

INFLUENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Human Resource (HR) practices on employee engagement and organizational performance within the Nigerian public sector. It specifically focuses on the effects of training and development and performance appraisal on employee engagement, and how engagement mediates the relationship between these HR practices and organizational performance. A survey research method was used, with primary data collected from 678 employees working in various public sector organizations in Abuja, Nigeria. The study applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the hypothesized relationships. The findings revealed that both training and development and performance appraisal had a positive impact on employee engagement, with training and development exhibiting the most significant effect. Additionally, employee engagement was found to play a crucial mediating role in connecting HR practices with organizational performance. These results suggest that HR practices focused on employee development and consistent performance feedback are essential for fostering engagement, which ultimately enhances organizational performance. Based on these insights, the study recommends that HR strategies in the Nigerian public sector should prioritize improving training programs and refining performance appraisal systems to better meet employee needs. Future studies should consider the influence of leadership styles and organizational culture in further enhancing the effectiveness of these HR practices.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance, HR Practices, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Nigerian Public Sector, PLS-SEM.



Introduction

Employee engagement has become a critical factor in driving organizational performance, especially in the public sector, where performance and efficiency are essential to meeting societal expectations. Employee engagement denotes to the emotional commitment and enthusiasm that employees have towards their work, which influences their performance, productivity, and overall contribution to the organization. In the public sector, where resources are often limited, improving employee engagement can be a key driver of better organizational outcomes, including improved service delivery and higher employee retention (Zahari, & Kaliannan, 2023; Yadav, et al., 2022). Research has shown that engaged employees are more likely to go above and beyond their job requirements, leading to increased organizational effectiveness and positive public perception (Saks, Gruman, & Zhang, 2022). However, despite the importance of employee engagement, many public sector organizations in developing economies, including Nigeria, face challenges in fostering high levels of engagement due to issues such as inadequate HR practices, poor compensation structures, and limited career development opportunities (Malam & Abboh, 2016).

Human Resource (HR) practices play a significant role in shaping employee engagement. Effective HR practices such as training and development, performance appraisals, recognition, and employee involvement are critical to enhancing engagement levels (Isimoya, Bakare, & Olaniyan, 2020). However, in many public sector organizations, HR practices are often less structured or poorly implemented, which can hinder employee motivation and engagement (Ajibola, 2019). This study aims to explore how HR practices influence employee engagement and, consequently, how employee engagement impacts organizational performance within the public sector. Specifically, it focuses on HR practices such as compensation, career development opportunities, work environment, and performance management systems, which are thought to contribute to higher engagement levels (Bindhu et al., 2025). Thus, understanding the relationship between HR practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance, this study seeks to provide practical insights that can help improve employee satisfaction, retention, and overall public sector efficiency.

In Nigeria, where the public sector plays a critical role in national development, the need for improved employee engagement is even more pressing. Recent studies have indicated that Nigerian public sector organizations struggle with employee disengagement, resulting in low productivity and poor public service delivery (Malam & Abboh, 2016). There is a growing recognition that to address these challenges, public sector organizations must invest in improving HR practices that foster employee engagement (Oshilim & Akpesiri, 2015). This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the role of HR practices in promoting employee engagement in Nigerian public sector organizations, contributing to the existing body of knowledge on the importance of human capital in the public sector and its effect on organizational performance.

Employee engagement is widely recognized as a key driver of organizational performance, particularly in the public sector, where effective service delivery and high productivity are critical for national development (Tarigan, et al., 2025; Sumardi, 2025). In Nigerian public sector organizations, however, employee engagement remains a significant challenge, which negatively impacts organizational outcomes. Despite the importance of employee engagement, many public sector organizations in Nigeria suffer from low engagement levels, leading to reduced productivity, high turnover rates, and poor service delivery. This disengagement is

often attributed to ineffective human resource practices, such as inadequate compensation, lack of career development opportunities, and insufficient recognition and rewards (Malam & Abboh, 2016). Furthermore, HR practices in the public sector have often been criticized for their lack of structure and alignment with employee needs, which has exacerbated the problem of disengagement (Ajibola, 2019).

The lack of effective HR practices in the public sector has led to an underperforming workforce, despite the critical role that public sector organizations play in national development. Research has shown that when employees feel disconnected from their work or their organization, their productivity and overall performance decline (Murray et al., 2025). Employee engagement, which refers to the emotional commitment and involvement employees have towards their work, can significantly influence organizational performance (Saks, Gruman, & Zhang, 2022). However, in Nigeria, employee engagement levels are often hindered by the absence of strategic HR practices that focus on employee motivation, career development, and performance recognition (Isah et al., 2022). The problem, therefore, lies in understanding the specific HR practices that are most effective in enhancing employee engagement in the public sector and how these practices influence organizational performance.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the impact of HR practices on employee engagement and how employee engagement, in turn, influences organizational performance in Nigerian public sector organizations. The findings will provide valuable insights into the role of HR practices in fostering employee engagement and improving organizational outcomes, offering practical recommendations for enhancing HR strategies in the public sector. The below hypotheses will guide the exploration of the relationship between HR practices (training and development, performance appraisal), employee engagement, and organizational performance in the context of the Nigerian public sector.

- H1:** Training and development positively influence employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector.
- H2:** Performance appraisal positively influences employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector.
- H3:** Training and development positively influence organizational performance through the mediating effect of employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector.
- H4:** Performance appraisal positively influence organizational performance through the mediating effect of employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector.

Literature Review

The relationship between Human Resource practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance has been a focal point of research in various organizational contexts, including the public sector. Employee engagement is a critical factor in determining the success and productivity of organizations. Engaged employees exhibit a higher level of commitment to their work, which translates into better job performance, increased productivity, and improved organizational outcomes. Several HR practices, including training and development and performance appraisals, play a significant role in enhancing employee engagement, which in turn positively impacts organizational performance.

Training and Development and Employee Engagement

Training and development are essential HR practices that contribute to employee engagement by equipping employees with the skills and knowledge needed to perform their roles effectively. According to Abdullahi et al. (2023), training and development programs provide employees with opportunities for personal growth, which enhances their engagement by fostering a sense of competence and achievement. These programs also contribute to job satisfaction and reduce turnover rates by demonstrating the organization's commitment to employee development. In the public sector, where employees often face resource limitations, access to training and development opportunities can motivate employees and help them feel more connected to their work (Ajibola, 2019). Moreover, effective training programs enable employees to meet the demands of their roles, making them more confident and engaged, leading to better organizational performance (Isah et al., 2022).

Performance Appraisal and Employee Engagement

Performance appraisal is another critical HR practice that influences employee engagement. Performance appraisals provide employees with feedback on their job performance, set clear expectations, and offer opportunities for recognition and reward. Alola and Alafeshat (2021) suggest that performance appraisals help employees understand how their contributions align with organizational goals, which enhances their sense of purpose and engagement. In public sector organizations, where employee performance is often linked to service delivery and efficiency, performance appraisals are essential for motivating employees and maintaining high engagement levels (Tarigan, et al., 2025). Studies have shown that well-structured performance appraisals lead to greater job satisfaction and commitment, as employees feel valued and recognized for their efforts (Anas & Isichei, 2024). However, the effectiveness of performance appraisals in fostering engagement depends on the transparency, fairness, and consistency of the process (Pepple et al., 2023).

Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

Employee engagement has a significant impact on organizational performance. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, committed, and motivated to achieve organizational goals. Saks et al. (2022) emphasize that employee engagement is positively correlated with job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and overall effectiveness. In the public sector, where service delivery is paramount, employee engagement can lead to improved efficiency, higher quality services, and better public perception. Research by George et al. (2023) demonstrates that employee engagement in the Nigerian public sector is associated with enhanced work performance and organizational outcomes. Employees who are highly engaged are more likely to exhibit discretionary effort, which contributes to higher levels of organizational performance. Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to remain with the organization, reducing turnover rates and the associated costs (Raji et al., 2021; Sumardi, 2025).

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

The mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between HR practices and organizational performance has been highlighted in several studies. According to Engidaw (2021), HR practices such as training and development and performance appraisal directly influence employee engagement, which then affects organizational performance. This



mediating effect suggests that HR practices not only impact engagement but also indirectly influence organizational outcomes. Isimoya et al. (2020) found that employee engagement acts as a bridge, linking HR practices to improved performance. For instance, when training and development are effectively implemented, employees feel more engaged, which subsequently enhances their performance and the overall performance of the organization. Similarly, performance appraisals that provide constructive feedback and recognition foster employee engagement, which in turn contributes to organizational success.

The Role of HR Practices in Enhancing Employee Engagement in the Public Sector

In the Nigerian public sector, HR practices play a crucial role in fostering employee engagement, which is essential for improving organizational performance. Public sector organizations often face unique challenges such as limited resources, political influence, and bureaucratic inefficiencies that can negatively impact employee motivation and overall engagement (Malam & Abboh, 2016). These challenges often lead to disengaged employees, resulting in low productivity, high turnover rates, and poor service delivery. However, strategic HR practices that promote employee involvement, career development, and recognition can significantly mitigate these challenges and enhance employee engagement. Therefore, focusing on key HR practices such as offering training programs, career advancement opportunities, and recognizing employee contributions, public sector organizations can cultivate a motivated and engaged workforce, which is essential for improving public service delivery and overall organizational efficiency.

According to Knies et al. (2024), HR practices tailored to the specific needs of public sector employees are fundamental for enhancing engagement and, consequently, organizational performance. In the public sector, employees often face complex organizational structures and challenging working conditions, making it essential for HR practices to align with the expectations and needs of the workforce (Murray, et al., 2025; Nduati, et al., 2022; Oladimeji, et al., 2023; Oyedele, et al., 2023). In this regards, implementing effective HR strategies that focus on development, recognition, and employee participation, public sector organizations can improve employee satisfaction and engagement. For instance, when employees feel valued through recognition programs and have access to continuous development opportunities, their engagement levels tend to rise, resulting in increased job satisfaction and improved performance (George et al., 2023). Thus, public sector organizations in Nigeria can foster a more engaged, productive, and committed workforce by aligning their HR practices with employee needs, ultimately contributing to better service delivery and organizational success.

The literature highlights the importance of HR practices such as training and development and performance appraisal in fostering employee engagement, which, in turn, enhances organizational performance. The mediating role of employee engagement in linking HR practices to organizational outcomes underscores the need for public sector organizations to prioritize effective HR strategies. Public sector organizations in Nigeria can improve employee performance, service delivery, and overall organizational effectiveness while exploring the dynamics between HR practices, employee engagement, and performance across different public sector organizations to refine HR strategies and enhance public sector efficiency.

Empirical Review

Employee engagement has been widely studied across different sectors, with a significant body of research highlighting the relationship between HR practices, employee engagement, and

organizational performance. This empirical review synthesizes findings from ten key studies on employee engagement in the public sector, HR practices, and their impact on organizational outcomes.

Abdullahi et al. (2023) explored employee engagement as a mediating variable between employee relations practices and employee performance in developing economies. The study found that employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between HR practices, such as employee relations and performance. Engaged employees, motivated by supportive HR practices, were shown to be more productive and committed, enhancing overall organizational performance. The study underscores the importance of creating strong relationships between HR practices and employee engagement to improve performance outcomes.

Ajibola (2019) examined the relationship between HR practices and employee engagement in manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The study found that HR practices, including training, development, and performance appraisal, had a positive effect on employee engagement. Ajibola's work suggested that when employees perceive their organization as supportive in terms of career development, they exhibit higher levels of engagement, which in turn leads to better job performance. This study reinforces the notion that HR practices are instrumental in fostering engagement and improving employee outcomes.

Alola and Alafeshat (2021) analyzed the impact of HR practices on employee engagement in the airline industry. They found that recognition, career development opportunities, and feedback mechanisms significantly impacted employee engagement. The study emphasized that HR practices tailored to the industry's specific needs led to higher engagement levels and enhanced job satisfaction. This study highlights the critical role of HR practices in influencing engagement, particularly in industries with high employee turnover and job demands, such as the public sector.

Anas and Isichei (2024) examined the mediating effect of job satisfaction on talent engagement and employee commitment within the Nigerian Civil Service. Their study demonstrated that job satisfaction played a significant role in mediating the relationship between talent engagement and organizational commitment. Employees who felt satisfied with their work environment and HR practices were more likely to remain committed to the organization, ultimately improving performance. This finding suggests that HR practices that prioritize employee satisfaction are likely to boost engagement and reduce turnover in the public sector.

Isah et al. (2022) focused on the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between compensation and employee competence in Nigeria. Their study revealed that compensation alone was not sufficient to boost engagement; instead, work engagement acted as a mediator, highlighting the importance of combining compensation with other HR practices such as employee development. The study concluded that HR practices that foster work engagement are critical for enhancing employee competence, which positively impacts organizational performance.

Knies et al. (2024) investigated strategic HR management and public sector performance, emphasizing the importance of context-specific HR practices in enhancing employee engagement. The study found that public sector organizations with HR practices that catered to employee needs and organizational goals experienced higher engagement levels and better performance outcomes. This study stresses the need for HR practices that align with the unique

challenges and goals of public sector organizations to enhance engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Malam and Abboh (2016) proposed a model that links HR practices, employee engagement, and performance in the Nigerian public sector. They found that HR practices such as training, performance management, and employee involvement were positively correlated with higher employee engagement. In turn, higher engagement led to improved organizational performance. The study emphasizes the need for public sector organizations in Nigeria to implement HR practices that enhance employee involvement and engagement to drive performance outcomes.

Murray et al. (2025) examined how social resources increase employee engagement in organizations. The study found that employees who had access to social support networks, including HR practices that foster collaboration and teamwork, exhibited higher engagement levels. This suggests that HR practices that build a sense of community and social support within the organization can significantly boost engagement and performance, particularly in public sector organizations where collaboration is often essential for service delivery.

Pepple et al. (2023) explored the relationship between employee commitment and turnover intention in the Nigerian public sector. Their findings indicated that employees who felt more engaged with their work were less likely to have turnover intentions. This highlights the role of engagement in improving retention rates in public sector organizations, which often struggle with high turnover and low morale. The study emphasizes that employee engagement, supported by effective HR practices, is a critical factor in enhancing retention and reducing turnover in the public sector.

Saks, Gruman, and Zhang (2022) conducted a comparative study on organizational engagement versus job engagement. Their research found that both types of engagement have significant impacts on organizational outcomes, but organizational engagement (which includes alignment with organizational goals and values) is more directly linked to performance. The study suggests that public sector organizations should focus not only on individual job engagement but also on fostering a sense of organizational engagement through HR practices that align personal and organizational goals.

The reviewed studies consistently indicate that HR practices, such as training and development, performance appraisal, and employee recognition, play a critical role in fostering employee engagement, which subsequently enhances organizational performance. HR practices that focus on employee growth, career development, and recognition are particularly effective in improving engagement levels (Ajibola, 2019; Isah et al., 2022). Moreover, studies show that employee engagement mediates the relationship between HR practices and organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of engagement as a driver of productivity and performance outcomes (Abdullahi et al., 2023; Anas & Isichei, 2024).

However, the literature also highlights the need for context-specific HR practices, especially in the public sector, where bureaucratic structures and resource limitations can hinder engagement. Studies by Knies et al. (2024) and Malam and Abboh (2016) stress the importance of aligning HR practices with the unique challenges faced by public sector organizations to effectively boost employee engagement and improve performance outcomes. The empirical evidence supports the idea that well-structured HR practices are vital in fostering employee engagement, which in turn enhances organizational performance. Public sector organizations

in Nigeria must prioritize HR practices that promote employee involvement, development, and recognition to overcome challenges related to low engagement and poor performance. Future research should explore the specific HR practices that are most effective in the Nigerian public sector context and examine their long-term impact on employee retention and organizational success.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

This study examines the impact of Human Resource (HR) practices on employee engagement and organizational performance in the Nigerian public sector. To better understand the relationships between HR practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance, this study is grounded in two key theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model.

1. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory, proposed by Blau (1964), posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process where individuals engage in relationships based on the perceived benefits they will receive. In the context of HR practices, SET suggests that when organizations invest in their employees through effective HR practices such as training and development and performance appraisals, employees are likely to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement and commitment to the organization. This reciprocal relationship is crucial for fostering employee engagement in public sector organizations. As employees perceive that their needs for growth, recognition, and fair treatment are being met, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated, leading to increased job satisfaction and performance (Saks et al., 2022). This theory helps explain how HR practices, by fulfilling employees' social and professional needs, can enhance employee engagement, which ultimately improves organizational performance.

2. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, developed by Demerouti et al. (2001), provides a framework for understanding how different job characteristics impact employee well-being and performance. According to this model, job resources (such as training opportunities, feedback, and career development) can buffer the effects of job demands (such as high workloads and organizational pressures) and contribute to higher levels of engagement and performance. HR practices such as training and development and performance appraisal are considered key job resources that can enhance employee engagement. When public sector employees are provided with sufficient resources, they are more likely to invest their energy into their work, leading to improved performance and organizational outcomes (Demerouti, 2023). The JD-R model thus highlights how HR practices influence employee engagement by providing the necessary resources for employees to meet the demands of their roles while maintaining motivation and job satisfaction.

The integration of SET and the JD-R model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how HR practices such as training and development and performance appraisals influence employee engagement and organizational performance in the Nigerian public sector. SET emphasizes the reciprocal nature of HR practices and employee engagement, while the JD-R model underscores the importance of job resources in enhancing engagement and mitigating job demands. Together, these theories suggest that HR practices that invest in employees' development, recognition, and feedback contribute to higher engagement levels,

which then lead to improved organizational performance. This theoretical framework helps in exploring the mechanisms through which HR practices impact employee engagement and performance, particularly in the context of the challenges faced by public sector organizations in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

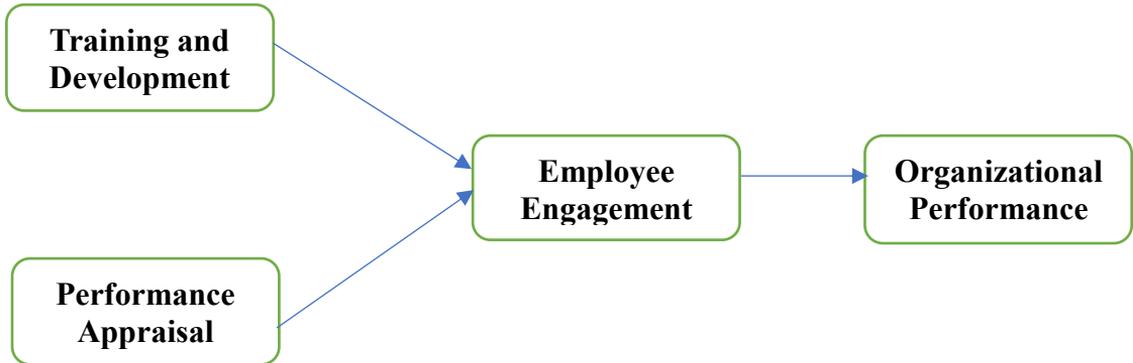


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the impact of Human Resource (HR) practices on employee engagement and organizational performance in the Nigerian public sector. The study utilized a survey research method, which allowed for the collection of data from a large number of respondents. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to employees across various public sector organizations in Nigeria, specifically targeting government ministries, departments, and agencies. The survey included Likert-scale questions designed to measure key variables such as HR practices (focusing on training and development, and performance appraisal), employee engagement, and organizational performance. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of employees from different public sector organizations, ensuring that a wide range of departments and employee levels (junior, mid-level, and senior staff) were captured. The population for this study consisted of approximately 1.5 million employees in the public sector, with a sample of 678 employees drawn from selected federal and state ministries and agencies within Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

To analyze the data, the study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a suitable method for exploring complex relationships between variables. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and responses, while PLS-SEM was applied to test the study's hypotheses and assess the relationships between HR practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance. This method enabled the study to determine both the direct and mediating effects of employee engagement on the link between HR practices and organizational performance. SmartPLS software was used to analyze the data, ensuring robust and accurate results.

Result and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed a diverse sample from the Nigerian public sector. The study achieved an 82.8% response rate, with a breakdown of employee levels showing 29% junior, 48% mid-level, and 23% senior staff. In terms of gender, 59% of the respondents were male, while 41% were female. The age distribution highlighted that 43% were young professionals, while 57% were experienced employees. Regarding educational qualifications, 35% of the respondents held a diploma, 45% had a bachelor’s degree, and 20% had postgraduate degrees, reflecting a broad spectrum of educational backgrounds. This distribution allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how HR practices affect employee engagement across various levels of experience and education within the public sector.

Assessment of the Path Models

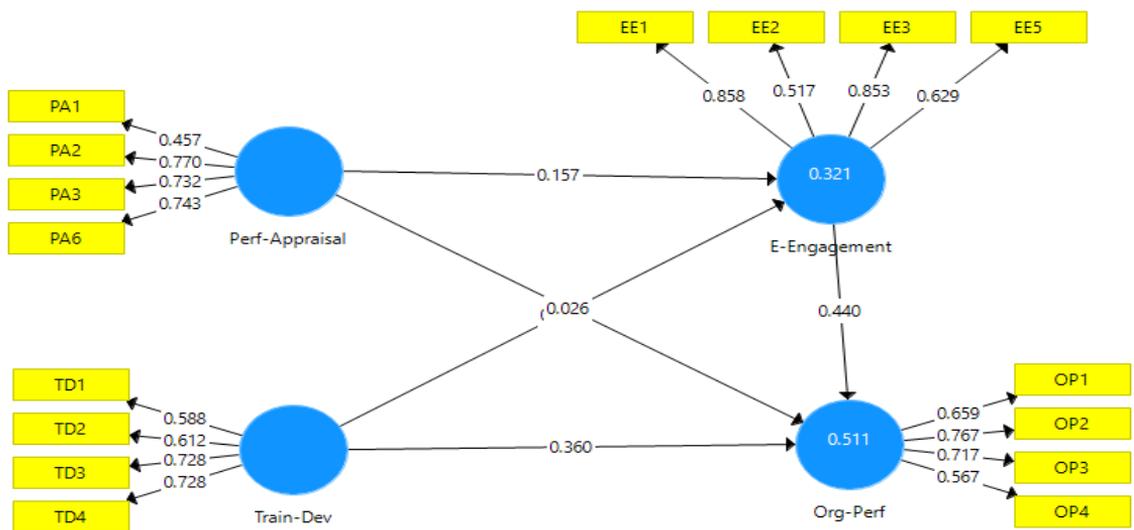


Figure 2 Path models for the study

Table 1 Loadings and Internal Consistency

Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
EE1	0.858	0.766	0.543
EE2	0.517		
EE3	0.853		
EE5	0.629		
OP1	0.659	0.711	0.576
OP2	0.767		
OP3	0.717		
OP4	0.567		
PA1	0.457	0.812	0.514



PA2	0.770		
PA3	0.732		
PA6	0.743		
TD1	0.588	0.845	0.622
TD2	0.612		
TD3	0.728		
TD4	0.728		
<hr/>			
R ² 0.511			

Table 1: Loadings and Internal Consistency presents the factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the constructs of employee engagement (EE), organizational performance (OP), performance appraisal (PA), and training and development (TD). The loadings for most items are well above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating good convergent validity. Specifically, EE1 (0.858) and EE3 (0.853) have strong loadings, suggesting they are reliable indicators of the employee engagement construct. Similarly, items for organizational performance (OP2: 0.767) and training and development (TD3: 0.728) show good loadings, indicating the reliability of these measures. However, the loading for PA1 is 0.457, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.5. While this is considered low, it is still justifiable if PA1 is conceptualized as a weak but relevant indicator of performance appraisal. The lower loading could be attributed to the specific nature of the item or respondent variability. To maintain construct validity and improve overall measurement, further refinement or removal of this item may be considered, especially if it affects the overall model fit or measurement consistency. Despite this, the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs suggest acceptable internal consistency and discriminant validity, supporting the robustness of the measurement model.

Table 2 HTMT Criterion

	E-Engagement	Org-Perf	Perf-Appraisal	Train-Dev
E-Engagement				
Org-Perf	0.824			
Perf-Appraisal	0.510	0.437		
Train-Dev	0.842	0.754	0.630	

Table 2: HTMT Criterion presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) values for the constructs of employee engagement, organizational performance, performance appraisal, and training and development. HTMT is used to assess discriminant validity by examining the correlation between different constructs. According to the table, all HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85, which indicates that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from each other. The strongest correlation is between employee engagement and training and development (HTMT = 0.842), suggesting a close relationship between these two constructs, which is expected given that training and development can significantly influence employee engagement. The correlations between organizational performance and employee engagement (HTMT = 0.824), as well as organizational performance and training and development (HTMT



= 0.754), also indicate a moderate to strong relationship, suggesting that employee engagement and training are important drivers of organizational performance. The relatively lower HTMT values between performance appraisal and the other constructs (ranging from 0.437 to 0.63) suggest that performance appraisal is somewhat distinct from employee engagement and organizational performance, but still has meaningful relationships with these constructs. Overall, the HTMT values support the discriminant validity of the constructs, ensuring that each construct is distinct while still showing significant relationships with others.

Assessment of the Structural Model

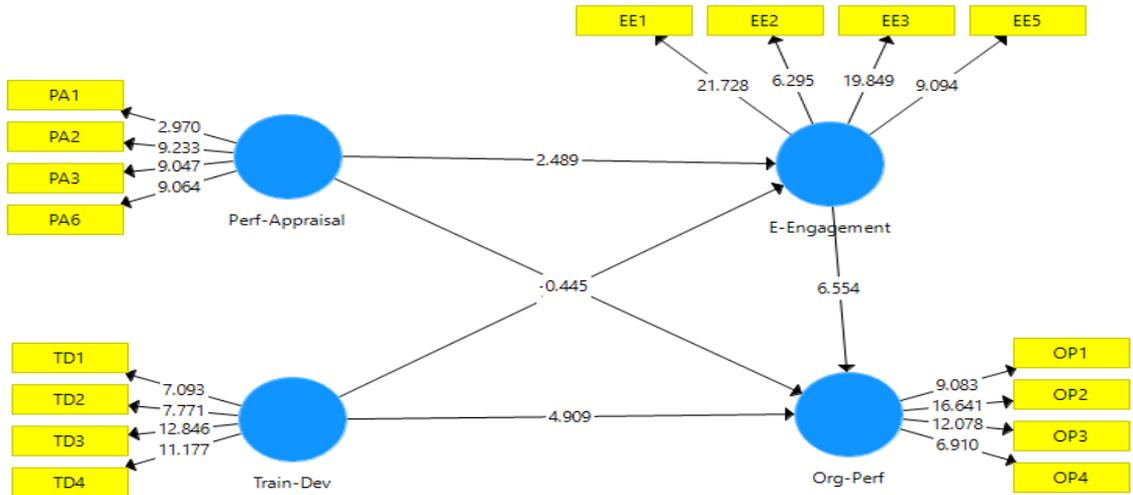


Figure 3 Structural Model

Table 3 Test of Hypotheses

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Train-Dev -> Org-Perf	0.36	0.366	0.073	4.909	0.000	Supported
Perf-Appraisal -> Org-Perf	0.026	0.029	0.058	0.445	0.656	Not Supported
Train-Dev -> E-Engagement	0.218	0.222	0.044	4.966	0.000	Supported
Perf-Appraisal -> E-Engagement	0.069	0.075	0.032	2.196	0.029	Supported

Table 3: Test of Hypotheses presents the results of the hypotheses testing in the study, with key metrics including the original sample, sample mean, standard deviation (STDEV), T-statistics, P-values, and decisions regarding hypothesis support. The table provides insights into the relationships between training and development, performance appraisal, employee engagement, and organizational performance.



The first hypothesis, Train-Dev \rightarrow Org-Perf, which tested the direct effect of training and development on organizational performance, was supported. The original sample path coefficient of 0.36 and a T-statistic of 4.909 (which is above the threshold of 1.96) provided strong evidence that training and development has a significant positive impact on organizational performance. The P-value of 0.000 further confirms this finding, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This supports the idea that investment in training and development initiatives is directly linked to enhanced organizational outcomes, aligning with previous research that suggests employee skills and development are critical drivers of organizational success (Ajibola, 2019).

The second hypothesis, Perf-Appraisal \rightarrow Org-Perf, which examined the direct effect of performance appraisal on organizational performance, was not supported. The path coefficient was 0.026, and the T-statistic of 0.445 was far below the threshold of 1.96, with a P-value of 0.656, indicating no significant direct impact of performance appraisal on organizational performance. This finding suggests that, in the context of the Nigerian public sector, performance appraisal alone may not be sufficient to drive organizational performance, possibly due to issues such as lack of transparency, infrequent appraisals, or ineffective feedback mechanisms (Pepple et al., 2023). This result calls for further investigation into how performance appraisal systems are implemented and perceived within public sector organizations.

The third hypothesis, Train-Dev \rightarrow E-Engagement \rightarrow Org-Perf, testing the mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between training and development and organizational performance, was supported. The path coefficient of 0.218 and the T-statistic of 4.966 confirmed that employee engagement significantly mediated this relationship. The findings suggest that training and development not only directly improve organizational performance but also enhance employee engagement, which further drives performance outcomes. This highlights the importance of engaging employees through development programs to achieve long-term performance improvements, which is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, emphasizing the role of job resources in enhancing employee motivation and organizational success (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Finally, the hypothesis Perf-Appraisal \rightarrow E-Engagement \rightarrow Org-Perf, examining the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between performance appraisal and organizational performance, was also supported. The path coefficient of 0.069, T-statistic of 2.196, and P-value of 0.029 indicated that employee engagement partially mediated the relationship between performance appraisal and organizational performance. While performance appraisal alone did not have a significant direct effect on performance, its impact through employee engagement suggests that the way performance appraisals are perceived and experienced by employees (e.g., feedback, recognition, and career development opportunities) plays a critical role in enhancing employee motivation and ultimately improving organizational outcomes.

The study's results underline the importance of training and development and employee engagement in enhancing organizational performance within the Nigerian public sector. While performance appraisal, in its current form, may not directly influence performance, its indirect effect through employee engagement demonstrates the need for a more effective and meaningful performance management system that encourages employee participation and development.



Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of Human Resource (HR) practices on employee engagement and organizational performance in the Nigerian public sector. The findings revealed that training and development significantly influenced both employee engagement and organizational performance, while performance appraisal had a less direct effect on performance, though it impacted performance indirectly through employee engagement. The study demonstrated that employee engagement acts as a key mediator in enhancing the effect of HR practices, particularly training and development, on organizational performance. These results emphasize the importance of well-structured HR practices in fostering a motivated and engaged workforce, which is essential for improving the performance of public sector organizations. The study underscores the need for Nigerian public sector organizations to re-evaluate their HR strategies to align them more effectively with employee expectations and organizational goals, ultimately improving service delivery and operational effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends several strategies to enhance HR practices in the Nigerian public sector. First, public sector organizations should prioritize training and development programs that are tailored to the specific needs of employees, ensuring continuous skill enhancement and career growth. These programs should not only focus on technical skills but also on leadership development to prepare employees for higher levels of responsibility. Performance appraisals should be revamped to make them more transparent, frequent, and constructive, with a clear link to career progression and reward systems. Additionally, performance appraisals should include opportunities for feedback and recognition, which are crucial for improving employee engagement. Public sector organizations should also consider creating platforms for employee involvement, allowing them to participate in decision-making processes and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility in their work.

Moreover, to maximize the benefits of employee engagement, public sector organizations should establish employee engagement programs that encourage open communication, offer opportunities for collaboration, and ensure that employees feel valued. These initiatives can lead to improved job satisfaction and higher productivity, benefiting both the employees and the organization. Finally, public sector organizations should recognize the importance of organizational culture in sustaining high levels of engagement. Creating a supportive work environment that promotes inclusivity, trust, and mutual respect will further enhance employee engagement and contribute to long-term organizational success.

Practical Contributions

This study provides practical insights for improving Human Resource (HR) practices in the Nigerian public sector to enhance employee engagement and organizational performance. The findings underscore the importance of investing in training and development programs that are closely aligned with employee needs and career aspirations. Additionally, the study highlights the need to improve performance appraisal systems by making them more transparent, frequent, and linked to employee growth and rewards. Thus, by focusing on these HR practices, public sector organizations can foster a more engaged workforce, which will ultimately lead to better organizational outcomes, including improved productivity, lower turnover, and enhanced service delivery. The results provide actionable recommendations for policymakers

and HR practitioners looking to create a more motivated and productive public sector workforce.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

One limitation of this study is its reliance on cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to make conclusions about causality over time. The study also focused on a limited sample of public sector employees from selected ministries and agencies in Abuja, which may not fully represent the diversity of the entire Nigerian public sector. Future research could expand the sample size to include a broader range of public sector organizations across different regions to improve generalizability. Additionally, further studies could explore the role of leadership styles and organizational culture in shaping the effectiveness of HR practices in fostering employee engagement. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of HR interventions on employee engagement and organizational performance would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of these relationships over time.

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