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HARCOURT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the relationship between non-financial compensation systems and employee engagement in public agencies in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study comprised of 2,320 employees of 5 public agencies selected on the basis of their involvement and direct functions with regards to State developmental projects and revenue generation. The sample size of 331 was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The reliability coefficients for all instruments was observed to be higher than 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0. The tests were carried out at 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between non-financial compensation systems and employee engagement in public agencies in Port Harcourt. The study recommended that the design of non-financial systems within organizations should be such that adequately captures and integrates other forms of benefits such as awards for behaviour, recognition for efforts, opportunities for growth, additional responsibilities as well as medical insurance and retirement benefits.*

**Keywords:** Non-Financial Reward, Employee Engagement, Dedication, Vigor, Absorption

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## INTRODUCTION

The growing level of uncertainty in the business environment requires organisations to continuously adapt to changes and accommodate different needs of their workforce. Organisations often compete and attempt to survive by lowering prices, cutting costs, redesigning business processes and downsizing the number of employees. Assuming that there is a limit to cutting costs and downsizing, new approaches to Human Resources Management are inevitable for organisational survival and progress. Rather than focusing on reducing costs, the shift of the focus in Human Resource Management (HRM) is to build employee engagement. As a result, numerous studies have been conducted that advocated for a more positive approach that focuses on the workforce, that is, engaging employees rather than focusing on problem-coping strategies (Luthans & Avolio 2009; Bakker & Schaufeli 2008; Luthans & Youssef 2007).

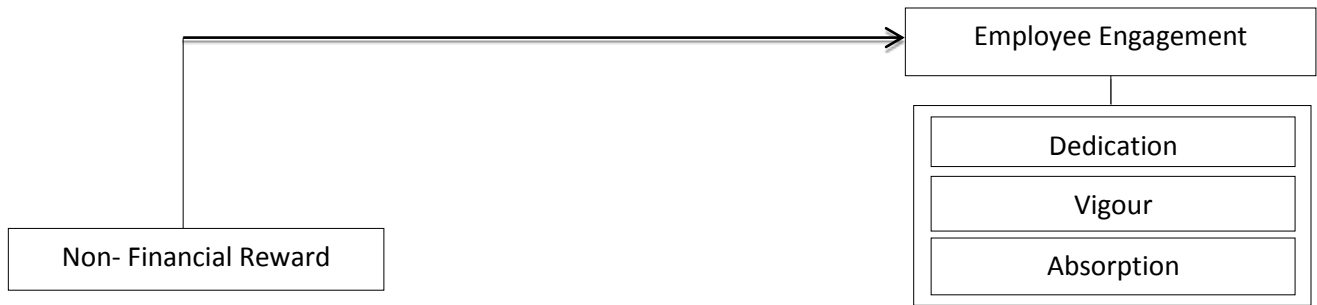
Employee engagement is the positive attitude held by the employee toward the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday, 2004). Maslach (2004) view employee engagement as a concept with a sparse and diverse theoretical and empirical demonstrated relevance to the relationship among potential antecedents and consequence of engagement as well as the components of engagement have of engagement have not been rigorously conceptualize, much less studied.

Akinyi (2015) opined that rewards system drives and is a major motivating factor for employee engagement. Organizational reward system has been found to play a critical role in enhancing employee

satisfaction. Mondy (2008) claims that non-financial rewards can predict employee performance as the more challenging a goal is, the higher the performance level becomes and the higher the perceived satisfaction. Mondy (2008) argues that an employee's performance is determined by the degree to which available non-financial rewards are attractive, so as efforts lead to higher levels of performance (first-level outcomes) which in turn, leads to second level outcomes (praise, friendship, wages). People need non-financial rewards to ensure that they are always at their optimum working condition. In turn, this will absolutely lead to optimum productivity. According to Resurreccion (2012) the value of human resource performance is a managerial concern. Employee motivation is the classic response on this matter. This has been utilized for ages by many different entities, small- and large-scale businesses alike. It fosters mutual growth in an employer-employee relationship. Indeed, non-financial rewards increase performance. This study examines the relationship between non-financial reward systems and employee engagement in public agencies in Rivers State.

This study was also be guided by the following research question:

- What is the relationship between non-financial reward systems and dedication in public agencies in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between non-financial reward systems and vigour in public agencies in Port Harcourt?
- What is the relationship between non-financial reward systems and absorption in public agencies in Port Harcourt?



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the relationship between non-financial reward systems and employee engagement**

**Source: Author’s Desk Research, 2019**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Theoretical Foundation**

According to Saks (2006), a stronger theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement can be found in the Social Exchange Theory because it explains the differential level of employee engagement found in work places and organizations. When employees receive rewards from their organizations, they will feel obliged to exercise fair exchange by responding to higher levels of engagement. He further argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence (Kumar & Swetha, 2011).

The basic principle of the theory is that relationship evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain ‘rules’ of exchange. Such rules tend to involve reciprocity or repayment rules, so that the action of one party lead to a response or action by the other party. For example, when individuals receive economics and socioeconomic resources from their organizations, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization. This is consistent with Robinson *et al.* (2004) description of employee engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and the employee.

This study is therefore based on the social exchange theory as it draws its generalizations and assumptions about the relationship between the variables from the theoretical underpinnings of the components of reciprocity, trust and obligatory expectations as provided by the social exchange theory. Furthermore, the social exchange is adopted because it offers support for the assertions of this paper that the involvement and commitment of the employees to the organization depend on the rewards and recognition they receive. If the organization does not provide these rewards appropriately, it is highly likely that the employees withdraw and disengage themselves from their roles. As indicated by Kumar and Swetha (2011) the amount of cognitive, emotional and physical resources that an individual is prepared to devote the performance of their work roles may be contingent on the economic and socio-economic resources received from the organization.

**Non-Financial Reward**

According to Brown (1996) reward can also be non-financial or relational. For example, praise, thanks, opportunities to develop skills and recognition awards such as ‘employee of the month or year’, ‘going the extra mile’. Awards are often publicly acknowledged ceremonies or company newsletters and notice boards thus communicating to the wider workforce the employee behaviour the organisation

values and is prepared to reward. Non-financial also include the general quality of working life (QWL). For example, the work environment, flexibility, work-life balance, managerial style/ attitude, job-role autonomy and responsibility plus opportunities for employee involvement and employee voice; collectively this may be termed the work 'experience'.

This type of compensation does not directly involve money and is usually related to the work itself. It includes achievement, autonomy, recognition and the scope of the work. Other forms of non-financial compensation include skills development, training and career development opportunities (Armstrong, 2013). This category of rewards aims to boost employee morale (Danish and Usman 2010; Resurreccion, 2012).

Mahaney and Lederer (2006) note that non-financial recognition has a variety of schemes from the range of informal, impromptu and formal structured based. This includes sending thanks to the employees or writing formally to record their thanks to recognize employee(s); An appreciation in public meeting regarding the efforts; Appreciating in organizational newsletter or at special dinner gathering; declaring Employee of the month or year; Holidays tour and travelling and Meal for the individual and his/her partner and home appliances or domestic goods. McAdams (1995) says recognition programmes involve rewards of both kind's - monetary as well as non-monetary nature. Modes of recognition may consist of social reinforcers, such as making mention in the company newsletter; plaques or letters of commendation; travel prizes; or extra time off, and even the verbal appreciation privately or publicly etc.

These observations are in line with the opinion of Brun and Dugas (2008) who contend that, for the beneficiary, recognition represents a reward experienced primarily at the symbolic level; however, it may also envisage the emotional, practical or, financial value to any extent. McAdams (1995) joins

the chorus of Serino (2002) and Stajkovic and Luthans (2003) which claims that non-cash recognition awards are not only more motivating but are also economical compared to cash incentives. In his research on some 600 firms, McAdams (1995) found that cash incentives, no doubt, enhanced sales performance by 13% but only through additional 12% cost. In contrast, non-financial recognition-based rewards also enhanced sales performance to the same level but against cost of only 4%. Jeffrey and Schaffer (2007) had almost similar conclusions out of their research who found that non-financial recognition-based rewards are not only motivationally superior to cash rewards but also, from the employer perspective, they are favoured since the employer does not need to pay out any cash, which is a scarce resource in most organizations.

Furthermore, not only is non-cash recognition cost effective, it's a crucial piece of keeping employees engaged. Saunderson (2004) identifies the essential nature of employee recognition as a vector of motivation, a component of meaningful work, an agent of personal development, and centre for workplace mental health. Research findings of Brun et al. (2003) show that dearth of sense of recognition among the workforce in the organizations signals risk of psychological distress and, in the result, an antagonism towards the management. Evans (2001) says that managerial recognition of the employee performance is one of the most salient sources of employee engagement and mobilization and plays cardinal role in organizational change and continuity towards success.

### **Employee Engagement**

Armstrong (2006) defines engagement as a positive two – way relationship between an employee and their organization. Both parties are aware of their own and the other's needs, and the way they support each other to fulfil those needs. He adds that engaged employees and organizations will go the extra mile for each other because they see the

mutual benefit of investing in their relationship. Weatherly (2003) argues that engagement of talent is based on the development and communication of an employee value proposition (EVP) that at least partly articulates the psychological contract, the value exchange, or the deal between the employer and employee. The EVP also forms the basis for an employer brand that the organization can use to market itself to potential employees. An EVP needs to address four areas which include great company, great leaders, great job and attractive compensation.

The engaged life is an important concept as individuals spend more than a third of their lives engaged in their work (Van Zyl, Deacon & Rothmann, 2010). Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). Furthermore, according to Rothmann and Rothmann (2010), work engagement is the extension of the self whereby individuals are provided with the opportunity to express their preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others. It is thought that this engagement occurs when individuals experience an optimum fit between themselves and their work roles.

Furthermore, Kahn (1990) identified three components that conceptualise work engagement: a physical dimension which refers to Schaufeli's concept of vigour, an emotional dimension which indicates an individual's commitment to his or her job and a cognitive dimension that is categorised by absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Vigour refers to increased levels of energy as well as mental resilience whilst working. Dedication is described as a strong immersion in one's work and is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, challenge, pride and inspiration (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001). Absorption is characterised by being happily engrossed and fully

immersed in one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001). Engaged employees experience a psychological presence in the workplace which helps them develop a sense of identity (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010). They are hands-on, dedicated to maintaining a quality performance standard and take responsibility for their own growth.

Other research has found that individuals who are engaged in their work are more passionate, enthusiastic and happy (Schaufeli & Van Rhenen, 2006). It is important to understand that organisations need to encourage and foster work engagement amongst employees in order to flourish and prosper during constant environmental changes (Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009). Engagement occurs when individuals experience an ideal fit and identification between themselves and their work roles (Kahn, 1990). Work engagement aids in the contribution of employees' organisational dedication as the organisation equips employees with not only the necessary resources to achieve their work goals but also the opportunity to grow and develop in their work (Korunka, Kubicek, Schaufeli & Hoonakker, 2009).

The opportunity for individuals to express their true selves as well as their strengths may 'lead to a greater work-role fit, which leads to work engagement' (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2010). At an organisational level, levels of work engagement are a predictor of overall job satisfaction, level of productivity, commitment and lower level of turnover, therefore providing the organisation with an overview of how well the organisation is performing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Work engagement is a complex and multidimensional construct. Although there are some similarities, it should not be confused with other constructs such as job satisfaction, involvement and commitment (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

According to White (2012), engaged people are fully aligned with the goals and objectives of the

organisation with the aim to contribute, going beyond the sense of commitment. Researchers such as Maslach *et al.* (2001) noted that there was a clear difference between engagement and job satisfaction when it comes to personal fulfilment and energy. Fulfilment and energy could be associated with engagement, but not so clearly in the other two constructs. It is therefore reasonable to argue that engagement is a unique construct and contains a deeper dimension of wellbeing, emotional and behavioural responses, such as experiencing joy and fulfilment at work (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002).

### **Vigour**

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) when a person has vigour, it means that they have elevated levels of energy and cognitive resilience during work and a desire and inclination to put a lot of effort in the work and persists even when there are apparent difficulties. Vigour implies high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. There is also a determined investment in the actual work, together with high levels of persistence even when faced with difficulties. This aspect can be determined based on Atkinson's motivational theory (Latham & Pinder, 2005). Motivation is strength of doing work or resistance against that. So, strength and resistance are addressed as aspects of work engagement and their concept is constant with popular definition of motivation (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

### **Dedication**

When employees are engaged, they display elevated commitment levels to a point that they feel that the work they are doing is very important to them. Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) refers to dedication as the state of being intensely involved in one's own work, where they experience a sense of passion, inspiration, pride, a sense of worth as well as feel challenged by their work. Dedication is about being inspired, enthusiastic and highly involved in your job (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Dedication is an individual's

deriving a sense of significance from work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about the given job, and feeling inspired and challenged by the job (Song, Kolb, Lee & Kim, 2012).

### **Absorption**

Absorption happens where an employee feels that the work has filled them and almost taken them over. Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) states that it refers to being undivided, engrossed in one's own work while at the same time happy to be doing it so that one is not conscious of time passing by and find it difficult to detach him from the work. Absorption refers to a sense of detachment from your surroundings, a high degree of concentration on your job, and a general lack of conscious awareness of the amount of time spent on the job (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Absorption means concentration and being engrossed in work, whereby passing time will be intangible and being detached from the job has some difficulties for the individual. Furthermore, such engrossment is pleasurable for the individuals (Hayati, Charkhabi, & Naami, 2014).

From the foregoing arguments, the research thus hypothesized that:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and dedication in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and vigour in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and absorption in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. The population of the study comprised of 2,320 employees of 5 public agencies selected on the basis of their involvement and direct functions with regards

to State developmental projects and revenue generation. The sample size of 331 was determined using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The reliability coefficients for all instruments was observed to be higher than 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Bivariate Analysis

Secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman's rank correlation at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover a  $H_{01}$  hypothesis that was bivariate and declared in the null form. We based on the statistic of Spearman's rank correlation to carry out the analysis. The level of significance 0.05 was adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ( $p > 0.05$ ) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Result for tests for relationship between non-financial compensation and the measures of employee engagement**

			Non finance	Dedication	Vigour	Absorption
Spearman's rho	Non finance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.366**	.712**	.635*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.001	.037
		N	237	237	237	237
	Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.366**	1.000	.707**	.272**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	237	237	237	237
	Vigour	Correlation Coefficient	.712**	.707**	1.000	.554**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.	.000
		N	237	237	237	237
	Absorption	Correlation Coefficient	.635*	.272**	.554**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.000	.000	.
		N	237	237	237	237

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data, 2019

***Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and dedication in public agencies in Port Harcourt.***

The correlation coefficient (r) showed that there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and dedication. The *rho* value 0.366 indicated this relationship and it was significant at  $p < 0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represented a low correlation between the variables. Therefore,

based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate held. Thus, there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and dedication in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

***Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and vigour in public agencies in Port Harcourt.***



The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) showed that there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and vigour. The  $\rho$  value 0.712 indicated this relationship and it was significant at  $p$   $0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represented a strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate held. Thus, there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and vigour in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

***Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and absorption in public agencies in Port Harcourt.***

The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) showed that there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and absorption. The  $\rho$  value 0.635 indicated this relationship and it was significant at  $p$   $0.000 < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient represents a strong correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated was hereby rejected and the alternate held. Thus, there is a significant relationship between non-financial reward systems and absorption in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section of the study discussed the findings for the study. The findings for the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between non-financial compensation systems and the measures of employee engagement – dedication, vigour and absorption. This relationship was tested using the Spearman's rank order correlation at a confidence interval of 95% and a significance level of 0.05. The findings from the test revealed all hypothetical statements to be false and as such based on the evidence of significant effects, all related hypothetical statements were rejected. The results from the

analysis as such identified non-financial compensation systems were having a strong bearing on the behaviour of workers, especially that which is inclined towards employee engagement.

The evidence from the analysis reiterated the position of previous studies such as Gratton (2004) and Omolayo and Owolobi (2007) who affirmed that finance such as expressed in the form of wages and salaries are highly critical to the sustenance of any work-related contract. The results further identified financial compensation systems are highly critical to the engagement behaviour of respondents and as such place it as an essential feature of the organizations. In this vein, it was evident that financial compensation systems enhance the dedication, vigour and absorption in work of employees in public agencies in Port Harcourt.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The conclusions of the study were based on the evidence presented from the findings of the study. The study therefore affirmed that non-financial compensation systems positively impact and enhance the levels of employee engagement such as dedication, vigour and absorption and therefore is can be considered as imperative for the overall development and actualization of employee engagement in Public agencies in Port Harcourt.

Based on the discussion and conclusion above, the recommendation made was that the design of non-financial systems within organizations should be such that adequately captures and integrates other forms of benefits such as awards for behaviour, recognition for efforts, opportunities for growth, additional responsibilities as well as medical insurance and retirement benefits. Such designs should be emphasized upon and should form a significant feature or attribute of the organizations compensation systems.

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