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EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE.

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ABSTRACT: *This study focused on the influence of employee-employer relationship on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. The specific aim of the study was to examine the influence of employee-employer relationship which are; employee engagement and organizational justice on organizational performance. Methodologically, the researcher adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 826 staff of selected private schools in Akwa Ibom State. A Taro Yamane formula was utilized to determine the sample size of 269. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents using Stratified sampling techniques for proportionate representation procedure. Ordinal Logistic Regression was utilized to test the hypotheses. Findings from the study revealed that there is a significant positive influence of employee-employer relationship on organizational performance. In line with the findings, the researcher concludes that creating a positive work relationship that is based on trust, respect, value and fairness for employee's abilities and competence, play a critical role in promoting job satisfaction which subsequently reflects on their intention to remain devoted in the organization. The researcher recommended that employers should create a culture of employee engagement, cooperation and sense of belonging in the organization.*

Keywords: Employee-Employer Relationship, Organizational Performance, Employee Engagement, Organizational Justice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employees are among an organization's most important resources and coined as most valuable assets. Employees are the central point in the triumph of every organization (Amessa, and Drakeb, 2018). If the employees work together and carve up a good relationship with employers, they can attain their tasks much quicker. A good management of employee's cordial relations is imperative in achieving organizational goal and it is required to have a strong cordial relationship between employees and employers that leads to productivity, motivation, and better performance. If the employees come together to form a cordial relation and work together with their employers, there is no doubt that they can perform task faster and easier. A healthy cordial relationship between employer and employee is strongly recommended for increase in productivity and organizational efficiency. The survival of any organization in the competitive society lies in its ability to train its human resource to be creative, innovative and inventive and invariably enhance performance and increase competitive advantage (Vemić, 2017). In line with this, it has become very necessary that attention be paid to employee cordial relations being that good employer employee cordial relation is essential to the organization because it inspires employees to work better and produce more results (Burns, 2012).

A healthy relationship may generally deal with resolving issues concerning individuals which if left unresolved would affect the work environment negatively. A good employee cordial relation depends on healthy environment, incentive to boost motivation of employees and effective good communication system put in place within the organization (Uwa, 2021). A healthy employee cordial relation leads to increase in productivity and work commitment. The influence of employee cordial relations on organizational performance has been identified by various scholars and authors to be very crucial to an organization and its effectiveness (Oluchi, 2021). Employee cordial relations are concerned with creating an enabling work environment for a pleasant interpersonal relationship in the organization which gears towards the effective promotion of the organization goals and objectives. Donohoe (2015) defines employee cordial relations as the study of the relationship that exists between employees and the employers. Basically, effective employee cordial relations places high premium on the human element in the organization, which results in higher employee engagement, motivation and improved productivity. Considering the strategic role of employee relations in organizations, Yongcai (2019) posits that employee cordial relations is a specialized discipline in human resource development and management. Jing (2013) further buttress that employee cordial relations is the organization's concerted effort in adopting several mechanisms to regulate relationship amongst employees towards the achievement of the organization goals.

In the dynamic landscape of private secondary education, the synergy between employee-employer relations and organizational performance stands as a cornerstone for sustained success. Private secondary schools, tasked with nurturing the intellectual and personal growth of students, rely fundamentally on the collaborative efforts of administrators, teachers, and support staff. The quality of the relationships within this educational ecosystem holds the key to unlocking organizational excellence, shaping the learning environment, and influencing overall academic achievement (Lazarus, 2014). The intricate dance between educators and administrators in private secondary schools is not merely transactional but resonates deeply with the institution's capacity to deliver exceptional educational experiences. As we delve into the realms of employee-employer relations within this context, it becomes evident that the dynamics at play extend far beyond conventional workplace interactions. The collaborative spirit, the shared commitment to a common mission, and the cultivation of a

positive work culture all intertwine to mold the organizational fabric that determines the school's performance and reputation (Uwa, 2022).

Private secondary schools, often operating in competitive educational landscapes, find themselves navigating a delicate balance between academic rigor and the holistic development of students. In this delicate equilibrium, the interplay between employers, represented by school administrators, and employees, comprising teaching and support staff, plays a pivotal role. This introductory exploration seeks to unravel the symbiotic relationship between employee-employer dynamics and organizational performance, shedding light on the multifaceted factors that influence the effectiveness of private secondary schools in fulfilling their educational mission (Uwa, Ubong, and Etimfon, 2018). As we embark on this journey, we will examine the influence of employee-employer cordial relationship on organizational performance in selected private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The current state of employee-employer relations within organizations presents a critical challenge, with direct implications for organizational performance. The intricacies of this relationship, encompassing communication, satisfaction, engagement, and overall workplace dynamics, have emerged as a focal point for concern. A deeper examination reveals that the quality of these relations significantly influences the efficiency, productivity, and long-term success of the organization. One prominent issue lies in the prevalence of strained employee-employer relationships, marked by insufficient communication channels, organization trust, organizational justice, lack of recognition, and inadequate support mechanisms. This situation has resulted in diminished employee satisfaction, reduced engagement levels, and heightened instances of turnover, all of which directly impact organizational performance metrics.

Another facet of the problem stems from a limited understanding or acknowledgment of the pivotal role that employee-employer relations play in shaping organizational outcomes. Organizations may not be fully cognizant of the fact that a positive and nurturing relationship positively correlates with enhanced employee motivation, commitment, perceived job satisfaction and, consequently, improved overall performance. Moreover, the absence of systematic approaches to measure, assess, and strategically improve employee-employer relations further compounds the problem. Without clear frameworks for evaluation and intervention, organizations struggle to identify specific areas of concern and implement targeted measures to enhance the overall health of these relations, consequently impeding organizational performance. Thus, this study seeks to examine the influence of employee-employer cordial relationship on organizational performance in selected private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective was to examine the influence of employee-employer relationship on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. Specific Objectives are:

a) To examine the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.
b) To assess the influence of organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

1.4 Research Questions

a) What is the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

b) What is the influence of organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

1.5 Statement of Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant influence of employee engagement on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Ho_2: There is no significant influence of organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee-Employer Relationship

The growth and development of the human relations approach to an organization have attracted several scholarly works on the cordial relationship between employers and employees in organizations in this modern time. Employer-employee relations have been regarded as complex, due to its definition. Some scholars share the perspective of employee cordial relations as being dealings between employers and trade unions. Employer-employee relations should not be limited alone to the broad spectrum of labour relations. According to Karen (2015), employer-employee cordial relations is also about the relationship with employees. Michael (2019) emphasized that employee relations practices are not restricted only to formal processes, rules, and procedures and communication channel instituted in the organization, but that they are those informal interactions carried out daily between the employers and the employees, without the framework of employment policies, but acting based on their initiative.

Employee relations is the existence of an interconnection between the employers and the employees in the organization. Bajaj, Sinha and Tiwari (2017) pointed out that effective employer employee relations are geared towards stimulating motivation, commitment, and trust in the employees. It also creates an organizational climate that ensures the full maximization of the potential of the employees for the optimum realization of the goals of the organization. The issue of building trust is at the centre stage of human relations. Sanders (2012) posit that effective employer-employee relations elicit trust and that it is expressed when a manager exhibit consistent positive behaviour regarding the discharge of official responsibilities and the show of interest towards the general wellbeing of the employees. Karen (2015) added that employer-employee relations enhance mutual respect. It is about how an employer gains the respect of the employees. Employees may not be in tandem with every decision an employer may make, but due to the strong relationship that exists, they will respect such decision.

Hogos and Shimels (2018) succinctly assert that effective employer-employee cordial relations set the framework for the integration of the needs of the employees into the objectives of the organization. Within the framework of employee cordial relations, Shanks (2007) maintained that managers should be challenged to motivate their employees to strive towards the achievement of the goals of the organization and also motivating them to achieve their individual goals. There is the need for employers to recognize human nature that is the innate desire to be respected, valued, and recognized for competence and abilities, and also freedom over the discharge of work while dealing with the employees. The recognition of human nature will propel employees to put in their best for the organization. Maslow (1943) on the contrary shares the view that when employees are consistently disrespected and looked down upon by the employers, it instils the feeling of inadequacy and inferiority complex.

This will inadvertently lead the employees to a state of dissatisfaction and possible disengagement.

2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has been described as pivotal to the successful performance of organizations. It is a huge challenge to business operations which is attracting the attention of business executives and human resources experts and increasingly, the acceptance of scholars in the field of organizational behaviour (Soldati, 2017). According to Johnson (2014), the ability of managers to make their employees commit wholeheartedly to the business is going to be one of the huge battles for organizations in the future. To make or sustain their organization's profitability, employers must work hard to engage employees (Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann and Piller, 2014). Uwa (2021) posits that when organizations build a culture that facilitates the engagement of employees in their work, it culminates in staff the drive to go the extra mile and achieve organizational goals and objectives. A disengaged employee does not necessarily mean he has exited from the organization. Yongcai (2019) revealed that there are employees who are in the employment of organizations and yet disengaged. The state of disengagement of these employees is a result of lack of motivation and dissatisfaction at work, the energy, and enthusiasm required to exert themselves to be productive is absent. Engagement exerts influence on the employee's attitude, commitment, and turnover levels and research studies have revealed a relationship with productivity to employees who are highly engaged at work. Soldati, (2017), described employee engagement as the degree of the level of an employee's emotional attachment to the job, which can either be positive or negative.

This emotion can have a strong influence on their ability to learn and discharge their duties. Catteeuw et al (2017) while citing Johnson (2014) defined employee engagement as the degree of satisfaction employees have with their jobs, the feeling of value and the experience of trust, and cooperation in the organization. Uforo, Malachi, and Don (2022) assert that employee engagement is the willingness of employees to commit themselves emotionally and rationally to the organization. The main focus of employee engagement is aligning the employees with the goals of the organization and willing to go the extra mile. Anitha (2014) added that the willingness of employees to exert their best efforts to organizational success and to be positive and energized reflects two essential factors of employee engagement. Therefore, due to their mental, physical, and emotional attachment to the organization, engaged employees are required to be more productive in the discharge of their duties. Osborne and Mohammed (2017) buttressed that a low level of employee engagement can be due to the poor employer-employee relations and the resultant effect is low productivity.

2.3 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is a personal evaluation about the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct. The implication is that producing justice at the workplace requires that management should take the perspective of an employee (Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland, 2007). Also, Baldwin (2006) sees the term organizational justice as referring to the extent to which employees' perceive workplace procedure, interaction and outcomes to be fair in nature. These perceptions can influence attitudes and behaviour for good or bad which in turn will have impact on employees' performance, commitment and organizational success. People in all facet of life are naturally attentive to the justice of events and situations in their everyday lives, across a variety of contexts (Tabibnia, Satpute and Lieberman, 2008). Furthermore, the concept of organizational justice has been discovered by various Work Psychologists under three distinct, though overlapping, as distributive, procedural and

interactional. These three forms of organizational justice tend to be correlated (Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland, 2007).

There are various factors which affect the employees' commitment to the organizations they work for. One of these factors is the organizational justice perception. It involves the encouragement of fair and ethical applications and operations within the organization. In other words, in a fair organization, the employees evaluate the administrators' behaviours as fair, ethical and rational (İşcan, 2004). In literature, organizational justice is commonly known to have three factors: distributive, procedural (process) and interactional (Cohen-Charash, 2001). According to Burns (2012) good employer-employee relations are essential for different reasons. These reasons might include: Employees who are inspired to work produce better and more results, the level of competency of the staff increases because of their drive to become improved, customer service is enhanced because employees who have healthy relations with their employer are usually viewed as good customer consultants and assume having well customer handling.

Performance is the proficiency of an employee or business to utilize a firm's resources in an efficient and valuable manner to ensure the organizational objectives are achieved (Burns, 2012). Employees Performance measurement includes: the number of units manufactured, processed or traded is a decent objective pointer of performance. It is imperative to note that placing too much importance on quantity may result to poor quality. Several means for measuring quality of work include the percentage of labour output that has to be repeated or is overruled. The amount of inquiries, experienced in sales setting that is transformed to sales is a pointer of salesmanship quality. The mean customer's lost time, in the service field, is a good sign of appropriateness. The number of units produced per hour acts as a good indicator in manufacturing. According to Ekanem (2021), employee performance is affected by any nature of employee grievance, and grievance management deal directly with staffs and all that concern them, so can influence workers performance and productivity of organizations. Suppressed workers grievances are known to have given arise to accidents at the workplace, absenteeism, strike actions, and different forms of industrial sabotage, low morale and reduction in employee's commitment. Thus, when management of employee grievance is in place, workers morale improves, employee commitment enhances, and organizational citizenship behaviour also develops, and all of which are vital for improved organizational performance Willian, Uwa and Okurebia 2023).

2.4 Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

It says that "there is a growing recognition of the role that employees actively play in shaping and influencing their environment, as well as taking initiative, which is likely to create their own jobs, mobilize their own resources and set their own goals." work on their own engagement, in turn, to predict the performance ratings of other organizations. A study by a Canadian consulting firm found that employers believe that engaged employees are willing to do more, have higher productivity, and have positive working relationships (Pareek and Rai, 2020). However, the results of the study are based on the perceptions of HR managers, not the employees themselves. Engagement assessments are best done by interviewing the employees themselves, not through proxies (Ekanem, Akpan, Ekanem and Edem, 2023).

Employees are best able to share what they think about the work they do and the organization they work for. In addition, a study examining the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance found that there is a strong correlation between employee engagement and customer loyalty, productivity and profitability, employee turnover, employee and customer safety, absenteeism, loss, and disability (Oluchi, 2020). Evidence

shows that there is a relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance, where the more engaged and committed an employee is, the greater the organizational performance. Employee engagement positively influences absenteeism, continuation, promotion, facilitates customer service, and encourages staff to be effective in the organization. Achieving organizational effectiveness is the ultimate goal that any organization that puts great efforts in maximizing employee task performance, commitment, and maintaining intrinsic motivation to work well in challenging times should focus (Uforo, Malachi and Don, 2022). This is why efforts to improve organizational performance have recently begun to instil positive organizational concepts such as optimism, trust, and engagement (Johnson, 2014).

2.5 Organizational Justice and Organizational Performance

The rationale for the emphasis and regarded importance of justice for individual workers is that it ultimately allows them to maximise their personal gains. People believe that fair procedures will ultimately lead to valuable results for them and therefore they value these procedures (Donohoe, 2015). Cohen-Carash and Spector (2001) contend that when an individual feels there is no justice distribution of procedures in an organisation, or procedural justice, the individual reflects negatively on the business outcome or result. This negative reaction can have undesirable influence on other organizational members and their performance within the organization, resulting in lacklustre discretionary efforts (Micheal, 2019). Karen, (2015) stated that studies in the justice field suggest that perceptions of fairness and justice are related to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and estimation of power, output, and performance. Comparatively, the internal marketing approach to organizational justice means fair treatment and contact with employees. As a result, employees' satisfaction is established within the organization, which facilitates the achievement of organizational goals (Ekanem, Iko, Ekanem, and Ajibade, 2023).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. The study utilizes the survey research design approach. The population of this study consists of eight hundred and twenty-six (826) staff of top 10 Most Expensive Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 269 respondents from the staff of the selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. A total number of 269 questionnaire was administered to the staff of the selected Private Secondary Schools on different days at these locations. The instrument of data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was made of 12 questions which helped clarify responses gathered from the staff on the subject under study. The research instrument had both face and content validity. Ordinal Logistic Regression was used in analyzing the data.

4. RESULT

Test of Hypotheses

The ordinal logistic regression model was used to test the hypotheses when there is one dependent variable with more than two independent variables in categories (either sorted or unordered), and ordinal in nature.

The null statements of hypotheses were stated as follows:

Table 4.1 Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	556.385			
Final	349.031	207.354	13	.000

Link function: Logit.

From the table 4.1 the model shows the influence of employee engagement with a significant improvement on organizational performance. However, to measure the fit of the model, the chi-square statistics was computed and the result yielded a coefficient of 207.354 with a corresponding P-value which lies below the alpha value of 0.05 confident level. This implies that the model is fit to evaluate the influence of employee engagement, organizational justice on organizational performance at 0.000 (P<0.05).

Table 4.2 Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	642.773	242	.000
Deviance	266.184	242	.000

Link function: Logit.

To further compare the goodness of fit, table 4.2 shows the result was compare with the probability table value of 242 are the degree of freedom 1-241 respectively. The result 266.184 which implies that the model is significantly fit to examine the influence of employee-employer relationship on organizational performance. Therefore, since the p-value of 0.00 lies below 0.05 alpha value, it is concluded that the hypothesis which state that there is no significant influence of employee engagement, organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected and the alternate accepted, meaning that there is a significant influence of employee engagement, organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.3 Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.684
Nagelkerke	.688
McFadden	.227

Link function: Logit.

From Table 4.3 the Pseudo R-Square yielded a coefficient of Nagelkerke = .684, Nagelkerke, McFadden = .227. This shows that employee engagement, organizational justice can account for 68.8% variation in organizational performance. This implies that the model is fit for evaluating the interaction between employee engagement, organizational justice and organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.4 **Parameter Estimates**

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	Df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[organizational performance = 1.78]	-31.697	1.128	789.370	1	.000	-33.908	-29.486
	[organizational performance]	-30.287	.963	989.289	1	.000	-32.174	-28.399
Location	[Employee engagement =2.00]	30.992	1.230	634.969	1	.000	33.402	-28.581
	Organizational Justice =2.29]	27.812	1.002	769.694	1	.000	29.777	-25.847

Link function: Logit.
a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

From table 4.4 the presence of auto error in the model, the estimated error statistics was computed and the result show that the lower limit is less than 1 while the upper limit is less than 10 respectively. This implies that the variables independently function to establish a link between the independent and dependent variable (Employee engagement = 33.402, and Organizational Justice = 29.777) and organizational performance. The value estimate of the independent and dependent variable clearly shows that the error margin is low and it yielded (Employee engagement = 30.992, and Organizational Justice = 27.812).

Discussion of Finding

The study was designed to examine the influence of employee engagement on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State**.** From the ordinal logistic regression analysis, it could be found that Employee engagement had a significant positive relationship with organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is in line with the study of Ojokuku et al. (2012) who found that there was positive and significant correlation between performance and employee engagement. Their study concluded that the way of employee engagement have statistical significant effect on both performance and employee engagement.

On the objective of the study which was designed to assess the influence of organizational justice on organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, the ordinal logistic regression analysis showed that organizational justice had a significant positive relationship with organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that organizational justice had an impact on organizational performance with a regression co-efficient of b_2 = 0. 776. This is in line with the study of Hassan (2022) who investigated how perception of equity and justice played an important role in employees' commitment to the organization and intent to leave in Kenya found that both internal and external equity perceptions are positively related to performance.

Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be concluded that creating a positive work relationship that is based on respect, value and recognition for employee's abilities and competence, play a critical role in promoting job satisfaction which subsequently reflects on their intention to remain devoted in the organization. Also, building effective employee relations in an organization entail having and demonstrating fairness and respect for employee engagement, and having concern

for the wellbeing of the employees. From the study conducted, it is concluded that employee engagement and organizational justice, are relational dimensions that can influence organizational performance in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Recommendations

This study recommends that implementing employee engagement techniques is pivotal to achieving organizational success. Enhanced employee engagement is a by-product of employer employee relations and the quality of the relationship is one of the most critical factors that drive engagement and satisfaction of employees. Employers should exhibit fairness in the assessment of employees' performance. Equal opportunities for career growth and advancement should be pursued vigorously as this will go a long way to eliminate the feeling of discrimination and rejection on the part of the employees. Conclusively, it is potent to note from the study that a productive working employer-employee relationship could create opportunities to attract and retain employees in an organization. Employees would prefer working for any organization whose work climate is based on mutual respect, value, trust and zero tolerance for harassment or workplace bullying.

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