Employee Engagement and Workplace Harmony in Nigeria Civil Service

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Abstract:
Frequent employee-management uncomplimentary relations have been the bane of industrial growth in many sectors of Nigeria economy. Thus, this study attempts to examine the extent to which employee engagement as a non-financial incentive can significantly influence the degree of workplace harmony in the Nigeria civil service. Samples of 400 employees were randomly drawn from 10 ministries in the Rivers State Civil Service, Nigeria. Structured questionnaire items were administered on the sampled respondents and data gathered were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics for relationship in the hypothesis one as well as the independent T-Test analysis for test of influence of the hypothesis two. Results revealed a significant relationship and influence of the variables of employee engagement on workplace harmony in the studied sector. These results culminated into our condition that employee engagement is a critical non-financial incentive that has significant relationship on workplace harmony. Thus, it is recommended that institutional collaboration between management and employees, employee career enhancement as well leadership cooperation should be encouraged to attract workforce loyalty to the vision and mission of the state civil service.

Keywords: Employee engagement, workplace harmony, collaboration, career enhancement, workforce loyalty

1. Introduction

The challenge of modern day business is the increased awareness on the part of employees about their rights and privileges. The rise in this awareness has become a pain in the neck of growing management to such concerns that it attempts to diminish the glory of capitalistic mindedness that once bestride the pathway to managing like a colossus. Workplace harmony seems to be affected by this development that the frequency of management-workforce conflicts is fast raising in many sectors of world economies. The Nigeria workplace context had for decades been embattled in the demands for increased wage and earnings as means of incentivization as well as bonuses, awards, health packages etc which form the components of financial motivation. (Akinwade (2011). Inspite of these provisions, there is still manifest disaffection between employees and employees on the one strand and between management and employees on the other. This failure is the essence of this investigation that necessitated the operationalization of employee engagement as a non-financial index to address the problems of workplace harmony in the Nigerian civil service.

Employee engagement, also called worker engagement, is a business management concept. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. According to Brickner et al (1996) Survey, "Employee Engagement is a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work". Thus engagement is distinctively different from employee satisfaction, motivation and organisational culture. It is the extent to which employee commitment, both emotional and intellectual, exists relative to accomplishing the work, mission, and vision of the organisation. Engagement can be seen as a heightened level of ownership where each employee wants to do whatever they can for the benefit of their internal and external customers, and for the success of the organization as a whole. (Aina, 2000).

The variable called employee engagement is described as a modernised version of job satisfaction. It indicates an employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work. Employee engagement is a part of employee retention." This integrates the classic constructs of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Reeves 1995). Most recent meta-analysis can be useful for understanding the impact of engagement. Several contemporary research received significant attention in the business community because of correlations between employee engagement and desirable business outcomes such as retention of talent, customer service, individual performance, team performance, business unit productivity, and even enterprise-level financial performance(McCabe et al, 2001).

Schneider (2003) opined that employee engagement is derived from the value the organisation places on workforce commitment. An engaged workforce does get engaged in the philosophy and vision of an organisation and ensures that the spirit of getting things done strives across board. With the advent of the knowledge worker and emphasis on individual talent management (stars), a term was

needed to describe an individual's emotional attachment to the organization, fellow associates and the job. Thus, the birth of the term "employee engagement" is an individual emotional phenomenon whereas morale is a group emotional phenomenon of similar characteristics. In other words, employee engagement is the raw material of morale composed of many intrinsic and extrinsic attitudinal drivers.(Rollinson, 2000). More recently employee engagement has become an area of focus within organizations for the purpose of retention as a means of avoiding expensive employee replacement costs resulting from staff who voluntarily quit their jobs. Engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn, (1990) as the 'harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. The second related construct to engagement in organizational behavior is the notion of flow advanced by Szymanski et al (1987). They defined flow as the 'holistic sensation' that people feel when they act with total involvement. Flow is the state in which there is little distinction between the self and environment. When individuals are in Flow state, little conscious control is necessary for their actions. It is therefore the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.' Thus Employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization. Engagement is most closely associated with the existing construction of job involvement (Eno, 1996). Job involvement is defined as 'the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity and also a cognitive or belief state of Psychological identification (Ryan, 1998). Job involvement is thought to depend on both need saliency and the potential of a job to satisfy these needs. It results from a cognitive judgment about the needs satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are tied to one's self image. Engagement differs from job in as it is concerned more with how the individual employees relates with the elements of task during the performance of his/her job. Furthermore engagement entails the active use of emotions. Finally engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs. When Kahn (1990) talked about employee engagement he has given important to all three aspects physically, cognitively and emotionally whereas in job satisfaction, importance has been more given to cognitive side. Human resource management practitioners believe that the engagement challenge has a lot to do with how employee feels about the work experience and how he or she is treated in the organization. It has a lot to do with emotions which are fundamentally related to drive bottom line success in a company. There will always be people who never give their best efforts no matter how hard HR and line managers try to engage them. "But for the most part employees want to commit to companies because doing so satisfies a powerful and a basic need in connect with and contribute to something significant" (Byrd, 2011).

According to Aspinall, (2007), the basic contextual equations of employee engagement according to the global studies are:- The employees and their own unique psychological make-up and experience; The employers and their ability to create the conditions that promote employee engagement and Interaction between employees at all levels. Thus, it is largely the organization's responsibility to create an environment and culture conducive to this partnership, and a win-win equation. Categories of Employee Engagement, according to the Gallup Consulting organization, there are there are different types of employee engagement: - Engaged--"Engaged" employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They are naturally curious about their company and their place in it. They perform at consistently high levels. They want to use their talents and strengths at work every day. They work with passion and they drive innovation and move their organization forward. *Not Engaged* employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished. They focus on accomplishing tasks vs. achieving an outcome. Employees who are not-engaged tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped. They often feel this way because they don't have productive relationships with their managers or with their coworkers. *Actively Disengaged* employees are the "cave dwellers." They are consistently against virtually everything They are not just happy at work; they are busy acting out their unhappiness. They sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. Every day, actively disengaged workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish. As workers increasingly rely on each other to generate products and services, the problems and tensions that are fostered by actively disengaged workers can cause great damage to an organization's functioning. Employee engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or alienation is central to the problem of workers' lack of commitment and motivation. Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from ones works. In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves. Other Research using a different resource of engagement (involvement and enthusiasm) has linked it to such variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria (Hayes, 2002).

An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results. Some of the advantages of Engaged employees are: Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success. They will normally perform better and are more motivated. There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability. They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals Increases employees' trust in the organization. Harmony is achieved in the workplace only when the leaders determine what they want their organization's culture to look like and then strategize to make it a reality. Industrial harmony means harmony between persons or groups of persons. Conflict may arise, and harmony can conceivably be achieved, within a number of different pairs of opponents in industry, and conflict within any one may influence the course of conflict within the others, as when the demand of a certain job-group for higher

pay than others may crosscut and imperil the unity of the workers as a whole in their relations with management. The parties to conflict are many, and their disputes intersect; yet when we speak of industrial conflict we usually mean conflict between management and workers. In this major conflict, indeed, many of the minor ones find expression (Donnely et al, 1984). When speaking of industrial harmony, it shall mean harmony between these major parties. Industrial harmony is certainly not perfect harmony. Industrial harmony means that every person and every group in industry gets just what he wants – or even something less than what he wants -- without having to put up a fight for it, we shall never achieve industrial harmony; and we had better not set up a goal so illusory. The pursuit of the ideal of perfect harmony can too easily lead to the harmony of silence. This study is carried out to examine the effect of employee engagement on workplace harmony in the Nigerian civil service. Empirical effort is made to identify contextual alternatives to workplace harmony which in essence will embrace the following: (a) To ensure that institutional collaboration is adopted to enshrine workplace harmony in the civil service in Nigeria. (b) To forestall workforce career enhancement as a measure for attracting employees loyalty in the Nigerian civil service. (c) The study also advocates involving all employees in all policy process and implementation to enhance peaceful coexistence and institutional bonding amongst all internal stakeholders in the Nigeria civil service.

2. Methods
The primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire which was distributed to a randomly sample workers population of four hundred (400) Rivers State civil employees selected from 10 ministries with forty respondents(40) each to ministry used in the area of study. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was adopted to test the Hypotheses. All the hypotheses were subjected to testing at O.05 level of significance.

3. Research Questions
1. To what extent does workplace collaboration improves workplace harmony in the Nigerian civil service?
2. How does workforce career enhancement improves workplace harmony in the Nigerian civil service?

4. Findings of the Study
The findings are herein portrayed using contingency tables depicting the measure of central tendency (mean) and the measure of dispersion (standard deviation). Analysis here entails the single variable (univariate) analysis as well as the bi-variable (bivariate) analysis.

4.1. Single Variable Analysis (Univariate)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collab1	400	1.00	5.00	3.9475	1.17823
Collab2	400	1.00	5.00	3.8175	1.15000
Collab3	400	1.00	5.00	4.0375	.97646
Collab4	400	1.00	5.00	3.7750	1.09195
Collab5	400	1.00	5.00	3.7425	.96359
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Table 1: Measurement of Workplace Collaboration
Source: SPSS output, 2015

In table 1 above, the statistics on the 5 – item indicators of workplace collaboration; a measure of employee engagement; is illustrated with central tendencies (x>3.0) and dispersions (s<2.0). Values show an average preference for affirmations and agreement as regards the concept of workplace collaboration within the organization and as observed by the participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enhance1	400	1.00	5.00	3.9650	1.13003
Enhance2	400	1.00	5.00	3.9175	1.17863
Enhance3	400	1.00	5.00	3.7350	1.16110
Enhance4	400	1.00	5.00	4.0425	1.09485
Enhance5	400	1.00	5.00	3.8350	1.12959
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Table 2: Measurement of Career Enhancement
Source: SPSS output, 2015

In table 2 above, the statistics on the 5 – item indicators of career enhancement; a measure of employee engagement; is illustrated with central tendencies (x>3.0) and dispersions (s<2.0). Values show an average preference for affirmations and agreement as regards the concept of career enhancement within the organization and as experienced by the respondents

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Harmony1	400	1.00	5.00	3.7500	.98739
Harmony2	400	1.00	5.00	3.7225	.92338
Harmony3	400	1.00	5.00	3.6925	1.06573
Harmony4	400	1.00	5.00	4.1450	1.00324
Harmony5	400	1.00	5.00	3.7650	1.03074
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Table 3: Measurement of Workplace Harmony
Source: SPSS output, 2015

In table 3 above, the statistics on the 5 – item indicators of workplace harmony is illustrated with central tendencies (x>3.0) and dispersions (s<2.0). Values show an average preference for affirmations and agreement as regards the concept of workplace harmony within the organization and as experienced by the respondents

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collaborate	400	1.00	5.00	3.8640	.80556
Enhance	400	1.00	5.00	3.8990	.96796
Harmony	400	1.20	5.00	3.8150	.80623
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Table 4: Measurement on variables
Source: SPSS output, 2015

In table 4 above, the statistics on the variables of the study is presented. The predictor variable; employee engagement is analysed on its operational measures; workplace collaboration and career enhancement, followed by criterion variable workplace harmony Central tendencies (x>3.0) and dispersions (s<2.0)values show an average preference for affirmations and agreement as regards the concept of all variables within the organization and as experienced by the respondents.

4.2. Bi-Variable Analysis (Bivariate)

			Harmony	Collaborate	Enhance
Spearman's rho	Harmony	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.298**	.215**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	400	400	400
	Collaborate	Correlation Coefficient	.298**	1.000	.568**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	400	400	400
	Enhance	Correlation Coefficient	.215**	.568**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	400	400	400

Table 5: Test for Statements of Hypotheses
Source: SPSS output, 2015

In table 5, the test for previously hypothesized statements of bivariate relationship is carried out at a 95% confidence interval implying a 0.05 level of significance. Correlation is estimated using the spearman's rank order co-relational tool and significance of association is based on a p>0.05 value for non-significance or acceptance of the null hypotheses or a p<0.05 value for significance or rejection of the null hypotheses.

- Hypothesis 1 (HO$_1$: There is no significant relationship between workplace collaboration and workplace harmony in the Rivers State civil service)
  Where p<0.05 and rho = .298: values show a significant relationship between workplace collaboration and workplace harmony. Based on this finding we therefore reject the null hypothesis.
- Hypothesis 2 (HO$_2$: There is no significant relationship between career enhancement and workplace harmony in the Rivers State civil service. Where p<0.05 and rho = .215: values show a significant relationship between career enhancement and workplace harmony. Based on this finding we therefore reject the null hypothesis.

4.3. Hypothesis by Hypothesis Presentation of Results
In this section each of the hypotheses was re-stated in the null form. The variables as well as the statistical analysis techniques employed to test the hypotheses were identified and presented on tables. All hypotheses were subjected to testing at 0.05 level of significance.

4.3.1. Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between workplace collaboration and workplace harmony in the Rivers State civil service. The independent variable involved in this hypothesis was creating management-workers tasks team building, while the dependent variable was achieving workplace cohesion and cooperation in the Rivers state civil service. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) - analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis. The result of the analysis was presented on table 6.

Variable	- X	SD	r-value
Creating management-workers tasks team	26.78	3.16	0.96
Achieving workplace cohesion in the civil service	29.35	4.52	

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between creating management-workers tasks team and achieving workplace cohesion in the Rivers State civil service. (n=400)
*Significant at 0.05 level, critical r- 0.088, df =399.

The result in table I indicates that the calculated - r-value of 0.96 was higher that the critical r-value of 0.088 at 0.05 level of significance with 399 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected.
This result therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between workplace collaboration and workplace harmony in the Nigeria civil service.

4.3.2. Hypothesis II

Workforce career enhancement in the Nigeria civil service does not influence workplace harmony. The independent variable in this hypothesis was leadership succession (workforce career enhancement), while the dependent - variable was to reduce management-employees conflicts. The independent t-test analysis was adopted to test this hypothesis; the result of the analysis was presented on table 7.

Variables n	- X	SD		T-Value
Employees career development	252	31.03	2.89	12.62*
Conflicts reduction	228	27.48	3.23	
Total	480	29.35	4.53	

Table 7: Independent T-test Analysis of the Influence of workforce career enhancement of employees of the Rivers State civil Service on reduction of management-employees conflicts at work (n=478)
*Significant at 0.05 level, critical = 1.96, df =478.

The result in table 2, shows that the calculated t-value of 12.62 was higher that the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.5 level of significance with 478 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implies that developing employee's career prospect by management of the Rivers State civil service does influences the degree of conflicts between management and the workforce. Since the mean for employees career development of 31.03 (52.58) is higher in the direction of significance test carried out, it shows that the direction of significance is towards committed workforce career development. This means that workforce career development has a more significant positive influence on workplace harmony between management and workers in the Rivers State civil service as shown in table 2.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from the study that to build workplace harmony in the civil service, all actors are seen in the light of team players and such desire to be given recognition in the business of the government. Stakeholders' collaboration is critical to the existence of workplace harmony. This means that these relational measures are appropriate in enhancing the reduction of workplace conflicts which has become issues of frequency in the Nigeria civil service as against the hitherto assumption that only financial inducement has the capacity of encouraging workplace conflict between management and employees. Given the above conclusion, it is recommended that there is should be renewed collaboration between workers in the civil service and management of the Rivers state government ministries as shown in the responses. This collaboration should be seen in the manifestation of tasks, objectives, incentives and decisions that affect work and employees. The argument is that if workers are engaged in all aspects of institutional decision making and policy enforcement, there is the high tendency of the spirit of belongingness that permeates through the chains in the organisations. Team building about tasks and goal achievement is critical for the expected workplace bonding that can result in workplace harmony in the studied state ministries. Leaders and supervisors of the ministries should encourage the practice of building teams, networks amongst all the internal stakeholders so that employees' loyalty can be tapped for the essence of workplace harmony success. The business of developing employees career growth instills commitment and higher psychological attachment to the institutions and its property. This means that an engaged employee can do all in his or her capacity to protect the organization on all fronts.

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