and display engagement by being dedicated.
 3. Enhancing teacher beliefs in felt impact should be a focus of school management for all staff. This is to ensure that staff are not only valued but also appreciated as this feeling of impactful work will enhance absorption.

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