

**THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
ANTECEDENTS OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE
PERFORMANCE OF THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC
SECTOR WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AS
A MEDIATOR**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

ABDULLAHI SULEIMAN ADEWUMI

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	All Progressive Congress
AO	Administrative Officers
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
AUT	Autonomy
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CR	Composite Reliability
EE	Employee Engagement
EO	Executive Officers
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
HRM	Human Resource Management
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
HCM	Hierarchical Component Modelling
HOC	Higher-Order Construct
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
JI	Job Involvement
JS	Job Satisfaction
LOC	Lower-Order Construct
LV	Latent Variable
MDA	Ministry, Department, and Agencies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OC	Organizational Commitment
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Organizational Performance
OPSR	Office of Public Service Reform
OPPTDEV	Opportunity for Training and Development

PLS	Partial Least Squares
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
REW & REC	Reward and Recognition
RESINAD	Resource Inadequacy
ROLO	Role Overload
SELF-EFF	Self-Efficacy
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SET	Social Exchange Theory
SOCSUPP	Social Support
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TL	Transformational Leadership
WORCON	Work-Role Conflict

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**KESAN ANTESEDEN PSIKOLOGI PENGLIBATAN TERHADAP
PRESTASI SEKTOR AWAM NIGERIA DENGAN PENGLIBATAN
PEKERJA SEBAGAI PENGANTARA**

ABSTRAK

Prestasi sektor awam Nigeria baru-baru ini mengalami penurunan yang ketara walaupun beberapa reformasi telah dilaksanakan untuk memperbaiki kedudukan yang menurun. Selain itu, terdapat seruan yang semakin meningkat dari pada rakyat (akademik dan praktis) untuk mengambil pendekatan yang berbeza dan lebih organik yang akan berkesan dalam menangani situasi tersebut. Begitu juga, pekerja sektor awam mencapai kepuasan kerja mereka berdasarkan nilai intrinsik berbanding dengan rakan sejawat sektor swasta mereka. Oleh itu, situasi ini memerlukan kajian prestasi sektor awam Nigeria melalui penemuan psikologi penglibatan. Berdasarkan Teori Pertukaran Sosial dan Teori Sumber Permintaan Kerja, kajian ini telah merangka kerangka kajian untuk membantu penyelidikan penemuan penglibatan yang diperlukan secara menyeluruh melalui elemen-elemen psikologi mereka (makna, keselamatan, dan ketersediaan). Permintaan kerja, autonomi, peluang untuk latihan dan pembangunan, dan ganjaran dan pengiktirafan telah dikaji di bawah penglibatan elemen psikologi makna, sokongan sosial dan kepimpinan transformasi diperhatikan di bawah penglibatan elemen psikologi keselamatan, manakala kelebihan peranan, konflik peranan kerja, ketidakcukupan sumber dan keberkesanan diri telah dikaji di bawah penglibatan elemen psikologi ketersediaan. Sementara itu, penglibatan pekerja dinilai sebagai pembolehubah perantara dalam kajian ini. Soal selidik diedarkan dalam talian kepada pegawai pentadbiran dan eksekutif sektor awam dalam sepuluh kementerian, jabatan, dan agensi (MDA) organisasi sektor awam persekutuan Nigeria

iaitu Kementerian Tenaga, Kerja, dan Perumahan, Kementerian Maklumat dan Kebudayaan, Kementerian Kesihatan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Pembangunan Modal Insan, Kementerian Pertanian dan Sumber Alam, Kementerian Kewangan, Kementerian Alam Sekitar, Kementerian Buruh dan Produktiviti, Kementerian Keadilan, dan Kementerian Tanah dan Pembangunan Bandar. Sejumlah 332 pegawai pentadbiran dan eksekutif dari sektor awam Nigeria mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis dengan menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur separa terkecil (PLS-SEM). Berdasarkan analisis, kajian menunjukkan bahawa penglibatan anteseden yang digabungkan mempunyai hubungan positif yang signifikan dengan penglibatan pekerja dan penglibatan pekerja mempunyai hubungan positif yang signifikan dengan prestasi organisasi. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa beban tugas yang terlalu banyak, konflik peranan kerja dan kekurangan sumber mempunyai hubungan negatif dengan penglibatan dan prestasi organisasi. Selain itu, didapati bahawa keyakinan sendiri tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan penglibatan, tetapi ia berkaitan positif secara signifikan dengan prestasi organisasi. Selain itu, peranan penglibatan pekerja sebagai mediator dalam hubungan antara faktor pendahuluan penglibatan dan prestasi organisasi telah ditubuhkan dalam penyelidikan ini. Temuan dari penyelidikan ini berguna kepada akademik dan praktisi terutamanya pentadbir organisasi sektor awam Nigeria yang ingin menangani penurunan prestasi sektor melalui penglibatan pekerja dan faktor-faktor pendahuluan penglibatan.

**THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENTS OF ENGAGEMENT
ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR WITH
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AS A MEDIATOR**

ABSTRACT

The performance of the Nigerian public sector has of recent been massively declining albeit the implementation of several reforms to correct the declining position. Moreover, there has been an intensified call from the citizens (academics and practitioners) to approach the situation through a different and more organic measure which would be effective. Similarly, the public sector employees attain their job satisfaction based on intrinsic values rather than extrinsic values as their private sector counterparts. Therefore, this situation calls for the need to examine the Nigerian public sector's performance through the psychological antecedents of engagement. Based on the Social Exchange Theory and Job-demand resource theory, this study designed a research framework to assist the investigation of the required antecedents of engagement wholistically through their psychological elements (meaningfulness, safety, and availability). Job demand, autonomy, opportunity for training and development, and reward and recognition were investigated under the psychological meaningfulness antecedents, social support and transformational leadership were observed under the psychological safety antecedents, while role overload, work-role conflict, resources inadequacy, and self-efficacy were examined under the psychological availability antecedents of engagement. Meanwhile, Employee engagement was assessed as a mediating variable in this study. Questionnaires were distributed online to public sector administrative and executive officers in ten ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) of the Nigerian federal public sector

organizations namely Ministry of Power, Works, and Housing, Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labor and Productivity, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Lands and Urban Development. A total of 332 administrative and executive officers from the Nigerian public sector participated in the research. The data gathered were analyzed with the partial least square's structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Through rigorous analysis, the present study reveals that the amalgamation of antecedents influencing engagement manifests a substantial and positive correlation with employee engagement. Moreover, it is observed that enhanced engagement significantly contributes to improved organizational performance. The results also showed that role overload, work-role conflict, and resource inadequacy have a negative relationship with engagement and organizational performance. Furthermore, it was exhibited that self-efficacy had no significant relationship with engagement, but it was significantly and positively related to organizational performance. Also, the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between antecedents of engagement and organizational performance was established in this research. The findings from this research are useful to both academic and practitioners particularly the administrators of Nigerian public sector organizations who wish to address the performance decline of the sector through employee engagement and its antecedents.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Organizational performance is a vital aspect in assessing an agency's progress and effectiveness within its business context, considering the efficient utilization of available resources (S. Kim, 2005). It entails the economic outcomes resulting from an organization's features, actions, and context (Hamann & Schiemann, 2021). Ensuring sustained high performance poses a significant challenge for most organizations, necessitating a focus on both short-term and long-term retention and sustainability (Hamann & Schiemann, 2021). In the public sector, evaluating organizational performance becomes complex due to diverse definitions and measures proposed by various studies (Walker et al., 2011). Despite the lack of a consistent definition, the significance of organizational performance is widely acknowledged. Past research has suggested diverse criteria for evaluating organizational performance, ranging from financial indicators like profit to more multifaceted aspects such as organizational flexibility and intra-organizational strain (Lee & Kim, 2020).

In the Nigerian context, the public sector faces considerable challenges with its performance, leading to concerns among both authorities and citizens (The Guardian, 2019). This issue has been highlighted by the current head of the federal civil service of Nigeria and the Director-General of the National Bureau of Statistics, who have expressed worries about the continuous decline in public sector performance (see Appendix J). The Nigerian public sector has undergone numerous reforms aimed at addressing these challenges, but the outcomes have been limited, emphasizing the need to explore alternative perspectives, particularly from the human resource

management (HRM) angle (Tensay & Singh, 2020). Employee engagement, a potent HRM perspective, has demonstrated the ability to address organizational issues related to human factors (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2019). Employee engagement refers to the emotional connection, enthusiasm, and commitment of employees to their job and organization, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and goal attainment (Kahn, 1990). In the Nigerian public sector, employee engagement can play a crucial role in improving efficiency, quality of services, civic and customer engagement, innovation, and overall organizational success (Ohemeng et al., 2020).

Additionally, various studies have assess organizational performance using Brewer and Selden's (2000) measures, which have led to improved outcomes for organizations in the public and private sectors (Cera & Kusaku, 2020; Cheong & Kim, 2022; Kim, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2020; Thanh et al., 2022; Yu, 2021). Brewer and Selden (2000) created a model of organizational performance which consists of three core components: leadership, organization, and performance. Leadership measures assess the capability of leadership to create and maintain a vision, define goals, and provide direction (Thanh et al., 2022). Organization measures evaluate the efficiency of the organization in terms of resource allocation, coordination, and communication. Performance measures measure the organization's ability to meet its stated goals. Studies utilizing Brewer and Selden's (2000) model have revealed the importance of leadership, organization, and performance in organizational effectiveness (Thanh et al., 2022). These studies have also shown that organizations with strong leadership and organizational structures tend to outperform those with weaker structures, and that organizations with strong performance are more likely to survive in the long-term (Cera & Kusaku, 2020). Thus, Brewer and Selden's (2000) model provides an important framework for understanding the effectiveness of

an organization, and a useful tool for creating and maintaining a successful organization.

Consequently, it has been argued that a high performing organization ensures some form of satisfaction to its shareholders, and this will, in turn, motivate their will to invest more or to ensure a long term relationship with such business, due to the returns on their investment being achieved in the case of a private organization, and the provision of social infrastructures and other economic goods to the citizens in the case of the public organization (Chen et al., 2020; Ullah et al., 2020).

In some parts of the world, public sector performance has been poor (OECD reports, 2017; Rogers, 2017; Wushe & Shenje, 2019). The public sector consists of government-owned and controlled organizations that exist to provide services to its citizens (Sabiou et al., 2019). Organizations in the public sector, like those in the voluntary sector, do not generate profits and exist solely to ensure the proper implementation of government policies (Magbadelo, 2016). (Magbadelo, 2016). In the United States (U.S.), most public sectors perform below expectations (Jin & McDonald, 2017; Performance.gov, 2018), leading to public pressure on the government and its agencies. Likewise, in the United Kingdom (U.K.), there have been several reports of a decline in the performance of the public sector (Review, 2018; Ruck et al., 2017), most especially since the devolution of the public sector in 2013.

Concerning the Sub-Saharan African context, several reports have revealed the poor performance of the public sector (Dzimbiri, 2008; Hope, 2001; Wushe & Shenje, 2019). For instance, 70% of the South African public sector establishments were reported to be performing low (Nkwanyana & Mutereko, 2019). Similarly, in an earlier study, Dzimbiri (2008) also reported that the Botswana public sectors perform below

8% from the expected 15%. Likewise, the Zimbabwean public sector study revealed a sharp drop in performance from 12% to 8%, and available evidence still shows that there may be a more rapid decline if the public sector's performance problem is not addressed expediently (Dzimbiri, 2008; Tensay & Singh, 2020).

Several factors affecting public sector performance in Nigeria have been identified, such as lack of employee motivation, inadequate training and development opportunities, poor reward and recognition systems, insufficient work resources, rigid organizational structures, and bureaucratic obstacles (Sabiou et al., 2019; Shokunbi, 2016; Nwokorie, 2017; Eneanya, 2018). Employee engagement has been found to positively impact organizational performance globally, and it is crucial to explore the relationship between engagement and public sector performance in Nigeria (Jin & McDonald, 2017; Clark & McLeod, 2009; Ohemeng et al., 2020; Oladipo & Oladejo, 2020).

However, despite the potential benefits of employee engagement, most studies on engagement have been conducted in the private sector, with limited focus on the public sector (Buckingham & Coffman, 2001; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Wefald et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a significant knowledge gap concerning the antecedents of employee engagement within the public sector in Nigeria. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the psychological antecedents of employee engagement—psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability—and their relationship with employee engagement and overall public sector organizational performance. By understanding these antecedents and their impact, public sector organizations in Nigeria can effectively improve employee engagement and, consequently, enhance their performance and service delivery. Moreover, this

research has implications not only for Nigeria but also for other countries facing similar challenges in their public sector organizations.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem of low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed urgently (Akinniyi et al., 2020). Employee engagement is a key driver of organizational success, and when it is low, it can lead to poor organizational performance, high employee turnover, low productivity, and a general decline in organizational effectiveness (Ezeanyim et al., 2020). The Nigerian public sector has been experiencing a long-standing issue of low employee engagement, which has resulted in a decline in organizational performance (Idigo, 2023; Idike et al., 2020; Olufemi et al., 2020).

There is ample evidence to support the existence of the problem of low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations. Firstly, the live broadcast on Friday 26th of August 2022 during the Friday Morning Program of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) where the Head of Federal Civil Service of Nigeria (see Appendix J) mentioned that, according to the Bureau of Public Service Reforms, only 3.5% of public sector organizations in Nigeria had a functional performance management system in place and this lack of accountability and transparency can lead to demotivation and disengagement among employees.

Secondly, in a similar national television interview of Tuesday 11th July 2022, the Director-General of the National Bureau of Statistics (see Appendix J) mentioned that Poor employee engagement in public sector organizations poses a significant challenge and adversely affects organizational performance. He further added that

according to their data, job satisfaction among public sector workers in Nigeria is only at 31.7%, while job dissatisfaction stands at 43.2%. A previous survey conducted by their office in 2019 revealed that a staggering 69% of public sector employees in Nigeria expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs, with only 31% reporting high levels of engagement in their work. In contrast, private sector employees in Nigeria exhibited substantially higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement, with 83% of employees reporting a high level of engagement in their work. These findings underscore the critical need to address employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector to enhance overall organizational performance.

Additionally, a study conducted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2020 reported that Nigerian public sector employees ranked lowest in terms of job satisfaction and motivation, compared to their counterparts in other African countries. This study revealed that Nigerian public sector employees had low levels of trust in their supervisors and a lack of confidence in the fairness and transparency of the promotion and reward system. These factors have contributed to the low levels of employee engagement and the resultant decline in organizational performance (AfDB, 2020; ILO, 2021).

The low level of employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations is a pervasive problem that affects various sectors of the economy, including health, education, finance, and governance (Ufuophu-Biri & Ayewumi, 2022). The problem has been attributed to several factors, including poor working conditions, low salaries, lack of job security, and inadequate training and development opportunities (Abu & Staniewski, 2021; Idigo, 2023; Ikhida et al., 2022). These factors have contributed to the low levels of employee engagement and the resultant decline in organizational performance.

Poor working conditions are a significant factor contributing to low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations. Many public sector employees work in dilapidated buildings, with inadequate facilities and equipment. This has a negative impact on employee morale and motivation, as it creates a sense of neglect and disinterest on the part of the organization (Garba, 2020).

Low salaries are another significant factor contributing to low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations. Many public sector employees in Nigeria earn salaries that are significantly lower than their private sector counterparts, which creates a sense of inequality and injustice (Akinniyi et al., 2020). This can lead to low morale and a lack of motivation, as employees feel undervalued and unappreciated (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022).

Lack of job security is also a factor contributing to low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations. Many public sector employees are employed on a contract or temporary basis, which creates a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about their future (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022). This can lead to low motivation and a lack of commitment to the organization, as employees are more focused on securing their future employment than on performing their duties effectively (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022).

Inadequate training and development opportunities are also a factor contributing to low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations (Peter & Julius, 2022). Many public sector employees do not receive adequate training and development opportunities, which limits their ability to develop their skills and advance their careers.

Inadequate leadership is another trend that has contributed to the problem of low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022). Nigerian public sector organizations lack effective leadership, which has resulted in a lack of direction, low morale, and a lack of motivation among employees. Leaders in Nigerian public sector organizations often lack the necessary skills and abilities to lead effectively, resulting in a workforce that is disengaged and unproductive (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022).

Lastly, a culture of corruption is a trend that has contributed to the problem of low employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations. Corruption is endemic in the Nigerian public sector, and it has a significant impact on employee engagement and organizational performance (Idigo, 2023; Onah et al., 2022). When employees perceive that their supervisors and colleagues engage in corrupt practices, it can lead to a lack of trust and confidence in the organization, resulting in low levels of employee engagement and a decline in organizational performance (Abu & Staniewski, 2021).

Meanwhile, Rich et al. (2010) have stressed the importance of approaching the use of antecedents of engagement with cognizance to Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of engagement (i.e., meaningfulness, safety, and availability). Prior studies have looked at antecedents of engagement using one or two of the psychological dimensions, i.e., job characteristics (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2019; Badi et al., 2023; Isah et al., 2022; Jin & McDonald, 2017; Nehra, 2023; Thanh & Quang, 2022), organizational support (Bailey, 2022; Braganza et al., 2021; Bridger, 2022; Ha & Lee, 2022; Kurtessis et al., 2017), leadership (Aggarwal & Nobi, 2022; Gutermann et al., 2017; Hans & Gupta, 2018; Park et al., 2022; Tse et al., 2012; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), reward and recognition (Bayraktar et al., 2017; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017; Malam

& Abboh, 2017; Saks, 2006; Shokunbi, 2016; Wushe & Shenje, 2019), and job resources (Karatepe & Aga, 2016; Karatepe et al., 2018; Saks, 2019; Shokunbi, 2016). Similarly, none of these significant studies combined the antecedents from the three dimensions. Additionally, Saks (2019) advocated for further studies on antecedent variables such as leadership, the opportunity for learning and development, job demands, fit perceptions, and dispositional factors on employee engagement.

Thus, this research responded to both Saks (2019) and Rich et al. (2010) advocacy by combining the antecedents using the three suggested dimensions from Kahn's (1990) study (i.e., meaningfulness, safety, and availability). Moreover, due to the public sector-oriented context, the research examined the employees whose motivation is not usually based on extrinsic factors but mostly intrinsic (Adekoya et al., 2019; Inegbedion, 2022; Jin & McDonald, 2017; Katou et al., 2021; Spoor et al., 2022). Some of the more relevant elements such as psychological meaningfulness (job challenge, autonomy, opportunity for training and development, and reward and recognition), psychological safety (social support and transformational leadership), and psychological availability (role overload, work-role conflict, resource inadequacies, and self-efficacy) were the antecedents adopted.

Therefore, this research examined the effects of the antecedents of employee engagement combining the three main psychological antecedents elements, i.e., psychological meaningfulness (job challenge, autonomy, opportunity for training and development, and reward and recognition), psychological safety (social support and transformational leadership) and psychological availability (role overload, work-role conflict, resource inadequacies, and self-efficacy) on the performance of the Nigerian public sector as well as the mediating effect of employee engagement.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the relationship between psychological meaningfulness antecedents (Job Challenge, Autonomy, Opportunity for Training and Development, and Reward and Recognition) and employee engagement of the Nigerian federal public sector employees.
2. To examine the relationship between psychological safety antecedents (Social Support and Transformational Leadership) and employee engagement of the Nigerian federal public sector employees.
3. To examine the relationship between psychological availability antecedents (Role Overload, Work-role Conflict, Resource Inadequacies, and Self-efficacy) and employee engagement of the Nigerian public sector employees.
4. To examine the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between the psychological antecedents of engagement (Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability) and the performance of the Nigerian federal public sector.
5. To examine the relationship between employee engagement and performance of the Nigerian public sector organizations.

1.4 Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Do psychological meaningfulness antecedents (job challenge, autonomy, opportunity for training and development, and reward and

recognition) have a relationship with employee engagement of the Nigerian federal public sector employees?

2. Do psychological safety antecedents (Social Support and Transformational Leadership) have a relationship with employee engagement of the Nigerian federal public sector employees?
3. Do psychological availability antecedents (Role Overload, Work-role Conflict, Resource Inadequacies, and Self-efficacy) have a relationship with employee engagement of the Nigerian federal public sector organization employees?
4. Does employee engagement mediate the relationship between the antecedents of employee engagement (Meaningfulness, Safety, and Availability) and the Nigerian federal public sector performance?
5. Does employee engagement have a relationship with Nigerian federal public sector performance?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study spanned through theoretical and practical around organizational performance, especially public sector performance and the influence of having required antecedents of engagement and raising employee engagement within the Nigerian public sector.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This research adds to the existing literature on employee engagement and its antecedents and their effects on organizational performance. However, studies have been conducted on engagement and its antecedents and how they influenced the

organizational bottom line. Saks (2006; 2019) and Rich et al. (2010) have called for an extension of their studies to examine antecedents of engagement by combining the three psychological elements of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. This research, therefore, hearkens to their clamor by examining the effect of the antecedents of engagement through the combination context-specific three psychological elements of the antecedents such as, meaningfulness (job challenge, autonomy, and reward and recognition), safety (social support and transformational leadership), and availability (role overload, work-role conflict, and resource inadequacies, and self-efficacy).

Particularly, employee engagement and its antecedents have been thoroughly examined in most Western work contexts, with most of the variables selected such as job characteristics, opportunity for training and development, leadership, work context, among others not being an issue in these contexts. However, in Sub-Saharan African generally and particularly the Nigerian work contexts, these variables are much needed. They have rarely been examined alongside employee engagement or performance as a combination of the three psychological elements in a developing nation, as is done in this research. Adekoya et al (2019) and Nehra (2023) supported the claim that the studies on the impact of antecedents of engagement on public sector performance that encompasses the three psychological antecedent elements are limited within the Nigerian academic. Hence this current study embraced the initiative to study how the public sector performance can be influenced by the antecedents of engagement, while investigating this influence from the three psychological antecedent elements. Thus, this present study is the one of the first to do so within the Sub-Saharan African context.

Furthermore, this research proffered significance by testing the effect of the antecedents of engagement on the relationship between employee engagement and

organizational performance. Since there is little understanding of how the combined three psychological antecedents' elements have positively influenced employee engagement within a work context, especially the Nigerian work context (Inegbedion, 2022; Isah et al., 2022; Oladipo & Oladejo, 2020).

Most importantly, this research also introduced a new variable into the psychological availability antecedent variables (i.e., self-efficacy) to examine the effect on the indirect relationship between engagement and organizational performance within the psychological availability antecedent of engagement. It is strongly believed that engagement might be difficult to achieve where an individual's level of self-efficacy is low, affecting the employee's level of psychological availability. Meanwhile, this notion is yet to be studied within the context of employee engagement and public sector performance. Therefore, this research introduced self-efficacy as an essential catalyst within the psychological availability antecedents of engagement to achieve higher engagement and improved performance in the public sector organizational context.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The leaders and administrators of the Nigerian public sector would have much interest in knowing what could reduce the problem of poor organizational performance of the public sector after investing millions of Naira in previous reforms. Therefore, examining the development and increase of employee engagement through its antecedents to improve organizational performance will offer enlightenment for developing effective policies that will encourage a conducive work context that fosters employee engagement within the public sector organizations in Nigeria and, in turn, increases organizational performance.

This present study will also give insight on how to increase the organizational performance of the Nigerian public sector by improving employee performance through increased employee engagement by bringing together the three psychological antecedents (Psychological Meaningful, Psychological Safety, and Psychological Availability antecedents). Introducing the new antecedent variable (self-efficacy) will ensure that the public sector employs individuals who are ready and prepared both physically and psychologically to drive the Nigerian public sector towards its goal. Remarkably, the Nigerian public sector administrators can address the poor organizational performance of the sector and create a new image for the sector while giving the citizens of Nigeria peace of mind and value for their tax payments.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Definition of key terms in this study are presented below:

Organizational Performance: Organizational Performance refers to the degree to which an organization achieves its objectives and accomplish the expectations of its stakeholders, including workforce, clients, shareholders and the broader (Brewer & Selden, 2000). They also defined public organizations' performance as a set of values: efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness, including efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is an active, fulfilling, and job-related condition that involves a high identification with the organization and self-expression (Albrecht et al., 2018).

Antecedents of Employee Engagement: Antecedents of employee engagement refer to those factors that predict and encourage the development of employee engagement within an organization (Rich et al., 2010).

Psychological Meaningfulness Antecedents: The feeling of psychological meaningfulness includes a sense of return on investment in job role accomplishment. Employees who experience meaningfulness feel accomplished, functional, and valuable as if they have been able to contribute beneficially and have not been taken for granted (Kahn, 1990).

Psychological Safety Antecedents: The feeling of psychological safety refers to when employees have a sense of the ability to invest themselves in job role performances without being afraid of negative consequences to their job security, self-image, and status. When work situations are perceived as secure, predictable, and trustworthy, employees often feel safer than when situations are perceived to be inconsistent, unpredictable, or threatening such that it is deemed as unsafe and too dangerous to invest themselves in job role performances (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006).

Psychological Availability Antecedents: The feeling of psychological availability portrays employees' sense that they are available and ready to engage individually at a time. Employees feel they have the capacity to invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources into work role performances when they are psychologically available (Kahn, 1990, 1992).

Job Challenge: Job Challenge refers to the possession of expansive job scope, high job responsibility, and high workload (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rich et al., 2010).

Job challenge is a task drive because it brings about the ability for mastery, personal development, and accomplishment (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006)

Autonomy: Autonomy refers to the amount of discretion, independence, and freedom given to employees in designing and scheduling their tasks and determining the processes and procedures they use to achieve their work (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006)

Opportunities for development: Opportunities for development refers to as training and development are those strategic efforts employed by organizations to enable employee acquisition of skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to fulfill customer demands and job requirements (Carayon et al., 2006)

Rewards and Recognition: Rewards and Recognition refers to the formal remuneration and benefits received as compensation related to a job, as well as the informal appreciation and praise showed by colleagues, supervisors, and clients approving of an individual's effort in the workplace (Saks, 2006)

Social Support: Social Support refers to individuals' beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization or their employers' values and appreciates their efforts and cares for their well-being (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).

Transformational Leadership: Transformational leaders influence their followers to transcend immediate self-interests to strive for achievements that profit the group, organization, or nation (Carless et al., 2000)

Organizational Justice: Organizational Justice refers to individual's perception of how fairly they have been treated relating to the outcome allocation and distribution, how fair is the process of distributing and allocating those outcomes, how

fair have people treated them during procedure implementation, as well as how fair the explanation given to people about why a specific process has been utilized in a particular manner or outcomes were shared and allocated as they were (Saks, 2006)

Role Overload: Role Overload occurs when individuals have too many tasks to accomplish in a bit of time available for its accomplishment (Bacharach et al., 1990)

Work Role Conflict: Work Role Conflict occurs where superiors, colleagues, and customers detect inconsistencies in employee behaviors (Rizzo et al., 1970). Work role conflict is a type of conflict that harms individuals' psychological availability at the workplace.

Resource Inadequacies: Resource Inadequacies refer to instances whereby work assignments are made difficult due to the challenges brought forward by a deficiency in work equipment or inadequacies in the amount of needed information to accomplish a given task (Rousseau & Aubé, 2010)

Self-Efficacy: Self-Efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs in their ability to positively affect events that influence their lives. This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, performance accomplishments, and emotional well-being. Unless individuals believe they can accomplish desired effects by their actions, they have little drive to carry out activities or persevere in challenging times. Whatever other factors may serve as drivers and guides; they are ingrained in the core belief that individuals can make a difference by their actions (Jones, 1998).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In Chapter 1 readers are exposed to the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research

questions, the significance of the study, and the definition of key terms used in the theses. Chapter 2 presents the review of the literature relating to the study variables. Apart from the underlying theory, the research framework, and hypotheses are also included and discussed in Chapter 2. Meanwhile, in Chapter 3 the research methodology used in this study is presented. The methodology discusses the research philosophy, research design, population and source of data, unit of analysis, sampling technique, minimum sample size, data collection procedures, research instruments, common method bias, pre-testing of questionnaire and the statistical analyses used for the research. In Chapter 4, the statistical results of this research are presented. And lastly in Chapter 5, discussions about the findings, implications of the study, limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research are presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this literature review is to understand the relationship between the three primary constructs of an organizational phenomenon: antecedent factors of engagement (i.e., psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability) and how they are linked to employee engagement and their effect on organizational performance. Hence, the role of employee engagement as a mediator will also be reviewed in the current study.

The current chapter reviews the relevant and critical literature that led to the development of the research model. Specifically, literature relating to public sector organizations' performance is reviewed. Subsequently, the literature on the psychological antecedents specifically, meaningfulness (i.e., job challenge, autonomy, opportunity for training and development, and reward and recognition), safety (i.e., social support and transformational leadership), and availability (i.e., role overload, work-role conflict, resource inadequacies, and self-efficacy) are reviewed as well as those on employee engagement. The chapter starts by presenting the history of the Nigerian public sector. After which, previous empirical reports relating to each of the variables are explored. Following this, the underpinning theories for the research framework are offered and explained. Lastly, the research framework and hypotheses for the current study are presented.

2.2 Nigerian Public Sector: History and Political Impacts

The Nigerian public sector is the brainchild of the nation's historical and political development. Specifically, the creation of the public sector in Nigeria can be traced back to 1900, the pre-independence colonial epoch (Nwosu, 1977), when the authority was formally established under British colonial rule. The colony and protectorates, such as the Lagos colony and the Northern and Southern protectorates, were then created to oversee most administrative activities. By the beginning of 1960, the amalgamation of the Lagos colony with the Northern and Southern protectorates took place, leading to a change of name and was subsequently called the colony and protectorate of Nigeria (Essays, 2018). Notably, the establishment of a central public sector by the British then was seen by the locals as an imposition on the then-existing traditional climate, which already has its structures, and evident development. Consequently, the process negatively impacted the local communities as it conflicted with the existing interests, values, norms, and power structure of the traditional communities (Essays, 2018). The public sector was created to maintain law and order and generate revenue used in sustaining the colonial authorities in Nigeria.

During this period, the existing structure of the civil service was headed by the Governor-General, who reports to the colonial secretary in London while the colonial secretary reports to the British cabinet and the parliament accordingly (Essays, 2018). With most of their activities, the Chief Secretary, who was the head of the service, usually derived his authority from delegated means by the governor-general. He coordinates the entire public sector, divided into two parts, i.e., political and departmental administration (Essays, 2018). The head of the technical department mainly has its operation center in Lagos, where he operated from; meanwhile, their subordinates were saddled with overseeing the field offices.

The field officers, which consisted of the lieutenant governor, district officers, and residents, were the pillars of the colonial public sector because they were entirely responsible for ensuring law and order and allocating resources that were the central goal of the colonial government (Essays, 2018). Ownership of the people through indirect rules was given to the field officers during this time. The indirect rule system was more successful in the northern part of Nigeria than any other region due to a mature indigenous political and administrative structure.

On the other hand, the departmental administration was responsible for the professional and technical functions, including overseeing the health, treasury, education, public work, forestry, audit, and agriculture for the colonial administration. The other heads then assisted the chief secretary. Their role not only stopped at advising the Governor but also engaged in policy initiation, legislative activities, and supervision of how the enacted bills and approved policies of the government were executed (Essays, 2018).

Ruling the citizens at this time was not directly done by the field officers. Rather, they used the indirect rule, which allowed them to own the people. Success was achieved in the northern part of Nigeria using the western system of governance due to the existing indigenous and administrative system in the area. Likewise, the western part also recorded a partial success because the locals in the country's western region had higher interactions with the west through the opportunity of Western education. However, the system failed in the eastern part because people upheld an extreme republican perspective (Essays, 2018).

The intertwining of both the traditional and western governance systems led to a new structure which, as described by Nwosu (1977), goes along with Fred Riggs's analogy of the mode of role differentiation in a traditional social context. During this period, however, Nigerians who were the locals were only placed at the lower level of the public sector. While even with their amalgamation, the north and south still had their separate public sector organizations (Essays, 2018). Today, the Nigerian public sector is constituted mainly within the federal, state, and local governments (Oyedele & Aluko, 2018). The federal civil service is the highest level of the Nigerian public sector establishments, and most of the structures used in other arms were duplicated from the federal civil service. The public sector is superintended by the federal civil service, which also has duplicated representatives in both the state and local government levels in Nigeria (Oyedele & Aluko, 2018).

The Nigerian public sector is structured around the federal ministries mainly led by a minister and supported by at least one member from each of the 36 states in Nigeria. The president of the country appoints the head of the ministry. Nigeria has 36 federal ministries, and in some cases, a minister is assigned to oversee more than one ministry (i.e., power and energy, works, and housing) and assigned one or more Minister of State to assist them. Each of the federal ministries has a permanent secretary who would have attained a senior civil servant position at the appointment time (Essays, 2018). The ministries are assigned the responsibility to oversee various agencies, for example, public establishments such as National Broadcasting Corporation, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Nigerian Port Authority, Federal Ministry of Finance, Education, and Human Capital Development, among others. While some other agencies fall under the purview of the office of the president popular called 'Office of the Presidency,' such agencies include; the Independent

National Electoral Commission, Federal Civil Service Commission, Federal Road Safety Commission, Federal Emergency Management Commission, and National Intelligence Agency among others (Ibietan, 2013). Most of these federal ministries, departments, and agencies have devolved offices in 36 states in Nigeria. Their activities are coordinated through delegated authority, while most operations are sent from the headquarters, situated in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Furthermore, the Nigerian public sector has undergone several changes. However, it still holds onto its canonical responsibilities. These include ensuring a better life for the citizens by instituting law and order, assist the executive arms of the government in policy formulation and implementation, generate income from the provision of self-servicing structures (i.e., toll gates, hospitals, parks, wildlife reserves, tourists, and schools), ensure the development of the national economic standards and level, attending to citizenry needs at different levels, among others (Magbadelo, 2016; Onah et al., 2022). Additionally, this pertinent role expected of the Nigerian public sector is still perceived by the majority of the citizens and other stakeholders as mandatory upon the sector because it has been blessed with most of the resources it needs to operate and deliver services such as competent human resources, a vibrant and active labor market, and the wherewithal to perform and deliver to the expectation of the citizenry (Oyedele, 2015). However, the reverse has been the case, as the Nigerian public sector has been consistently represented with a problem of poor performance, low productiveness, high inefficiency, high nepotism, unprecedented grafts, and corrupt practices, among other negative representations. Consequently, several efforts have been made by different governments and administrations dating back to the time of the military regime until the present political dispensation to eradicate the Nigerian public sector's poor level performance and resuscitate the lost

or eroded public sector values. Values such as loyalty, selflessness, patriotism, integrity, transparency, discipline, accountability, and professionalism have since been effaced in the Nigerian public sector leading to the service further plunging into an unending precipice (Magbadelo, 2016; Onah et al., 2022).

The Nigerian public sector still possesses dedicated employees. However, in most cases, the level of decadence usually overwhelmed their virtues and the little they seem to contribute to trying to revive the image and performance of the public sector. Fortunately, the coming into power of the current political leader, President Mohammad Buhari, through the All Progressive Party (A.P.C) political banner, has brought a new wave of change in the entire polity. The president's negative body language and countenance towards corruption and corrupt practices, particularly within the Nigerian public sector, have begun to send waves of fear to the civil servants who were racketeering the ill practices as well as those who may have developed the tendency to entertain or perpetrate corruption within the service (Bamidele, 2018; Oyedele & Aluko, 2018). With this new development, the federal civil service has thus been tasked with the urgent responsibility of reviving its 'lost glory,' bringing back the values and virtues which it has been previously known to uphold and bring it to a better, more productive, serving, incorruptible, effective and high performing public sector (Agbo et al., 2019).

Since its creation, the Nigerian public sector has come a long way, and it has held several positive heirlooms of performance and service delivery until today. The public sector in any mentioned context contributes immensely to the areas related to nation-building and the provision of social amenities to ensure a better life and well-being of the entire citizenry. Aside from the earlier mentioned facts, the critical functions it performs in policy formulation and implementation requires the service to