

Knowledge Management, Work Ethics, and Leadership Management as Predictors of Academic Staff Engagement in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

Employee engagement issues have become a concern to researchers, especially in our tertiary institutions that face challenges. This study examined knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management as predictors of academic staff engagement in Colleges of Education in South-West Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample comprised nine hundred and thirty-six (936) academic staff selected through a stratified random sampling technique from one college of education in each of the six states of southwest Nigeria. Data were collected using five instruments; namely: Employees Engagement Scale ($r = 0.84$), Knowledge Management Scale ($r = 0.82$), Work Ethics Scale ($r = 0.61$) and Leadership Management Scale ($r = 0.57$). Findings revealed the significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement. It was recommended that Nigerian Colleges of Education management should appropriately incorporate leadership styles that will foster positive work engagement. They should also ensure that their academic staff are comfortable with the work climate and are willing to stay on. Suppose academic staff are valued for their contributions, receive constructive criticism, and are given latitude in how they go about their jobs. In that case, both student engagement and instructor retention will increase, making for a better educational environment overall.

Keywords: Staff, Engagement, Retention, Work ethics, Leadership Management and Knowledge Management

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement issues have become a concern to researchers, especially in our tertiary institution. Employee engagement is emerging as a critical issue, especially now that academic institutions are bedeviled with challenges. Academic staff engagement has been a pertinent issue in colleges of education, particularly in Nigeria (Adeyemo, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for research on the constructs to position

Colleges of Education for enhanced service delivery. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2006) defined employee engagement as an attitude of selflessness and dedication to the Organization's values.

In a similar vein, Schmidt (2004) characterizes engagement as the union of contentment and dedication. Satisfaction focuses on a person's feelings and outlook, whereas commitment includes their actions and motivations. A fully engaged workforce is enthusiastic, committed, and fully immersed in their work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, Bakker, 2002, Fenzel, 2013). When workers are engaged, they are actively contributing to the company's success in various positive ways (Macey & Schneither, 2008). According to the Annual Survey Report (2006) of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, employees who are emotionally invested in their work perform better than those who are merely attentive to their tasks and who are not willing to "go the additional mile" for their employers. According to the survey results, employees who are fully invested in their work will go above and beyond by advocating on behalf of their organization, creating what they see as a "win-win" for everyone involved.

Adeyemo (2017) observed that there are misgivings among some staff regarding motivation interventions in the institution. The high rate at which academic staff in Nigeria embarks on industrial action and eventually resign from their jobs has become a concern for management and government in general. While engaging employees depends on many agents and variables, knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management within an organization are some factors to be examined in this study.

Knowledge management is widely regarded as the most efficient method for generating knowledge value that can provide a company with long-term competitive advantages (Wen, 2009). In today's knowledge-based culture, many businesses see knowledge management as an essential part of their plans for gaining an edge over the competition (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2004). Knowledge management techniques can help universities achieve their goals (Ramachandran, Chong, & Wong, 2013). Using knowledge management, universities may better examine and develop plans to expand knowledge-based activities in service of their mission. The effects of knowledge management have garnered more attention in the past decade. However, the majority of studies have been undertaken in the commercial sector. Knowledge management in higher education settings such as universities has not been the subject of much research (Ramachandran et al., 2013). Classroom knowledge management may follow the same or a different set of guidelines as those used in the business world (Keeley, 2004; Thitithananon & Klaewthanong, 2007).

Working ethically is unquestionably important to the success of any Organization employee. Respect for others and carrying out moral behaviors are hallmarks of a morally upright person. The term "work ethic" refers to a set of principles and practices that are generally accepted as moral and appropriate by employers. The term "work ethics" refers to a body of ideas that emphasize the importance of doing one's job well (Miller, Woehr & Hudspeth, 2002). Attendance, teamwork, attitude, organizational prowess, personal grooming and presentation, productivity, initiative, honesty, respect, etc., are all examples of such values and behaviors. According to Miller et al. (2002), work ethic is multiple things. Work ethic, on the other hand, is not a monolithic concept but rather a collection of ideas on how one should act at work. They argue work ethics is: 1) complex; 2) not limited to any one occupation; 3) acquired through education; 4) a motivational construct whose manifestations may be seen in actions; and 5) apolitical, not bound to any particular religious or moral tradition. Miller et al. (2002) define labor ethic along seven dimensions. Work, independence, toil, play, rest, ethics, deferring gratification, and time well spent are all essential concepts.

Research by Parboteeah and Kapp (2008) found that an ethical work climate was associated with higher levels of employee dedication, job satisfaction, and a decrease in dysfunctional conduct in the workplace. Therefore, studies have shown that there is a connection between ethical work environments and factors of employee engagement such as dedication, enthusiasm, and satisfaction (Martin & Cullen, 2006). That's why it makes sense to associate good ethics in the workplace with satisfied workers. Our ethics as a company dictate both the nature of the issues we address and the standards by which we evaluate them. Let's assume that research proves that working in a more ethical setting significantly boosts employee enthusiasm for their work with the Organization.

In the colleges of education in Nigeria, rules, and regulations guide the conduct of members called code of ethics or ethical issues. Ethical issues are principles that serve as guidelines for both individuals

and organizations. The codes of ethics are necessary due to reported cases of questionable characters; unethical behaviors exhibited by some workers. Head of departments are the mirrors others look unto in the departments; therefore, their behaviors should be morally right (Efanga, Effiong & Nwokomah, 2018).

Leadership management, as one of the variables of this study, is also a driver of employees' engagement. Performance management relies heavily on strong leadership. To give one example, employees are more likely to be pleased with their performance reviews and more driven to succeed if they have a favorable exchange relationship with their supervisors (Makros & Sridevi, 2010). Subordinates' commitment levels can be greatly boosted by effective leadership management. Leaders that exhibit both task-oriented and supportive behaviors are more likely to inspire their followers to get involved (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010).

According to Xu and Thomas (2011), leadership is a necessary precondition for participation. The researchers found that some aspects of the job were linked to higher levels of employee engagement. To be more precise, persons in higher-ranking positions in businesses have more leeway in determining their own work processes and are more likely to be assigned stimulating tasks that encourage all aspects of their personalities to be utilized while at work. Various forms of engagement, including but not limited to, motivation, work satisfaction, organizational commitment, proactivity, and citizenship, have been linked to specific leadership characteristics (Nguyen & Mohamed, 2004). Psychological safety, a state described by Kahn, is associated with increased engagement among academic employees. This safety can be achieved by a leader's credibility, the provision of resources, and the establishment of an atmosphere free of blame (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

A great deal of study has been done over the past decade on the factors that affect academic staff engagement. Only a small number of the research have offered evidence of how academic staff engagement influences institutions in Nigeria, but these studies looked at a wide range of related criteria including socioeconomic position, personality, family history, age, and gender. It is useful to collect data to learn about the interplay between Knowledge Management, work ethics, and leadership management as Predictors of Academic Staff Engagement in Colleges of Education in South-west Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study's specific objectives are to assess how Knowledge Management, Work Ethics, and Leadership Management will collectively and individually predict Academic staff Engagement and Retention in Colleges of Education in South-West Nigeria.

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There is no significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement
2. There is no significant relative contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research is a descriptive survey. Through the use of a descriptive survey, a researcher can collect data without having to introduce any arbitrary changes to the study's independent variables. The instructors at colleges of education are surveyed because they are a potentially representative sample. In this analysis, employee engagement serves as the dependent variable, while knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management serve as the independent factors.

a) Population

The study population comprised all lecturers in South-West, Nigeria's public colleges of education. The total population of lecturers in the available ten colleges of education in South-West, Nigeria was about 1,557.

b) Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 936 subjects participated in the study. The study's sample was chosen via a stratified random sampling process. In selecting the sample, one (01) college of education was drawn from six different states in South-Western Nigeria: Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, and Oyo. 60% of the total population of lecturers in each state was randomly selected. Table 1 below shows the number of samples chosen from the six (6) states chosen for the study.

Table 1: Number of Research Samples

State	Colleges of Education	Population	Sample
Ogun	Tai Solarin of Education	181	109
Lagos	Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education	237	142
Osun	Osun State College of Education	127	77
Oyo	Emmanuel Alayande College of education	356	214
Ekiti	College of Education	282	169
Ondo	Adeyemi College of Education	374	225
Total		1557	936

c) Research Instrument

The following five scales were used to gather the data needed for this study, namely:

1. Employees Engagement Scale
2. Knowledge Management Scale
3. Work Ethics Scale
4. Leadership Management Scale

Employees Engagement Scale: is a scale developed by Buckingham and Coffman (1999). The instrument is divided into two parts (1) biographical information and (2) Employee Engagement. The instrument contains twelve (12) items with Likert scaling method ranging from "1 strongly disagree," "2 disagree", "3 agree" to "4 strongly agree". A critique committee comprising three senior lecturers in Educational Management certified the scale as adequate to measure engagement among academic staff of colleges of education. A test-retest method of two weeks was used to establish the reliability. The instrument was administered to 20 lecturers in the Federal Colleges of Education, Osiele, who will not participate in the main study. The administrations of these instruments are collated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation and it yielded a 0.844 coefficient.

Knowledge Management Scale (KMS): is a 34-item scale developed by Filius, De Jong, and Roefs (2000) to measure Knowledge Management practices in the institutions. The Knowledge Management practices are Knowledge acquisition (07-item), Knowledge documentation (06-items), Knowledge transfer (06-items), Knowledge creation (07-items), and Knowledge application (08-items). They all focused mainly on the degree at which the routine activities were predisposed by the knowledge and experience of workers. The 26 items adapted by Durojaiye (2019) are used for this study. The items are measured using a 4-point Likert scaling method ranging from "1 strongly disagree," "2 disagree", "3 agree" to "4 strongly agree". Durojaiye (2019) had used the instrument with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82 was reported. A test-retest method of two weeks was used to establish the reliability. The instrument was administered to 20 lecturers in the Federal Colleges of Education, Osiele, who will not participate in the main study. The administrations of these instruments are correlated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation and it yielded a 0.81 coefficient

Leadership Management Scale: The scale was developed by Akif Lutfi and Sahar (2012). It was a 12-item scale designed to assess the Leadership management of a head of the department, measured along 4 points likert scaling method ranging from "1 strongly disagree," "2 disagree", "3 agree", to "4 strongly agree". The scale was divided into the following Leadership management styles: Democratic (item 1-4), laissez-faire (item 5-8), and Autocratic (item 9-12). Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated for the three Leadership management styles, which yielded – Democratic 0.761; Autocratic 0.79, laissez-faire 0.74, and internal consistency reliability (coefficient alpha) of 0.81 was found for the total scale. A critique committee comprising three senior lecturers in Educational Management certified the scale as adequate to measure leadership management among academic staff of Colleges of Education. A test-retest method of two weeks was used to establish the reliability. The instrument was administered to 20 lecturers in the Federal Colleges of Education, Osiele, who will not participate in the main study. The administrations of these instruments are correlated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation and it yielded a 0.57 coefficient.

Work Ethics Scale: is a scale developed by McDaniel (1997). It contains twenty (20 items). Likert scaling method ranging from “1 strongly disagree”, “2 disagree”, “3 agree” to “4 strongly agree”. The scale yielded a coefficient of 0.88 through the use of test-retest method and a cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.93. A critique committee comprising three senior lecturers in Educational Management certified the scale as adequate to measure ethics among academic staff of Colleges of Education. A test-retest method of two weeks was used to establish the reliability. The instrument was administered to 20 lecturers in the Federal Colleges of Education, Osiele, who will not participate in the main study. The administrations of these instruments are correlated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation and it yielded a 0.61 coefficient.

d) Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher, with three trained research assistants, personally visited the institutions selected for the study. The instruments were administered to the respondents that are willing to participate. The respondents were asked to fill the instrument independently before returning them to the researcher.

e) Method of Data Analyses

The statistical analysis used for testing the hypotheses was the Multiple Regression Analysis (to show the predictive power between variables) at a 0.05% significance level.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The general description of the study data was presented. Data were analyzed using inferential statistics of Multiple Regression Analysis and discussed.

a) General Description of Data

It was found that a 98.3 percent response rate was achieved after 936 questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff at the College of Education in South-West, Nigeria. Table 2 displays the responses broken down by respondent demographics.

Table 2: Description of Respondents’ Characteristics

Demographic Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	462	50.2
	Female	459	49.8
	Total	921	100.0
Age group	Below 30yrs	45	4.9
	31-40yrs	188	20.4
	41-50yrs	552	59.9

continued

	51yrs & above	136	14.8
	Total	921	100.0
Highest Level of education	First Degree	54	5.9
	Masters	648	70.3
	Ph.D	219	23.8
	Total	921	100.0

Table 2 shows that 462 (50.2%) of the lecturers were male, and 459 (49.8%) were female. For the religion, 512 (55.6%) were Christian, and 394 (42.8%) were Muslim, 15 (1.6%) were from traditional religions. For age, 45 (4.9%) were below 30 years, 188 (20.4%) were within 31-40 years, 552 (59.9%) were within 41-50 years, 136 (14.8%) were above 50 years of age; This analysis shows that 54 (5.9%) had first degree while 648 (70.3%) and 219 (23.8%) had Masters and Ph.D. respectively.

b) Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement.

Table 3: Composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement

Regression	ANOVA						Remark
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig	
R = .526 R ² = .276	Regression	6060.580	3	2020.193			
Adj. R ² =.274 Std Error = 4.161	Residual	15877.713	917	17.315	116.674	.000 ^b	Significant
	Total	21938.293	920				

The result in Table 3 indicated that a significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement existed (R = .526; R² = .276; F (3,917) = 116.674; P < .05). It implies that knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management accounted for 27.6% of the variance in academic staff engagement. The null hypothesis, which states that no significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement, was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relative contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement.

Table 4: Beta Coefficient and t ratio for relative contributions of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	14.324	1.246		11.492	.000
Knowledge Management	.170	.016	.350	10.323	.000
Work Ethics	.088	.021	.154	4.257	.000
Leadership Management	.119	.032	.124	3.686	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Table 4 revealed the relative contributions of each independent variable (knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management) to the dependent variable (academic staff engagement). Knowledge management (Beta= .350; $t = 10.323$; $P < 0.05$) was the most potent contributor out of the three variables. Followed by Work ethics (Beta= .154; $t = 4.257$; $P < 0.05$) and Leadership management (Beta= .124; $t = 3.686$; $P < 0.05$) respectively. Therefore, the postulated null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. It implies a significant relative contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis revealed that there was significant composite contribution of knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management to academic staff engagement. Knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management accounted for 27.6% of the variance in academic staff engagement. This result aligns with the findings of Abdul-Rahman (2015), who discovered that knowledge management influenced employee engagement. Hough, Green, and Plumlee (2016) also discovered an organization's ethical and unethical environment directly correlates to its trust or mistrust. Furthermore, the study found that trust in, or lack thereof, between employees and managers is positively and strongly related to the degree to which both are invested in, or disinterested in, the Organization. To our already robust understanding of the connection between a company's ethical culture and its ability to retain and motivate its workforce, this finding adds significant nuance.

Anunya (2014) found further evidence that the ethical climate of a firm has an effect on employee dedication and loyalty. The results showed that the respondents held positive attitudes toward their organization's ethical atmosphere, were satisfied with their performance on the job, and were actively invested in the success of their organization. Employees' job satisfaction was determined by several factors, including their level of responsibility, their familiarity with organizational policies and procedures, their rapport with organizational leaders, the predictability of their schedules, the nature of their work, the prospects for advancement, and the quality of their interactions with coworkers. Employees' levels of dedication to the company could be anticipated using these factors. Mangundjaya's (2018) result also buttresses the involvement of leadership management when its study showed that leadership directly impacted employee engagement. The results also indicated that work ethics partially mediate the relationship that existed between charismatic leadership and employee engagement. Moreover, Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi, and Mojeed-Sanni (2018) demonstrated the excessive bureaucracy and transactional nature of Nigerian universities and their procedures. Moreover, it was shown that some context-specific norms affect leadership functions that have an effect on employees' motivation to show up for work every day.

The second hypothesis revealed that knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management relatively contributed to academic staff engagement. Knowledge management was the most potent contributor out of the three variables, followed by Work ethics and Leadership management respectively. This discovery lent credence to the research of Vosloban (2012), whom it was shown that increased knowledge responsiveness results in the implementation of responses more quickly, which in turn raises the possibility of meeting targets within allotted timeframes and affects employee engagement. Iqbal, Karim, and Haider (2015) also indicated that leadership functions significantly affected employee engagement. Likewise, the findings of Paul (2012) also showed that a positive work climate could have to do with positive or elevated levels of employee engagement. The findings of Esmail, Ghaffar, and Arefe (2018) also support this result when they discovered that there was a direct effect of work ethics on employees' job engagement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutions should prioritize employee engagement by identifying factors that affect it and taking deliberate, methodical steps to improve and adopt required policies in these areas so as to retain personnel. Teachers' college faculty engagement was investigated. There are several advantages to having a thriving staff component at an institution, and one of these is the ability to attract and keep a highly qualified academic staff. The university's academic staff members should be regarded as essential to the institution's success because of the wide-ranging impact they have on the research, teaching, and service that emerge from universities. For this reason, universities need to improve their retention rates for faculty members. The findings from the study show that knowledge management, work ethics, and leadership management had composite and relative contributions to the engagement of academic staff in colleges of education in southwest Nigeria. Therefore, the study concluded that colleges of education authorities should devise engagement strategies around these variables to facilitate the retention of qualified academics in our institutions of higher learning.

In light of the research findings, it was suggested that colleges of education management in Nigeria adopt leadership styles that create work environments that encourage employees to be actively engaged in their jobs. They need to make sure their faculty members enjoy working there and are happy to stay. Management and leadership that promotes ethics in the workplace are essential. Imagine a scenario where faculty members are valued for their contributions, receive constructive criticism, and are given latitude in how they go about their jobs. If this happens, student engagement will rise, teachers' burnout will decrease, and everyone wins.

The management of colleges of education should, as much as possible, provide an attractive workplace for academic staff to boost their decisions to stay within the institutions. Create a supportive culture in the workplace by offering competitive remuneration, providing rewards, training, and recognition, good communication between academic staff and employers, and good relations among colleagues. Therefore, it is suggested in this study that the institution put in place the appropriate structure to promote and develop knowledge management methods. It's also important to inspire people to incorporate knowledge management strategies into their daily routines. Additionally, knowledge management procedures need to be deeply embedded in the company's ethos.

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