

Examining the Mediating Role of Employees' Engagement in the Relationship between Positive Organizational Practices and Organizational Performance

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Abstract: *The study examined the mediating role of employees' engagement in the relationship between positive organizational practices and organizational performance in Nigeria's oil and gas firms. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using a partial correlation coefficient. The findings revealed a significant relationship between positive organizational practice and performance. Also, it was found that employee engagement positively and significantly influences the correlation between positive organizational practice and organizational performance. Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that a significant relationship exists between the study's variables and recommend business organizations prioritize customer engagement for improved performance.*

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Positive Organizational Practices, Organizational Performance*

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Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a conscious effort by organizations regarding their growth and development. This has culminated in phenomenal changes in their employees' attitudes toward organizational practices and performance. Organizational practices convert the values and ideals in an organization's culture into practical actions and movements that keep the organization running actively and, more importantly, on an upward trajectory in terms of business and profit margins (Karuna, 2016). Organizational practices impact immensely on the

performance of an organization and, to a great extent, determine its growth and development. However, organizational performance is the main objective of any organization, and it is dependent on the proactive mediating role of employees. According to Sheila (2019), the behaviors and actions of employees within an organization are internal and external. Internal practices refer to an organization's internal interactions, relationships, and achievements. In contrast, external practices are those actions that help organizations engage with forces or activities from the outside.

A study by Bloom et al. (2011) regarding the practices of 10,000 organizations in 20 countries compared the practices of government and founder-owned firms to multinational, dispersed shareholder, and private equity-owned firms and reported that the latter were better managed than the former. Their research's empirical findings demonstrated that American, Japanese, and German companies are better managed than those in developing nations like Brazil, India, and China, which typically have subpar management. Furthermore, data from their research suggested that, when family members run family-owned businesses, they are poorly managed in comparison to similar businesses run by CEOs. Nwanzu et al. (2019), in their research on employee performance, submitted that a healthy employee-employer relationship is a necessity for organizational performance, as it is an indication of a conducive, harmonious work environment that forces productive work behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Positive organizational practices

Performance monitoring, target setting, incentives, and people management were the three operations-focused dimensions used by Nicholas et al. (2012) to evaluate management practices. They contend that the best management strategies involve ongoing performance data collection and analysis, the setting of challenging, interconnected, and short-term objectives, and the recognition and reward of high performance while retraining or dismissing underperformers. For Nwanzu et al. (2019), positive organizational practices can be cultivated from the values, norms, beliefs, practices, and structures that exist in the organization. According to them, other factors such as planning for human resources, developing them, and assessing their performance are also positive organizational practices. Atkinson et al. (1983) submitted that individual personality—the characteristic pattern of behavior and modes of thinking that determine a person's judgment of the environment—is an influencing factor in employee engagement with positive organizational practices. The social exchange theory substantiates employee engagement because employees who are supported favorably by their organization will be inspired to perform optimally, thereby engaging the reciprocity principle.

Organizational Practices

When compared to external practices, which are those actions that assist organizations in their interactions with outside forces or activities, the internal operations of an organization, such as interaction, relationships, and accomplishment, are referred to as internal practices. The more general aspects of an organization are its organizational practices, which include both internal and external employee behaviors and actions. Organizational practices are very close to the core of an organization (Shoukat et al., 2018). Opatha (2018) observed that organizational practices are the processes of an organization to attract suitable people who meet the criteria of the organization and help in accomplishing organizational goals through the qualification and expertise of candidates.

Employee Engagement

Robert (2006) defined employee engagement as the scope to which workers put more exertion, thought, or energy into their work than is strictly necessary to complete the task at hand. Being emotionally and intellectually devoted to a team or organization leads to behaviors that assist in sustaining your word to customers and improving company efficiency. The findings of his study supported the notion that organizational socialization and work roles both consider how frequently individuals fill specific jobs. He sees personal engagement as having two ends and personal disengagement as having one. In terms of personal engagement, people are physically, mentally, and emotionally occupied by their jobs. They separate themselves from the role and engage in personal disengagement. Employee engagement was defined by Melanie et al. (2014) as the sentimental attachment workers have to their company and the initiatives, they take to make it successful. They see care, commitment, enthusiasm, accountability, and a results-oriented mindset in engaged workers. Therefore, an organization's treatment of its employees directly affects how engaged they are.

Khan's (1990) Theory of Employee Engagement categorically encapsulates the roles of individuals in organizational performance. First, Khan (1990) defined employee engagement as the degree to which a person shows self-preference in job tasks to secure connections between self and job, which can increase role performance through cognitive, emotional, and physical self-investment. A study by Stuart (2020) supports Khan's theory regarding the three principal dimensions of employee engagement in any organization. Employees who are cognitively engaged understand the level of performance necessary to have the biggest impact, as well as the objectives and plans of their employers. Khan also mentioned the importance that people place on their work, positing that greater creativity is a result of increased knowledge and self-assurance in judgment. An emotional connection, which describes the bond employees have with their employer, is the second key dimension. In order to foster a positive relationship, the organization must exert concerted effort how to give workers a sense of direction at work, encouraging them to embrace the mission and values of the company. Last but not least, physical engagement refers to the effort—both corporeal and psychological—employers put forth while performing their duties. The ability to expend physical and mental energy at work will instill feelings of confidence (Vance, 2006). Robert (2006) surmised that employee engagement represents two ends of a continuum:

personal engagement and personal disengagement. According to Robert's (2006) study, at the personal engagement end, individuals fully occupy themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally in their work roles. Disengagement from roles and decoupling from society are examples of personal disengagement.

Empirical Review

Positive organizational practices and organizational performance

The outcome of organizational practices on organizational performance is a present issue in many developed and developing nations. Results of the Shoukat et al. (2021) study demonstrate that organizational practices, such as high-performance work systems, information technology, internal communication, and recruitment and selection, have a significant impact on organizational performance. According to Sibnda (2015), information technology and both internal and external strategies are necessary for an organization to thrive. According to Yates (2006), for organizational stability to be achieved, internal communication must be in place. Opatha (2018) consented that in every organization, people are the most important asset; hence, human resource management (HRM) places emphasis on the importance of people in achieving organizational performance. Zafarullah (2009) observed that in the past three decades, companies have been using information technology to improve organizational performance, culminating in exponential growth in companies, especially in banking and manufacturing companies. Chegus (2018) focused his study on organizations that have massive data and analysis systems and how they rely on IT. His study found that the value of IT will vary and that not every organization can benefit from investments in IT. Competitive organizations must formalize IT tools must be used efficiently and develop specialized to capitalize on investments in IT. Notably, communication is a crucial element in every organization, and a conscious effort should be made to ensure its effectiveness. As an example, to ensure the smooth operation of the organization, staff members must develop a cooperative relationship. Employee performance and decision-making are impacted by the communication and information flow within an organization. Therefore, to achieve organizational goals, research on internal communication that affects employee performance is critical (Titang, 2013).

In addition, Muna et al. (2020) reported another vital aspect of organizational practices, which is the recruitment and selection process. Findings from their studies indicate that organizations face employee challenges as the number of applicants rises and that There is a high demand for qualified workers in knowledge-based workers, making recruitment and selection processes a challenge for developing countries. They claim that despite an increase in university graduates, the labor market remains extremely competitive, due to factors that affect the hiring process and the performance decisions made by labor market organizations, which present difficulties for employers. The social exchange theory propounded by George (1958) duly explains employee engagement and the relationship between positive organizational practices and organizational performance. According to George's theory, social interaction is determined by two major factors: benefits and costs. First, he defined social exchange as the exchange that occurs in social relationships where people weigh their potential benefits and costs; when the costs outweigh

the benefits, they'll break things off or part ways. Relationships give us advantages like enjoyment, company, friendship, and social support. Therefore, people tend to maximize benefits and minimize costs. George elucidates that most relationships are hinged on a certain amount of reciprocity; however, this does not mean that people reciprocate in equal measure.

Borman et al. (1993) submitted that for an employee to be fully engaged in organizational performance, factors such as motivation and cognitive ability are fundamental. Their findings explicate that in every organization, benefits always attract employee engagement. For instance, to them, incentives such as an increment in salary, sponsored trips, a luxury car, and an apartment are positive organizational practices that will be perceived as benefits, which will motivate employees' engagement for organizational performance. Similarly, the ability of employees to adapt, innovate, multitask, work under pressure, and engage in teamwork are major requirements for organizational performance (Hesketh & Neal, 1999). Bergeron (2007) supported his phenomenon with "multiple sub-dimensions", such as teamwork, allegiance, and determination. The second factor, costs, is made up of things we perceive as bad, like having to invest money, time, and effort in a relationship. Biologically, studies support the idea that relationships that are not mutually beneficial are seen as high-cost, parasitic relationships that should be abrogated. (Shelby, 2019). Another study by Wasliu (2013) stated that employees who do not contribute to the growth of an organization and are more concerned about their remunerations always stand a high risk of retrenchment because they are considered unaffordable risks.

This study utilized two theories of management (Elton Mayo's Human Relations Theory of 1930 and Max Weber's Theory of Bureaucratic Management of 1922) to duly explain the relationship between organizational practices and employee performance. Some studies, such as Harappa's (2021), anchored on Mayo's human relations theory, reported that, as a social system, the workplace influences employees' performance, spearheaded by some relational skills like communication, conflict resolution, and organization. In addition, other mediating elements include providing context, offering praise and recognition, identifying unique needs, and making room for bonding. Sandro et al. (2019), in their study predisposed to Weber's bureaucratic management theory, submitted that some factors that influence employee performance in an organization comprise: division of labor and specialization, hierarchy of authority, formalized written rules and regulations, selection of employees by technical competence, stable wages, and formal social relationships. According to them, all of the aforementioned factors are interwoven and determine the association between employees and management in an organization.

Hypothesis 1: There is no Significant Relationship between Positive Organizational Practices and Organizational Performance.

The Moderating Role of Employee Engagement in the Interplay between Positive Organizational Practices and Organizational Performance

The best explanation of the mediating function of employee engagement towards POP and OP comes from Edward Deci et al.'s Self-Determination and Cognitive Evaluation Theory, published

in 1985. The first definition of self-determination is the capacity for decision-making and self-management. In contrast to being self-undetermined, which can lead people to believe that their lives are under the control of others, this suggests that a person is in greater control (Kendra, 2022). This theory contends that there are two distinct motivational factors at work in individuals. They are motivated both internally by forces that are present within them, then externally by forces that are present outside of them. It implies that people have an innate desire to perform certain tasks. they enjoy because doing so gives them internal pleasure. However, for tasks they are rewarded for, they are extrinsically motivated because they receive external reinforcement such as praise, money, or recognition (McLaughlin, 2021). A study by Malesedi (2017) reported that the quality of motivation is what matters more in predicting successful outcomes in organizations than the amount of motivation. The study further affirms the cognitive evaluation theory, submitting that the quality of motivation is a positive organizational practice that can determine employee engagement toward organizational performance.

Hypothesis 2: The Relationship between positive organizational practices and organizational performance is not mediated by employee engagement.

Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

The connection between employee engagement and organizational performance has been shown in earlier research. An engaged employee understands the organizational context and collaborates with coworkers to enhance performance on the job for the organization's benefit (Ologbo & Sofian, 2013). According to Shantz et al. (2013), engaged workers have a positive outlook and a work-related mental state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption that makes the workers psychologically present at work and reduces the likelihood that they would make mistakes or errors linked to their jobs. Additionally, Gichohi (2014) discovered a link between improved employee commitment and performance, which in turn is related to employee engagement. According to a study by Obeidat (2016), there is a strong and positive correlation between organizational performance and the vigor kind of involvement. They discovered that highly engaged workers produce more innovation and are more productive, while also lowering the cost of employing new employees by keeping the experienced and skilled ones on board. Employee engagement strongly and favorably correlates with worker performance, according to earlier research (Koech & Cheboi, 2018; Chege et al., 2017). Their research revealed a strong correlation between organizational effectiveness and vigor engagement. According to Alarcon and Edwards' (2011) research on the relationship between employee engagement and work satisfaction, job happiness is influenced by employee commitment, which improves organizational performance. Eghlidi and Karimi (2016) investigated the connection between organizational commitment and the elements of employee engagement among female university employees. The obtained results demonstrated that among the factors of interest in the regression, work ethic was the most accurate predictor of organizational commitment. According to Macey and Schneider (2008), commitment and engagement are additional factors that drive workers to improve organizational performance. The study by Eghlidi and Karimi (2016) showed that absorption to work has a substantial impact on an organization's performance. This is

corroborated by Devi's (2017) research, which found a strong correlation between organizational performance and employee absorption involvement.

Hypothesis 3: There is no Significant Relationship between Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance.

Social Exchange Theory

The theory underpinning the study is the social exchange theory. In 1958, George Homans developed the theory of social exchange (Redmond, 2015). Homans claims that social exchange theory places a strong emphasis on the cost-benefit dynamics of interpersonal interactions. Examining in detail the definitions of the terms that make up the social exchange theory, such as "cost" and "reward" (Redmond, 2015). Crossman (2020) asserts that mutual respect, approval, trust, and caring are the cornerstones of a long-lasting relationship. The study of social behavior was organized around rewards and punishments according to Homans' fundamental theories. Positive conduct is rewarded, and the relationship grows. The next are the five propositions: Under his first claim, which he refers to as the success proposition, actions that have favorable results are likely to be repeated. A behavior that has previously resulted in rewards will be repeated in a similar situation, according to the stimulus proposition, which is the second proposition. Thirdly, there is a value proposition that states that an actor is more likely to perform an action if they see a valuable outcome from it. An additional unit of a reward that a person has received more frequently in the past for an action is less valuable. This is the deprivation-satiation proposition, which qualifies the stimulus proposition that introduces the general idea of diminishing marginal utility. The fifth proposition concluded by describing how people respond emotionally to various reward scenarios. For example, when they do not get what they expect, people will get upset and start acting aggressively, and in turn, performance is affected. They may become irate if they do not receive a fair rate of return, according to Homans (1974).

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research was the method employed in this study. As per data gathered from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the study's population consists of 14 petroleum-producing companies in the Rivers States. Given the small population of Rivers State, the fourteen (14) petroleum-producing companies there were investigated. One (1) managing staff member, one (1) public relations officer, and one (1) marketing manager from each of the petroleum-producing companies made up the sample frame for the study, totaling forty-two (42) respondents. Books, articles, journals, magazines, and pertinent office records, both published and unpublished, served as the primary and secondary sources for the data. Our main source of data was the feedback we obtained from the survey. The test was conducted using Pearson correlation for the hypotheses and evaluate the strength of the connotation among the various variables under consideration, whereas the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) approach was used to evaluate the

moderator's impact on the interaction between the variables used as the criteria and the predictors.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 4.1: Analysis of survey responses

Numbers	Questionnaire	(%)
Nos; sent out	42	100%
Nos; Returned	40	95%
Nos; not returned	2	5%

Source: Field Survey 2023

As shown in Table 4.1 above, the survey questionnaire was made in forty-two (42) copies and distributed to the forty-two (42) participants who took part in the study. However, only forty (40) questionnaires, or 95% of the printed and distributed questionnaires, were included in the final analysis. Due to incorrect answers, two (2) questionnaires—representing 5% of the printed and dispersed questionnaires—were not used. These forty (40) returned copies serve as the foundation for this study's analysis.

Table 2: Results of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Positive organizational practices	0.844
Organizational Performance	0.857
Employee engagement	0.846

Source: SPSS Output 2023.

The research study used a structured questionnaire to measure concepts, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.9. This indicates that the instrument accurately measured the variables, allowing for analysis, conclusions, and reasonable decisions. The data can be used for both theoretical and practical generalizations, indicating the validity of the research tool.

Using data from the study's demographics and item accuracy, a relationship was established.

According to Dunn (2001, p. 222), it is crucial to express the degree of the association between the correlating variables, x and y, as independent and dependent variables, respectively, in addition to indicating the sign and strength of a correlation. In this study, the categorization used by Dunn (2001) is used to assess the relationship's scope.

Table 3: Range of Relationships and Descriptive Level of Association of Relationships

<i>r –values</i>	<i>Degree of association</i>
0.80 to 1.00	Very Strong
0.60 to 0.79	Strong
0.40 to 0.59	Moderate
0.20 to 0.39	Weak
0.00 to 0.19	Very Weak

Source: Adopted from Dunn's (2001) degree of relationship categorization

The relationship indicated by the minus sign on the table is opposed to the positive association denoted by the plus sign. The r sign indicates the direction of the relationship between the variables.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Positive Organizational Practices and Organizational Performance

Correlations			
		Positive organizational practices	Organizational Performance
Positive organizational practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation	.737**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS Output 2023.

The evaluation is high, indicating that there is a significant relationship between the categories listed in Table 3 and positive organizational practices and organizational performance. The example above showed that the Pearson correlation on the relationship between positive organizational practices and organizational performance is 0.737**. A higher level of positive organizational practice is linked to a higher level of organizational performance because the correlation coefficient is positive.

Hypotheses Testing

Decision Rule

If the probability value (PV) (0.05) significance level is met, it is appropriate to reject the null hypotheses and draw a conclusion about a significant relationship.

Accept the null hypothesis and draw an insignificant relationship if $PV > 0.05$.

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: Positive organizational practices and employees' performance are unrelated.

The null hypothesis was rejected

Because, as previously mentioned, the PV is (0.000), and this value is significant at the level of (0.05). According to the study, there is a strong link between effective organizational practices and worker performance.

Table 5: Partial Correlation of the Impact of Employee Engagement on the Relationship between Positive Organizational Practices and Organizational Performance

Correlations					
Control Variables			Positive organizational practices	Organizational Performance	Employee Engagement
-none- ^a	Positive organizational practices	Correlation	1.000	.737	.601
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		Df	0	39	39
	Organizational Performance	Correlation	.737	1.000	.699
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		Df	39	0	39
	Employee Engagement	Correlation	.601	.699	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		Df	39	39	0
		Correlation	1.000	.688	

Employee Engagement	Positive organizational practices	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		Df	0	38	
	Organizational Performance	Correlation	.688	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		Df	38	0	
a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.					

Source: SPSS 20.0 Output (based on 2023 field survey data)

According to the data in Table 6 above, there is a strong, significant, and favorable correlation between good organizational practices and performance ($r = 0.737$, $PV = (0.000)$ (0.05)). The table also demonstrates a significant and direct correlation between employee engagement and effective organizational practices and organizational performance: $r = (0.601)$, $PV = (0.000)$ (0.05), and $r = (0.737)$, $PV = (0.000)$ (0.05), respectively. The r value's positive sign is a signal that as employee engagement rises, good organizational practices and organizational performance follow.

Test of Hypothesis 2

H_{02} : Employee engagement does not mediate the relationship between positive organizational practices and organizational performance.

The Partial Correlation Decision Rule

If the difference between the controlled partial correlation (CPC) and the zero-order partial correlation (ZPC) is greater than 0.01, there is a significant moderating influence. The controlled partial correlation (CPC) is equal to 0.688, and the zero-order partial correlation (ZPC) is equal to 0.737. The researchers concluded that employee engagement significantly influences the relationship between effective organizational practices and organizational performance because the difference between the zero-order partial correlation (ZPC) and the controlled partial correlation (CPC) ($0.737 - 0.688 = 0.49 > 0.01$) rejected the null hypothesis. The difference's positive sign is proof that employee engagement positively affects the link between good organizational practices and organizational performance.

Discussion of Findings

A significant correlation between effective organizational practices and employee performance at petroleum-producing companies in Rivers State appears to exist, based on the data analysis and tested hypotheses. The regression coefficient is 0.737, according to Table 4 above. It is clear from the high correlation coefficient that the variables are significantly correlated. The results of

earlier studies support this conclusion. For instance, Shoukat et al.'s (2021) study shows that organizational practices have a significant impact on organizational performance, such as high-performance work systems, information technology, internal communication, and recruitment and selection. Opatha (2018) acquiesced that in every organization, people are the most important asset; hence, human resource management (HRM) emphasizes the importance of people in achieving organizational performance.

This study also demonstrated how strongly employee engagement affects the link between efficient organizational procedures and organizational performance. Positive organizational practices and organizational performance have a strong, significant, and positive relationship, as shown in Table 6 ($r = 0.737$, $PV = (0.000) (0.05)$). The table also demonstrates a significant and direct correlation between employee engagement and effective organizational practices and organizational performance: $r = (0.601)$, $PV = (0.000) (0.05)$, and $r = (0.737)$, $PV = (0.000) (0.05)$, respectively. The r value's positive sign is a signal that as employee engagement rises, good organizational practices and organizational performance follow.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers found a strong relationship between good organizational practices and employee performance, with employee engagement significantly strengthening this relationship. The study thus recommended that businesses should prioritize customer engagement for improved performance.

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