

# An Empirical Review of Employee Engagement on Productivity of Fast Food Businesses in Akwa Ibom State

Patrick Montok Igbaji<sup>1</sup>, Enya Matthew Njobili<sup>1</sup>, Abang George Ndifon<sup>1</sup>, Ene-Ita Ene Okpo<sup>2</sup>, Rabson Iniobong Cletus<sup>3</sup> & Wonah Godwin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Administration, Cross River University of Technology, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Department of Business Management, University of Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup> Department of Accounting, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Correspondence: Patrick Montok Igbaji, Department of Business Administration, Cross River University of Technology, Nigeria.

doi:10.56397/LE.2024.08.01

## Abstract

The study empirically examined employee engagement and productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were to examine the effect of communication on productivity of fast food businesses, ascertain the effect of leadership on productivity of fast food businesses. The research study used survey tools such a questionnaire to gather data for the study, the formulation and testing of hypotheses and drawing of inferences from the statistical process. Primary source of data was used in the study. Data were presented using tables and percentages. Multiple regression analysis was used in this study. Based on the results of the analysis, the findings revealed; thus, there was a significant effect of communication on productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State, there was a significant effect of leadership on productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. The study recommended that organizations should encourage and nurture communication by listening to employees' concerns and to encourage them to participate in workplace discussion. Also, leaders of the organization should be effective in fostering employee well-being and enhancing quality of work life and life satisfaction. Finally, organizations should implement policies that will make employees conduct themselves in an organized way by conforming to regularities of perception and behavior.

**Keywords:** employee engagement, communication, leadership, productivity, fast food businesses

## 1. Introduction

Employee engagement is a psychological and physical demonstration of what the employee understands of his/her role in the organization, and the commitment of stewardship that manifests in high productivity levels in his/her work (Kahn, 2020). Employees that speak positively about their organizations and those that feel a sense of belonging are also those that remain loyal and will concern themselves with productivity in their roles. It is this type of employees that organization should strive to have, as they exhibit what is known as engagement characteristics (Board, 2014).

Despite the acknowledgement of its importance in business, low levels of employee engagement are reported, globally. Employee Engagement' has been a hot topic in the corporate circles. It is a buzz word that employers think they understand, but face difficulties and challenges while practicing. Many organizations copy 'Employee Engagement' activities from the best practices, looking at the benefits enjoyed by their competitors. However, most lose track after a few strides ahead. Employee Engagement cannot be a cosmetic intervention in enhancing commitment towards job, motivation or productivity. Corporate culture has an important role in enduring positive impact of such engagement programs. Engagement as a positive attitude toward the job and

distinguished it from both job satisfaction and commitment. Thus, the complete equation of engagement is obtained by aligning maximum job satisfaction and maximum job contribution.

Employee engagement is the willingness to invest oneself and expand one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed, which is beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer. Bersin (2015) has revealed that employee engagement makes an organization irresistible and drive employee on a global scale. Thus, the complete equation of engagement is obtained by aligning maximum job satisfaction and maximum job contribution. In Nigeria, high staff turnover leads to loss of experience and skill, high frequency injury rate (HFRI) incidents that ultimately lead to low productivity. Several studies have been conducted on employee engagement on productivity. In fast food businesses, communication, leadership affected the productivity of the organization.

Engagement as a positive attitude toward the job and distinguished it from both job satisfaction and commitment. It is often stated that the level of employee engagement is used in a workplace as an approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization's goals and values. The problems of communication such as language barriers and cultural differences, lack of effective communication processes, inconsistent communication channels, lack of employee engagement, lack of feedback, when there is no collaboration and poor communication skills, it will affect the productivity of fast food businesses. There are several external challenges as well in leadership, lack of projects, scarcity of funds and lack of support. Workplace conflict can be extremely detrimental when handled poorly, causing stress to almost half of employees. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the effect of employee engagement (communication) on organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Cross River State;
- ii. ascertain the effect of employee engagement (leadership) on organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Cross River State.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

The study is anchored on Self-determination theory:

The Self Determination Theory (SDT)

This theory was propounded by Cherry in 2016. The theory is used to study human motivation, personality and best functioning. Literature shows that the quality of motivation is what matters in predicting successful outcomes more than the amount of motivation. As described by Cherry (2016), SDT is centered on three psychological needs and is driven by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This theory is relevance to the study when people are engaged, they need to feel competent, connected and autonomous. As applied to the study, if people experience positive meaning in their work, they become motivated to perform better because they experience a psychological sense of connectedness, competency and autonomy. People want more than just a salary and are looking for a sense of belonging in their organizations and when they feel this, they become more engaged and motivated.

### *2.2 Employee Engagement*

AbuKhalifer and Som (2013) defined employee engagement as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its value". An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. Stated differently, employee engagement is "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances." Abrahams (2012) defined employee engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption". Employee engagement as "the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization and its values."

Mishra et al. (2015) defined employee engagement as "the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles". Ariani (2013) defined employee engagement, as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, emotional) and active, full performances. Employee engagement is a positive attitude toward the job and distinguished from both job satisfaction and commitment."

### *2.3 Communication*

A number of researchers have identified different drivers in their studies. Leadership, communication and a work-life balance were observed by Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) as drivers of employee engagement. Under a similar notion Soni (2013) deduced that a culture of respect, constant feedback both from manager to employee

and vice versa, counselling and mentoring, as key drivers of employee engagement. Dulagil (2012) states that if there were to be any level of engagement, there needs to be clear communication of the core values and beliefs of the employees. He adds that the transparency about the goals and objectives of the organization should be evident. Supervisors and managers should demonstrate care about the health and well-being of the employees. There should also be a person-job fit alignment so that people are placed in their areas of capabilities.

Managers should trust their employees and create opportunities for growth so that they remain engaged and productive. Farouk (2014) explored the attitude of employees on productivity. The study included communication as a driver of employee engagement in organisations. The study refers to the assumption made by scholars, that if employees were included in the decision-making process of matters concerning their work and more so if they are given the opportunity to make decisions themselves, there would be positive benefits for both the employee and the organization. If organizations could endeavour to improve the process of informing employees about issues and changes in relation to their work environment, employees would be more likely to be initiative and suggest improvements, which in turn increase the productivity of their work.

#### *2.4 Leadership*

Karaa et al. (2013) conducted a study to test the notion that transformational leadership style is more effective than transactional leadership style by fostering employee well-being enhancing quality of work life and life satisfaction as well as increasing organizational commitment and decreasing employee burnout. The study used 443 participants from Turkish 5-star hotels. The findings support the positive effect of transformational leadership in the hospitality industry, which implies that hospitality managers should be trained to use a transformational leadership style to enhance employee well-being, a significant predictor of productivity. Theory shows that exercising authentic and supportive leadership improves employee engagement.

Ariani (2013) conducted the relationship between employee engagement, OCB and Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A significant positive relationship between employee engagement and OCB was revealed by the study. It further explains OCB as the occurrence of behaviours that result in efficient and effective functioning of the organization that is increased by the engaged employees. These behaviours are identified as high energy demonstrated by employees, the eagerness to meet goal. Strategies to increase OCB suggested in the study as having maintained the social systems that support the performance of the organization, like involving employees in decision-making.

#### *2.5 Productivity*

Ali et al. (2013) defined productivity as “that which people can produce with the least effort”. They went further to say that productivity “is a ratio to measure how well an organization (or individual, industry, country) converts input resources (labour, materials, machines etc.) into goods and services.” In addition, productivity refers to the “effort that individuals can produce with the least effort by putting labour, material, and machines.” Atkinson (2013) defined productivity as “an economic output per unit of input as the unit of input can be labour hours (labour productivity) or all production factors including labour, machines and energy (total factor of productivity).” Feige et al. (2013) defined productivity as “the ratio of output to input depending on the context and content of the output measure (e.g., products, services, market shares, value) and input measure (e.g., cash, labour, energy, materials, and work environment).”

A good performance by employee is necessary for the organization, since an organization’s success is dependent upon the employee’s creativity, innovation and commitment. Even though employee productivity and employee job performance seem to be related, performance is in some cases measured as the number and value of goods produced. However, in general, productivity tends to be associated with production-oriented terms (e.g., profit and turnover) while employee performance is linked to efficiency or perception-oriented terms (e.g., supervisory ratings and goal accomplishments). Organizations need good employees and appropriate structure that will enhance their performance. Most organizations performance is measured by supervisory ratings, supervisory ratings quality, and quantity, dependability and job knowledge and goal accomplishments even though they are highly subjective. This study however will adopt the variables of employee’s performance to include supervisor’s ratings, quality, quantity, effectiveness, efficiency, dependability, job knowledge and goal accomplishments.

#### *2.6 Empirical Review*

Many studies were conducted in developed and developing countries.

Berdarkar and Pandita (2014) conducted a literature review to explore the concept of employee engagement and also shed light on key drivers of employee engagement by analyzing specifically three drivers, namely communication, work life balance and leadership. This study also analyzed how these drivers impact the level of employee performance and wellbeing at workplace of the employees. The study recommended that organizations should actively look forward to fulfilling employee’s expectations and thus, create an impact on the performance

of employee, which directly affects the organization's performance.

Guest (2014) conducted a review of the debates and evidence on employee engagement. The aim of his study was to assess the feasibility of engagement becoming a mainstream part of human Resources Management (HRM) activity. His findings raise a concern of improving employee well-being and organizational engagement in order to improve organization performance. In terms of higher engagement levels, their study places its association with higher supervisor-related job performance and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Karanges (2014) researched the optimization of employee engagement using internal communication from a social exchange theory perspective. Their study links employee engagement to higher productivity and an improved reputation of the organization. Similarly, to previous research, they identified employee engagement drivers as perceived support, job characteristics, value congruence and internal communication. They collected data from 200 non-executive workers and applied linear and mediated regression to test their model. Their findings direct organizations to no focusing on internal communication in order to build greater perceptions of support in employees so as to foster optimal level of employee engagement.

Kaliannan and Adjovu (2014) explored the impact of effective employee engagement on organizational success. It argues that the concept of organizational success is not infused in tangible results but rather in the organization's employees. The study notes that executives are obsessed with focusing on brand equity, market share and increasing profitability, yet all these attributes of business success would not be possible without employees. The study describes the role of employee engagement in the success of the organization as that of a catalyst, whereby employees serve as the drivers behind the steering wheel of their organizations' productivity.

Anita (2014) conducted a study to identify the key determinants of employee engagements and their predictability of the concept. The study used 383 participants from the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association in India. The results revealed that employee engagement had significant impact on employee performance, which is a significant predictor of productivity.

### 3. Methodology

The research study used survey tools such a questionnaire to gather data for the study.

Primary source of data was used in the study. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument for collecting the needed data for the study. Data were presented using tables and percentages. Multiple regression analysis was used in this study. The adoption of this technique is to examine the effect of independent variables on dependent variables. For the purpose of this study, the model for this study is specified thus.

$$Y = f(X)$$

The ordinary least square (OLS) model is stated thus:

$$PR = b_0 + b_1COMM + b_1LS + U_t \quad (1)$$

Where;

PR	=	Productivity	COMM	=	Communication
LS	=	Leadership	b <sub>0</sub>	=	Regression constant
b <sub>1</sub> -b <sub>2</sub>	=	Regression parameters or coefficients	U <sub>t</sub>	=	Stochastic error term

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Hypothesis One

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Employee engagement (communication) does not significantly affect organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

Decision rule: Since t-calculated (3.50) is greater than t-critical (1.96), accept alternate hypothesis and reject null hypothesis. It is concluded that employee engagement (communication) has a positive significant effect on organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

#### 4.2 Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Employee engagement (leadership) does not significantly affect organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

Decision rule: Since t-calculated (4.80) is greater than t-critical, (1.96) accept alternate hypothesis and reject null hypothesis. It is concluded that employee engagement (leadership) has a positive significant effect on organizational productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1. Model summary of the effect of employee engagement on productivity of fast food

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622 <sup>a</sup>	.386	.378	.45801

a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication, leadership.

Table 2. ANOVA<sup>a</sup> of the effect of employee engagement on productivity of fast food

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	46.341	2	15.447	73.557	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	73.632	149	.210		
Total	119.973	151			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Communication, leadership.

Table 3. Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of the employee engagement on productivity of fast food

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	1.485	.110		13.480	.000	
	Communication	.109	.031	.169	3.508	.001	.754 1.327
	Leadership	.188	.039	.266	4.807	.000	.572 1.747

The results on Tables 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate the effect of employee engagement on productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. The correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.622$ ) in Table 1 reveals that the relationship between employee engagement and productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State is 62.2 percent. This indicates a very high degree of relationship between the variables in the context of the study. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.386$ ) indicates that employee engagement accounts for up to 38.6 percent of the variation in productivity of hotels in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that if other factors remain unchanged, employee engagement will affect the productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State by up to 38.6 percent. Given that  $F = 73.557$  and  $p = 0.000$ , as shown in Table 1, it indicates that the effect of employee engagement on productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State is statistically significant.

Furthermore, the collinearity statistics presented in Table 3 indicate that the variables were devoid of multicollinearity because the tolerance values generated exceeded 0.1 and the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) generated were not greater than 5. This entails that the multicollinearity condition of regression analysis has been met under this circumstance. Also, from the standardized coefficients column in Table 3, it has been revealed that with a beta coefficient of 0.266 or 26.6 percent, leadership had the highest contribution to the regression model. Whereas the least contributing variable to the model is communication, with a beta coefficient of 0.169 or 16.9 percent.

This entails that in order of relative importance, communication, leadership are the most relevant employee engagement variables capable of impacting the productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. In addition, the p-values of all the dimensions tested were less than the error margin of 0.05 with positive t-test values [Communication value: p-value = 0.001,  $t = 3.508$ ]; (Leadership: p-value = 0.000,  $t = 4.807$ ); This implies that communication, leadership have significant positive effects on the productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

## 5. Conclusion

The study x-rays employee engagement and productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. The findings revealed that there is a significant positive effect of communication, leadership on the productivity of fast food businesses in Akwa Ibom State. Employee Engagement cannot be a cosmetic intervention in enhancing commitment towards job, motivation or productivity. Employee engagement is more temporary and volatile than commitment. It is all about passion and commitment. It is the willingness to invest oneself and expand one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed, which is beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer. The study concluded that employee engagement positively affected productivity of fast food businesses.

## 6. Recommendations

- 1) Communication method builds engagement with employees; therefore organizations should encourage and nurture communication by listening to employees' concerns and to encourage them to participate in workplace discussion.
- 2) Leaders of the organization should be effective in fostering employee well-being and enhancing quality of work life and life satisfaction. Also, managers should be trained to use an effective leadership in order to enhance employee well-being.

## References

- Abrahams, S., (2012). Job Satisfaction as an Antecedent to Employee Engagement. *SIES Journal of Management*, 8(2), 27-36.
- AbuKhalifer, A., & Som, A., (2013). The Antecedents Affecting Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance. *Asian Social Science*, 9(7), 41-46.
- Ali, A., Ali, A., & Adan, A., (2013). Working conditions and employees' productivity in manufacturing companies in Sub-Saharan African context: Case of Somalia. *Educational Research International*, 2(2), 67-78.
- Anita, J., (2014). Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 63(3), 308-323.
- Ariani, D., (2013). The Relationship between Employee Engagement, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, and Counter-productive Work Behaviour. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 4(2), 46-56.
- Atkinson, R., (2013). Competitiveness, Innovation and Productivity: Clearing up the confusion. *The Information Technology*, 1-7.
- Bedarkar, M., & Pandita, D., (2014). A study on the drivers of employee engagement impacting employee performance. *Procedia — Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(133), 106-115.
- Board, C. E., (2014). Driving Performance and retention through employee engagement Corporate Leadership Council Employee Engagement Survey.
- Cherry, K., (2016). What is Self-Determination Theory? Retrieved from Psychology Web Site: <http://www.verywell.com>
- Farouk, I., (2014). Exploring employee attitude and productivity at electricity company of Ghana, Ashanti-East. *BSc Human Resources Management*, 83.
- Feige, A., Wallbaum, H., Janser, M., & Windlinger, L., (2013). Impact of sustainable office buildings on occupant's comfort and productivity. *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, 15(1), 7-34.
- Guest, D., (2014). Employee engagement: a skeptical analysis. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 1(2), 141-156.
- Kahn, (2020). Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692-724.
- Kaliannan, M., & Adjovu, S., (2014). Wining the Talent War via Effective Employee Engagement. *Journal of Business and Financial Affairs*, 3(3), 1-7.
- Kara, D., Uysal, M., Sirgy, J., & Lee, G., (2013). The effects of leadership style on employee well-being in hospitality. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, 9-18.
- Karanges, E., Beatson, A., Johnston, K., & Lings, I., (2014). Optimizing employee engagement with internal communication: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Business Market Management*, 7(2), 329-253.
- Mishra, K., Boynton, L., & Mishra, A., (2015). Driving Employee Engagement: The expanded role of Internal Communications. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 51(2), 183-202.
- Soni, B., (2013). Employee Engagement-A key to organizational success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Voice of Research*, 1(4), 51-55.

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).