Workplace Culture and Employee Engagement among Non-Academic Staff Of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Workplace culture was measured using three dimensions: collaborative culture, innovative culture, and supportive culture, while employee engagement was treated as the dependent variable. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 211 non-academic staff, out of which 193 respondents were sampled and used for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with SPSS version 23 at a 5% level of significance. The results showed a strong relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement ($R = 0.791$). The three cultural dimensions jointly explained 62.5% of the variation in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.625$), and the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 53.974$, $p < 0.05$). Collaborative culture was

found to have a significant but negative effect on employee engagement ($\beta = -0.233$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that existing collaborative practices may not effectively promote engagement. In contrast, innovative culture had a significant positive influence on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.380$, $p < 0.05$), while supportive culture emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.772$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that supportive and innovative workplace cultures enhance employee engagement, while collaborative practices require improvement to achieve better outcomes.

Keywords: Workplace Culture, Collaborative Culture, Innovative Culture, Supportive Culture, Employee Engagement

Introduction

Workplace culture has become a central issue in organizational and human resource management research due to its profound influence on employee attitudes and behaviour. Workplace culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape how work is carried out within an organization and how employees interact with one another (Schein, 2017). In higher education institutions, workplace culture plays a crucial role in determining employees' level of commitment, motivation, and engagement, particularly among non-academic staff who provide essential administrative and support services.

Employee engagement describes the extent to which employees are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally invested in their work and organisation (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in their job roles, which in turn enhances organizational effectiveness and service delivery (Schaufeli, 2021). Prior studies have consistently shown that a positive organizational culture fosters trust, collaboration, innovation, and psychological safety, all of which are essential drivers of employee engagement (Albrecht et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, tertiary institutions both public and private operate within a challenging environment characterized by resource constraints, infrastructural deficits, and increasing performance expectations. These challenges often place significant pressure on non-academic staff, whose roles are critical to institutional efficiency and sustainability. Studies have indicated that ineffective management

practices, weak communication systems, and limited opportunities for professional development contribute to low engagement levels among university employees (Adebayo & Adenubi, 2022; Ezenwakwelu & Mgbemena, 2021).

Furthermore, the Nigerian organizational environment is marked by economic volatility, regulatory uncertainty, and institutional inefficiencies, which can negatively affect employee morale and commitment (Okoye et al., 2020). In such contexts, workplace culture becomes a strategic tool for enhancing employee engagement and organizational resilience. Cultures that encourage collaboration, support innovation, and provide emotional and instrumental support to employees are more likely to promote engagement and reduce turnover intentions (Gagné & Deci, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of workplace culture in fostering employee engagement, many Nigerian universities particularly private institutions continue to struggle with creating work environments that adequately support the well-being and productivity of non-academic staff. Organizational priorities in these institutions are often directed toward achieving short-term academic and administrative outcomes, with comparatively limited emphasis on building cohesive, inclusive, and supportive workplace cultures (Adeniji et al., 2020; Ololube, 2016).

The absence of a clearly articulated and consistently practiced workplace culture frequently results in ineffective communication, inadequate recognition of employee contributions, weak interdepartmental collaboration, and limited opportunities for innovation and professional development. Empirical studies suggest that such conditions contribute to low morale, diminished job satisfaction, and declining levels of employee engagement, particularly among support and administrative staff in higher education institutions (Cameron & Quinn, 2021; Olowookere et al., 2020). Over time, these challenges may translate into increased turnover intentions, reduced service quality, and declining institutional efficiency, thereby undermining organizational sustainability (Gallup, 2020; Musa & Ojo, 2020).

Furthermore, existing empirical research on workplace culture and employee engagement in Nigerian universities has largely concentrated on academic staff, with minimal attention devoted to non-academic personnel who play critical roles in administrative coordination, student services, and institutional operations (Akinbode & Kehinde, 2020; Ibrahim & Musa, 2021). This empirical gap constrains the ability of university administrators and policymakers to develop evidence-based interventions tailored to the unique needs and experiences of non-academic staff. Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to empirically examine the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement using collaborative, innovative and supportive dimension among non-academic staff at Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo. Specifically, the study aims to: Examine the effect of collaborative culture on employee engagement among non-academic staff, investigate the influence of innovative culture on employee engagement among non-academic staff and ascertain the influence of supportive culture on employee engagement among non-academic staff.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between collaborative culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between innovative culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between supportive culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State.

Literature Review

Employee engagement has attracted increasing scholarly attention because of its relevance to employee performance, retention, and organizational sustainability. Kahn (1990) conceptualized engagement as the harnessing of employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional selves in the performance of work roles. This perspective emphasizes not just participation in work tasks, but the depth of employees' psychological connection to their roles. Subsequent studies have extended this view by presenting engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional attachment, cognitive absorption, and sustained behavioural effort (Kumar et al., 2020; Schaufeli, 2021).

Within higher education institutions, particularly universities, employee engagement is critical for non-academic staff whose administrative and support functions directly influence institutional efficiency and service delivery. Empirical studies indicate that engaged non-academic staff demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment, responsiveness, and proactive problem-solving, which enhance the effectiveness of academic operations and student services (Sharma et al., 2022). In developing economies such as Nigeria, where universities often operate under financial and infrastructural constraints, employee engagement further contributes to staff retention and institutional stability (Gallup, 2020).

Workplace culture has been consistently identified as a key determinant of employee engagement. Schein (2017) describes organizational culture as a pattern of shared assumptions learned by a group as it solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration. These shared assumptions influence how employees perceive their roles, relate with colleagues, and respond to managerial practices. Studies have shown that when workplace culture aligns with employee expectations and values, it promotes positive work attitudes, whereas misaligned cultures may result in disengagement and withdrawal behaviours (Nguyen, 2020; Cameron et al., 2020).

A collaborative culture emphasizes teamwork, information sharing, and collective responsibility. Such environments are generally associated with increased trust and a sense of belonging among employees (Kim & Beehr, 2021). However, empirical evidence suggests that poorly structured collaboration may create coordination overload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflict, which can negatively affect engagement if not effectively managed. This observation is particularly relevant in bureaucratic or hierarchical organizations, including universities, where unclear authority structures may undermine the benefits of collaboration (Okoye & Okwuoma, 2021).

An innovative culture reflects an organizational climate that supports creativity, flexibility, and continuous improvement. Employees working in innovation-oriented environments are more likely to feel empowered and valued, as their ideas and contributions are recognized as meaningful to organizational success (Garcia-Morales et al., 2020). In Nigerian universities, innovative cultural practices have been shown to help institutions overcome operational inefficiencies and resource limitations by encouraging staff-led improvements and adaptive problem-solving (Baporikar, 2020).

Supportive culture centers on managerial concern, recognition, fairness, and employee well-being. Such cultures foster psychological safety and strengthen emotional attachment to the organization (Edmondson & Lei, 2020). Empirical studies consistently show that supportive practices such as recognition, open communication, and welfare support enhance employee engagement and reduce burnout, particularly in service-oriented institutions like universities (Ajibade & Salako, 2022; Adewale & Ibitoye, 2023).

Global empirical studies consistently affirm the positive relationship between workplace culture, employee engagement, and organizational performance. International research shows that cultures emphasizing empowerment, participation, recognition, and continuous learning enhance engagement, creativity, and adaptability across sectors (Cameron et al., 2020; Bass et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). These findings are reinforced by Nigerian studies, which demonstrate that collaborative, innovative, and supportive cultural practices significantly improve job satisfaction, commitment, and performance within

universities and other service oriented organizations (Akinbode & Kehinde, 2020; Olowookere et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Musa, 2021). In a nutshell, the literature provides strong empirical support for the view that workplace culture is a critical driver of employee engagement. In the context of Nigerian higher education institutions, cultivating collaborative teamwork, encouraging innovation, and fostering supportive and inclusive work environments are essential for enhancing the engagement and effectiveness of non-academic staff. These cultural dimensions not only shape positive employee attitudes and behaviours but also contribute to institutional sustainability and long-term performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Organisational Culture Theory, as proposed by Schein (2010), to explain the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo. The theory is appropriate because it explains how shared values, norms, and assumptions within an organization shape employee attitudes, behaviours, and engagement levels. Organisational Culture Theory conceptualizes culture as operating at three interconnected levels: artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts refer to visible organisational features such as structures, procedures, communication patterns, and observable behaviours. Espoused values represent formally stated goals, policies, and norms that guide organisational conduct. Basic underlying assumptions are deeply embedded beliefs about leadership, collaboration, trust, recognition, and employee worth, which exert the strongest influence on employee behaviour and engagement.

In the context of Achievers University, workplace culture is reflected in administrative practices, leadership styles, communication systems, and staff welfare policies. While artifacts and espoused values are easily observable, it is the underlying assumptions such as perceptions of fairness, support, collaboration, and opportunities for innovation that significantly influence the engagement of non-academic staff. A culture that promotes collaboration, innovation, and support is more likely to enhance emotional commitment, cognitive involvement, and discretionary effort among employees.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. The study population comprised 211 non-academic staff members across various administrative and support units of the university. Using Slovin's formula, a minimum sample size of 138 respondents was determined. However, to account for possible non-response and enhance the robustness of the analysis, a total of 193 questionnaires were distributed using a convenience sampling technique.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into three sections: demographic characteristics, workplace culture dimensions (collaborative, innovative, and supportive culture), and employee engagement. The measurement items were adapted from validated scales used in prior empirical studies. Content validity was established through expert review, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which ranged from 0.926 to 0.945, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Questionnaires were administered through online distribution channels to ensure ease of access and improve response rates. Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the study hypotheses at a 5% level of significance.

Regression Analysis Output for Collaborative, Innovative and Supportive Culture.

Model Summary

Metric	Value
R	0.791
R^2	0.625
Adjusted R^2	0.614
Std. Error	0.156

ANOVA

Metric	Value
F	53.974
Sig. (p-value)	0.000

Coefficients Table

Predictor	B (Coef.)	Beta	T	Sig.
Collaborative Culture	-0.2333	-0.2274	-2.3754	0.0195
Innovative Culture	0.3801	0.4233	5.0099	0.0000
Supportive Culture	0.7715	0.6456	7.4654	0.0000

Results of Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which collaborative culture, innovative culture, and supportive culture predict employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo. The model summary indicates a strong overall relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement, as reflected by a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.791. This suggests that changes in the cultural dimensions are closely associated with variations in employee engagement. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.625, implying that 62.5% of the total variation in employee engagement is jointly explained by collaborative, innovative, and supportive cultures. This indicates a substantial explanatory power of the model. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.614, which accounts for sample size and number of predictors, further confirms the stability and reliability of the regression model. Additionally, the standard error of estimate (0.156) is relatively low, indicating that the model provides accurate predictions of employee engagement. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) result shows an F-statistic of 53.974 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 5% level. This finding demonstrates that the regression model as a whole is valid and that the independent variables, when considered jointly, significantly predict employee engagement among non-academic staff.

An examination of the regression coefficients reveals differential effects of the individual cultural dimensions. Collaborative culture has a negative coefficient (B

= −0.2333) and is statistically significant (p = 0.0195), indicating a significant but contrary relationship with employee engagement. This suggests that, within the study context, increased emphasis on collaboration may be associated with lower engagement, possibly due to role ambiguity, coordination overload, or ineffective collaborative practices. In contrast, innovative culture demonstrates a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement (B = 0.3801; p = 0.000). This implies that environments that encourage creativity, flexibility, and new ideas significantly enhance employee engagement among non-academic staff. Similarly, supportive culture exerts a very strong and significant positive influence on employee engagement (B = 0.7715; p = 0.000). The magnitude of this coefficient indicates that supportive practices such as recognition, trust, and concern for employee well-being are the most influential predictors of engagement among the cultural dimensions examined.

In conclusion, the regression results demonstrate that while workplace culture significantly predicts employee engagement, supportive and innovative cultures play a dominant positive role, whereas collaborative culture, as currently practiced within the institution, may not effectively enhance engagement. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening supportive and innovation-oriented cultural practices to improve employee engagement in higher education institutions

Hypotheses Testing

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between collaborative culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University.

The regression coefficient for collaborative culture is –0.2333 with a p-value of 0.0195**,** which is below the 0.05 significance level. This result indicates a significant but negative relationship between collaborative culture and employee engagement. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected**.**

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between innovative culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University.

Innovative culture recorded a regression coefficient of 0.3801 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with employee engagement. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between supportive culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University.
Supportive culture shows a regression coefficient of 0.7715 and a p-value of 0.000, revealing a very strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with employee engagement. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of this study reveal that workplace culture significantly influences employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo. However, the effects of the individual cultural dimensions vary considerably. Contrary to conventional expectations, collaborative culture exhibited a significant negative relationship with employee engagement. Although collaboration is generally regarded as a positive organizational attribute, this result suggests that collaborative practices within the institution may not be optimally structured and could be perceived as demanding or inefficient. Empirical evidence indicates that poorly coordinated collaboration can lead to role ambiguity, coordination overload, and increased job demands, which may undermine employee engagement rather than enhance it (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Langfred & Moye, 2004). Similarly, Van der Vegt and Janssen (2003) argue that excessive interdependence without clear role boundaries can reduce individual motivation and psychological ownership of tasks. In university settings, where bureaucratic structures and overlapping responsibilities are common, collaboration that lacks clarity and equitable workload distribution may therefore diminish engagement, supporting the negative relationship observed in this study.

In contrast, innovative culture demonstrated a strong and positive influence on employee engagement. This finding suggests that when non-academic staff are encouraged to generate ideas, experiment with new approaches, and participate actively in problem-solving processes, they are more likely to feel motivated and psychologically invested in their work. This result is consistent with prior empirical studies which show that innovation-oriented cultures enhance

employees' sense of autonomy, competence, and meaningful contribution the key psychological conditions for engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; García-Morales et al., 2012). Additionally, research by Park et al., (2016) demonstrates that supportive innovation climates increase work engagement by fostering learning opportunities and perceived organisational support. In the context of Nigerian universities, where resource constraints often require adaptive solutions, an innovative culture may empower non-academic staff to contribute creatively to institutional efficiency, thereby strengthening engagement.

Supportive culture emerged as the most influential predictor of employee engagement among the cultural dimensions examined. The strong positive relationship underscores the critical role of managerial support, recognition, fairness, and concern for employee well-being in fostering sustained engagement. This finding aligns strongly with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate favourable treatment from the organisation with higher levels of commitment and discretionary effort. Empirical studies consistently confirm that supportive leadership and organisational care are among the strongest predictors of employee engagement across sectors (Saks, 2006; Albrecht et al., 2021). Furthermore, Edmondson and Lei (2014) emphasize that supportive and psychologically safe environments encourage employees to invest their full selves in their work without fear of negative consequences. In service oriented institutions such as universities, where non-academic staff play critical enabling roles, supportive cultures are particularly vital for maintaining morale, commitment, and performance (Olowookere et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Musa, 2021).

On the whole, the findings suggest that while workplace culture is a significant driver of employee engagement, its impact depends on how specific cultural practices are designed and implemented. Supportive and innovative cultures consistently enhance engagement, whereas collaborative practices, if poorly managed, may inadvertently suppress it. These results reinforce existing empirical evidence and highlight the need for university management to balance collaboration with role clarity, autonomy, and adequate support mechanisms.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between workplace culture and employee engagement among non-academic staff of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State. The results demonstrate that workplace culture is a significant determinant of employee engagement. Specifically, innovative and supportive cultures were found to have significant positive effects on employee engagement, while collaborative culture exhibited a significant negative relationship. The findings suggest that employee engagement within the university is largely shaped by cultural practices that promote innovation and provide institutional support. However, collaboration mechanisms may require reassessment to ensure they contribute positively to employee motivation rather than diminishing it. In general, the study confirms that cultivating an appropriate workplace culture is essential for enhancing engagement and organisational effectiveness in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

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

1. Redesign collaborative practices: University management should reassess existing collaborative frameworks to ensure clarity of roles, equitable workload distribution, and effective communication, thereby preventing collaboration from becoming counter-productive.
2. Strengthen innovative culture: Greater emphasis should be placed on encouraging creativity, idea-sharing, and problem-solving among non-academic staff through training, incentives, and inclusive decision-making processes.
3. Sustain supportive culture: University authorities should continuously evaluate and strengthen supportive practices such as recognition, welfare

programs, open communication, and leadership support to maintain a balanced and engaging work environment.

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