

WELLBEING AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Work engagement is a significant problem among teachers especially those in private secondary schools. The rate of lack of work engagement, particularly changing schools and quitting teaching is substantially high among private school teachers and is being linked with numerous deleterious effects. However, there is still paucity of studies examining the predictors of work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated the role of psychological wellbeing in work engagement among (N=261) purposively selected private secondary school teachers in Makurdi metropolis. Well-Being at Work Questionnaire (KDSP) and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) were used for data collection. Result from multiple regression analysis indicated that work fit and development significantly and positively predicted work engagement ($\beta = .158$, $t = 5.094$, $P < .001$). Also, interpersonal relationships emerged as a significant and independent predictor of work engagement, and was positively related to work engagement among teachers ($\beta = .826$, $t = 26.625$, $P < .001$). Additionally, work fit and development and interpersonal relationships were significant and joint predictors of work engagement $R = .925$, $R^2 = .855$, [$F(2, 224) = 653.304$, $P < .001$]. The study's findings are in line with previous studies on work engagement. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, private school proprietors prioritize work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationships of their teachers in order to have them engaged.

Keywords: Wellbeing, work engagement and Teachers

Introduction

In recent time, the work engagement of teachers has become a central concern in international psychosocial literature as psychologists and other social scientists have continued to research to identify the factors affecting this important work behaviour. This is imperative because the teaching profession has been associated with high attrition and turnover globally. For instance, in the US, 16% to 20% of all teachers choose to leave

the school in which they are teaching that year (Ruzuvika, 2022). A similar pattern is turnover is reported in United Kingdom as 44% of teachers plan to leave the profession by 2027 (National Education Union, 2022). In Kenya, Kilozi, Were and Odhiambo (2018) reported that 13.7% and 14.0% of secondary school teachers had no commitment and vigor respectively to their work.

The problem of work engagement among teachers in Nigeria is worrisome. This is particularly evident among private school teachers due to many factors such as poor remuneration and heavy workload. Many teachers are not fully engaged in their work as they can be seen leaving one school to the other, some even are quitting teaching completely. For instance Obasi and Adieme (2021) and Adiele (2014) in their various studies, reported poor remuneration, heavy workload and work-life imbalance among teachers. Obviously, these negate the conducive teaching atmosphere that guarantees positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that stirs vigor, dedication and absorption in private schools which account for a great part of employer of labour in the Nigerian economy. This is disturbing, considering that the high reported prevalent incidences of lack of engagement can lead to a lot of deleterious consequences.

Work engagement is referred to as a state of mind that demonstrates vigour, dedication and absorption in the job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Teachers' work engagement is beneficial to both the students and the teachers themselves. According to Tyler and Boelter (2008), engaged teachers search for new ideas, implement best teaching practices, modify instruction to meet the instructional needs of their students, have high expectations for their students, frequently monitor students' progress, provide students with feedback, and actively taking opportunities to discuss work-related improvements with their colleagues at work. Contrastingly, work disengagement is characterized by absenteeism, turnover intention and early retirement of teachers

(Khushboo & Puja, 2015), which affects the students, as students who observe teachers demotivated become themselves unenthusiastic (Atkinson, 2000).

Suffice to say that several studies have examined work engagement in studies (Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013; Aiello & Tesi, 2017; Roper, 2007) and Nigeria context (Obasi, et al., 2021; Ukaigwe & Adieme, 2017; Adekola, 2010). However these studies have failed to sufficiently explore the role of salient psychological factors which may have great influence on the extent to which a teacher will be fully engaged in his work. This has obviously creates a knowledge gap that needs research attention.

One variable that has influential role in work engagement but surprisingly has not been extensively researched is wellbeing. Verma and Verma (1989) defined wellbeing as the subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life's experiences and of one's role in the world of work, sense of achievement, utility, belongingness, and no distress, dissatisfaction or worry. Wellbeing is the goal of every individual including teachers and it is critical for full work engagement and optimum performance. Wellbeing is cauterized into four; positive organization, work fit and development; positive relationships with colleagues and contribution to the organization (Czerw, 2014).

However, only work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationship will be considered in this study. The researchers are more interested in these components of wellbeing because they are more relevant to

the study. Work fit and development deals with the level of satisfaction with one's work role and how one's development in that role is perceived. A teacher is more engaged when he is satisfied with what he has been asked to do, the workload, remuneration and the perceived chance of development in that role. While positive interpersonal relationship has to do with teacher's perception of his or her workplace ties with other people. A feeling of good, friendly and open relationships with colleagues and with the school management can make teachers to be more engaged in their work.

Theoretically, this study is premised on the hierarchy of needs theory by Maslow (1943). The theory proposed that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and some needs take precedence over others. The theory states that human needs are arranged in an order of hierarchy based on the importance with which each emerged as a determinant of behaviour. The hierarchy begins with the physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs as highest. However, for the purpose of this study, only the physiological needs and self-esteem needs are applicable and will be used. The physiological needs reflect the basic human needs such as food, water and shelter. When the remuneration receives is seen as not been sufficient to meet this need, it affect the teachers' satisfaction with his job role and chances of development and can result to work disengagement while the need for self-esteem is the fourth in the hierarchy of needs characterized by the need for respect, status, recognition, strength and freedom. Thus, a teaching atmosphere where the interpersonal

relationship is characterized with hostility and abuse of the teachers by the school proprietor, can diminish self-esteem and result to work disengagement.

Within the teaching context, several empirical studies have linked wellbeing with work engagement (Socha, Farnicka & Nowosad, 2019; Sarath& Manikandan, 2014). Research on the work engagement of private secondary school in RiversState Nigeria revealed a significant low prediction by wellbeing (Obasi &Adieme, 2021). The researchers observed that there is limited existing research exploring these variables on the population of study as those available seemed to focus more on public secondary schools (Adekola, 2010). Thus there is need for an investigation in this area with a particular interest on the influence wellbeing on work engagement. Developing an improved understanding of these associations may facilitate the modification of the work atmosphere to reduce work disengagement that is unarguably high among this population. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to address this gap in the literature by examining wellbeing and work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Makurdi metropolis.

It was therefore hypothesized that;

1. Wellbeing (work fit and development) will significantly predict work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Makurdimetropolis
2. Wellbeing (Interpersonal relationship with colleagues) will significantly predict work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Makurdi metropolis

3. Work fit and development and interpersonal relationship will jointly and significantly predict work engagement among private school teachers in Makurdi metropolis

Method

Design/Participants

The research adopted a cross-sectional design. The population of this study comprised 803 teachers randomly selected from 11 out of 22 registered private secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis (Record from Benue State Teaching Service Board, 2020). The sample of 261 teachers was determined using Roasoft Sample Size Calculator. Multi-stage sampling method was used in this study. Stratified sampling technique was used to group Makurdi metropolis into settlements; Wurukum, High level; North bank; Modern Market; Wadata and Ware fell quarters. The schools were selected using simple random sampling techniques while purposive sampling approach was adopted to select teachers.

Measures

Wellbeing: Wellbeing was assessed using a 43 item Well-Being at Work Questionnaire (Czerw, 2014). This is a widely used measure designed to specifically assess one's work and its place. The scale consists of four dimensions; (1) Positive organization (12 items); (2) Work fit and development (10 items); (3) Positive relationships with colleagues (13 items); and Contribution to the organization (8 items). The items are rated on a 5-point scale (1= I completely disagree, 5= I completely agree), with high score indicating the level of measure of

that dimension. In the present study, the reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.82$ and $\alpha=.77$ were reported for work fit and development and positive relationships with colleagues respectively. In the present study, the researchers used only two dimensions: work fit and development and positive relationships with colleagues because they are more relevant to the study.

Work engagement. Work engagement was measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and his colleagues (2002). This scale consists of three subscales: absorption (6 items); vigor (6 items); dedication (5 items). Altogether the scale consists 17 items which are rated on a 6-point frequency based scale (0=never, 6=daily). Samples of items include "I have a good relationship with co-workers", "The atmosphere at my work is welcoming and friendly" and "I think that my colleagues and I are guided by similar values". The reliability coefficient of 0.92 was reported by Schaufeli and his colleagues (2002). The reliability of .73 was reported in the present study. In this study, the global scale was used.

Procedure

The researcher visited the private schools that were studied. Potential participants who met criteria for inclusion were provided with relevant information about the study. Those who read and gave their consent were thereafter given informed consent to fill. Questionnaire were administered and collected on the same day. Completed data were retrieved and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version-23.

Data Analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to test the

research hypothesis, the result of which is presented in table 2.

Results

Table 1: Inter-correlations among study variables

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The result in Table 1 indicated that work engagement is positively related to work fit and development (r = .625, P<.001) and positive interpersonal relationship (r = .915, P<.001). Also, the result in Table also revealed that work fit and development is positively related to interpersonal relationship (r = .566, P<.001).

Table 2

Variable	R	R ² β	t	F	P
Constant	.925	.855		1.850	653.304 .000
Work fit and development			.158	5.094	.000
Interpersonal relationships			.826	26.625	.000

The presented result as captured in Table 2 revealed that work fit and development significantly and positively predicted work engagement (β = .158, t = 5.094, P<.001). This implies that work fit and development has independent predictive influence on work engagement, such that the more teachers are satisfied with their job role and perceives subsequent development on the role, the more they are engaged. Also, positive interpersonal relationships emerged as a significant and independent predictor of work engagement, and was positively related to work engagement among teachers (β = .826, t = 26.625, P<.001), implying that high positive interpersonal relationships was

a predictive of work engagement. Finally, work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationships proved to be significant joint predictors of work engagement R = .925, R² = .855, [F (2,224), 653.304, P<.001]The result indicated that work fit and development and interpersonal relationships jointly accounted for 85.5% of the variance in work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Makurdi metropolis.

Discussion

This study examined work wellbeing as a predictors of work engagement among private secondary school teachers in Makurdi

metropolis. The study was necessitated owing to perceived dearth of empirical studies on the factors that lead to work engagement problem among private secondary school teachers. Consequently, it was hypothesized that wellbeing (work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationships) will significantly, independently and jointly predict work engagement among private secondary teachers in Makurdi metropolis. Result from multiple regression confirmed this hypothesis as it revealed positive, independent and joint prediction of wellbeing (work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationships) and work engagement. The result implies that teachers who are satisfied with their job role and also perceived development on their job role are likely to feel good, friendly and have open relationships with colleagues and the school management, and stay engaged in their work.

The findings of this study corroborate with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory which states that people (including teachers) are to achieve certain needs and some needs take precedence over others. Teachers who receive attractive remuneration to meet their psychological needs will be more satisfied with their job and will be more convinced on their chances of development on their job role, and in turn be dedicated, absorbing and vigorous in their work.

Additionally, Teachers who enjoy positive interpersonal relationship from colleagues and the school management, devoid of yelling and verbal abuse will have more self-esteem and tend to stay engaged in their

work.

Empirically, the findings of the present study coincide with Socha, et al., (2019) and Sarath, et al., (2014) that wellbeing influence work engagement among teachers. Based on the findings, it is recommended that, private school proprietors should prioritize work fit and development and positive interpersonal relationships of their teachers in order to make them engaged.

The present study has its limitations. First the study was limited to a cross-sectional investigation and cannot explain causality or change in the relationship overtime. The self-report measure could have made it possible for faking response, thereby affecting the validity of the findings. Despite the aforementioned, the study has highlighted the facilitating role of wellbeing, particularly work fit and development and interpersonal relationship with colleagues in teachers work engagement. This could serve as guide to recognized and integrate in the design of the teaching job and also to help clinicians to prioritize and assess for wellbeing of teachers to identify those who may not be doing well for possible intervention.

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