
**ASSESSMENT OF INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL AND AFFECTIVE (ISA)
ENGAGEMENT OF ACADEMICS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES****NWACHUKWU, Chijioke**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores intellectual, social and affective engagement in Nigerian Universities. The study sought to determine Federal, State and private Universities' lecturers' perceptions of intellectual, social and affective engagement. Based on descriptive analysis of 310 responses it was observed that intellectual engagement and affective engagement are important dimensions of employee engagement. There is no clear preference for social engagement. The result reveals that intellectual engagement is the most preferred dimension of employee engagement. Further, the results suggest that intellectual, social and affective engagement is the same across all the sampled lecturers and Universities. The study recommends that University administrators should revisit their HRM policies and practices and employ a strategic approach to the management of academic staff.

Keywords: Affective engagement, intellectual engagement, social engagement, Nigerian Universities

INTRODUCTION

Shifting demographic profiles and intense competition in the global educational environment (Maina & Waianjo, 2014) have challenged operators of educational institutions to adopt a strategic approach to managing academics (Vu & Nwachukwu, 2020) in order to reduce the constant movement of lecturers and researchers. Ateke and Akani (2018) argued that high employee turnover affects service processes and carries other costs that erode organizational profitability and sustainability; and therefore, stands as a daunting challenge for managers of organizations in today's knowledge-based economy. Attracting and keeping competent academics that are skilled in the performance of their tasks; and deploying them to perform tasks in which they are proficient is essential for service-based organizations that seek to remain successful in today's highly competitive knowledge-based economy because service firms rely more on human competency to drive performance differentials (Nwulu & Ateke, 2018).

The continued survival and high-ranking of Universities depend on retaining focused and enthusiastic academic staff that excel at conducting innovative research and imparting knowledge to their students (Ali et al., 2014; Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Engagement connotes "vigour, dedication, and absorption in one's work" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Several studies have linked employee engagement to factors such as robust work environment (Harter *et al.*, 2002), leadership (Wallace & Trinkka, 2009), training and career development (Paradise, 2008),

compensation (Saks & Rotman, 2006), and job-related well-being (Rath & Harter, 2010). Despite several studies on engagement, Hay Group (2013) submit that over 40% of employees perceive their work as lacking conditions that foster productivity. Most of these studies were done in developed economies in sectors other than education. Further, these studies ignored the intellectual, social and affective (ISA) dimensions of engagement proposed by Soane et al. (2012). According to Soane et al. (2012), intellectual engagement focuses on the extent to which people think hard about their job; social engagement emphasizes social connectedness and relationship with others; while affective engagement suggests positive and energizing feelings about the workplace.

Information obtained from the National Universities Commission's website on 1st May 2022 shows that Nigeria has 217 approved universities; comprising 49 Federal universities, 57 State universities, and 111 Private universities (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2022). Nigeria has 36 states and one Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These States are divided into 6 geopolitical zones (South-West, South-South, North-Central, South-East, North-West, and North-East). A recent study (Agbionu *et al.*, 2018) that focused on the subject in higher education institutions used samples from selected Universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Southeast Nigeria. Literature on ISA engagement is scanty in Nigeria, especially in the University setting. To narrow the gap in the literature, this study examined intellectual, social and affective engagement in Universities located in the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The study explored whether the perceptions of lecturers about ISA engagement differs. The study opts to inform scholars, government, University owners and policymakers of the importance of creating empowering environment that facilitates Intellectual, Social and Affective engagement of academics. The study poses the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of lecturers concerning ISA engagement?
2. Which dimension is most preferred?
3. Is there a significant difference in the perception of ISA engagement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

According to Kahn (1990) engagement involves investing physical, cognitive, and emotional resources in one's work role. Work engagement suggests energy, involvement and effort towards accomplishing organisational goals (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Energy, involvement and willingness to achieve organisational goals are core to engagement (Bakker et al., 2011). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) note that engagement is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption; while Rich et al. (2010) argue that when people are engaged, they devote time, effort and energy to their work. Maslach and Leiter (2008) define engagement as "an energetic state of involvement with activities that are rewarding and improve an individual's sense of professional efficacy." Engagement connotes a simultaneous devotion of personal energies in the performance of work (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

Employee engagement is crucial for organisational outcomes such as business performance, (Levinson, 2007; Cleland *et al.*, 2008), employee tasks and extra-role performance (Christian *et al.*, 2011). Scholars demonstrate that engagement fosters competitive advantage (Albrecht, 2014; Richardson & West, 2010) and financial returns (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009). Albrecht *et al.* (2015) argue that engagement should be embedded in human resource management policies and

practices. Christian *et al.* (2011) reports that a moderate association exist between engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job involvement. In a study on antecedents to engagement and job performance, Rich *et al.* (2010) found a mediating effect of engagement on job involvement, job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and performance. Nwachukwu *et al.* (2021) found that religiosity and employee empowerment is antecedents to employee engagement. They concluded that religiosity has a counterbalancing impact on intellectual and affective engagement and employee empowerment influence intellectual and affective engagement. Amah (2018) observes that the effect of leadership style on engagement is contingent on employee voice and organisational support. Based on data collected from plastics manufacturers in Nigeria, Adekoya *et al.* (2019) demonstrates that employee engagement and individual well-being predict organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Agbionu *et al.* (2018) examine the effect of engagement on lecturers' performance in selected tertiary institutions in south-east Nigeria; and observed that employer reciprocity positively impacts lectures' research output. The study concluded that tertiary institutions can enhance employee engagement instituting policies and practices (like training and development opportunities). Literature suggests that studies on engagement abound, however, these studies did not focus on intellectual, social and affective engagement in universities. Hence, this study is designed to close this gap in literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study explored ISA engagement using a descriptive and quantitative research approach. To generate insight on the subject matter, primary data were collected. Online surveys were administered to the academic staff of all cadre in universities in Nigeria. The survey covered Universities in the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Data collection took place between September 2021 and December 2021. The study used a purposive and convenient sample of 310 academics drawn from Federal, State and Private Universities in the 6 geopolitical zones. The sampling method is appropriate to achieve the study objective.

The study adapted the ISA engagement scale developed by Soane *et al.* (2012). It consists 9 items that require respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The constructs (ISA) consists of three questions each. The second part of the questionnaire elicited information on the bio-data of the respondents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the engagement scale was 0.81, which implies good internal consistency of the instrument (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013).

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean, and standard deviation) were used to analyze the study variables and respondents' demographics. Descriptive statistics are useful in describing the distribution of scores or measurements using a few indices (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). One way ANOVA was used to report whether there is a statistically significant difference in the perception of the construct (engagement) among University lecturers. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was employed in the analyses conducted.

RESULTS

The 310 respondents included 227 males (73%) and 83 females (27%). 254(82%) are married and 56(18%) are single. Participants included 51 professors (16.5%), 14 associate professors (5%), 46 senior lecturers (15%), 66 lecturer 1 (21 %), 63 lecturer 2 (20%), 50 assistant lecturer

(16 %) and 20 graduate assistant (6.5%). The mean age of the participants was 36.22 years (*SD* = 7.56 years). 96 respondents have worked between 0-5years, 97 between 6-10 years, 48 between 11-15 and 26 between 16-20. 43 participants have 21 and above teaching experience.

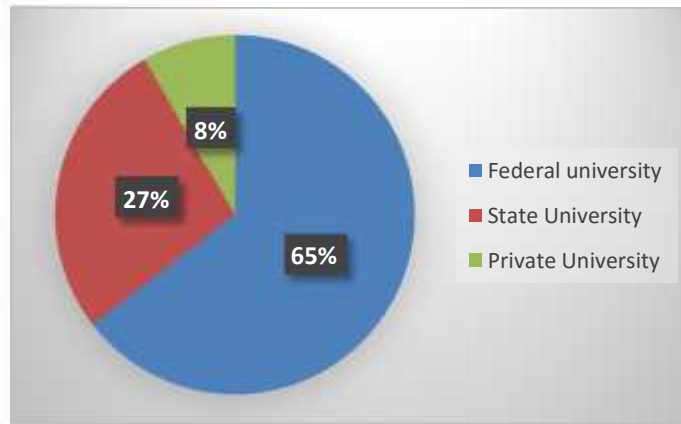


Fig. 1: Participant distribution based on university

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

The participants included 200 lecturers from Federal universities, 84 from State universities and 26 from Private universities. The sample is adequate concerning the distribution attributes.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Intellectual Engagement

Item	Mean	Std Deviation	N
IE1	4.52	.611	310
IE2	4.53	.621	310
IE3	4.62	.586	310
Composite Mean	4.56		

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

A mean value of (4.50-5.00 = strongly agree), (3.50 - 4.49 = agree), (2.50-3.49 = neutral), (2.00-2.49 = disagree) and (1.00-1.99 = strongly disagree). Presented in Table 1 is participants’ response concerning their extent of agreement to statement based on intellectual engagement. Respondents agree to the statements; IE1: I focus hard on my teaching and research (mean score, 4.52), IE2: I concentrate on my teaching and research (mean score, 4.53) and IE3: I pay a lot of attention to my teaching and research (mean, 4.62). The composite mean value (4.56) for intellectual engagement suggests that academic staff in Nigerian universities are intellectually engaged in their teaching and research.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Engagement

Item	Mean	Std Deviation	N
SE1	3.55	.897	310
SE2	3.53	.895	310
SE3	3.23	.967	310
Composite Mean	3.43		

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

The results in Table 2 show that respondents agreed with the following statements concerning social engagement: SE1: I share the same work values as my colleagues (mean score, 3.55) and SE2: I share the same work goals as my colleagues (3.53). However, they were neutral about the statement SE3: I share the same work attitude as my colleagues (mean score, 3.23). A composite mean value (3.43) for social engagement implies that the majority of the respondents are neutral about relationships with colleagues.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Affective Engagement

Item	Mean	Std Deviation	N
AE1	4.25	.825	310
AE2	4.15	.813	310
AE3	4.30	.802	310
Composite Mean	4.23		

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

Concerning affective engagement participants agreed with the following statements: AE1: I feel positive about my teaching and research (mean score 4.25), AE: I feel energetic in my teaching and research (mean score, 4.15) and AE3: I am enthusiastic about my teaching and research (mean score, 4.30). A composite mean value (4.23) for affective engagement is consistent with the individual statements.

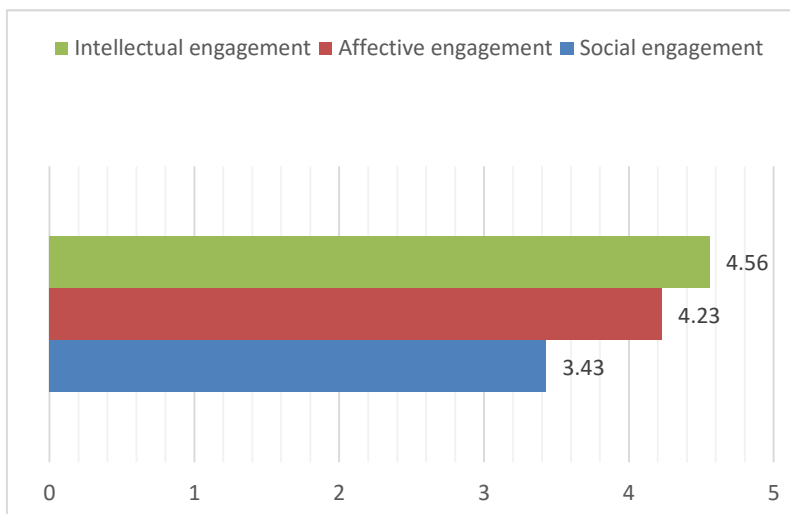


Fig. 2: Ranking of ISA Engagement based on composite mean

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

Fig. 2 shows the ranking of intellectual, social and affective engagement dimensions based on the perceptions of university lecturers in Nigeria. The highest scores were recorded on the “Intellectual” dimension, followed by “Affective” and “Social” dimensions.

Test of Hypothesis

H₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of ISA engagement in Federal, State and Private universities in Nigeria.

Table 5: ANOVA test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Group	51.102	2	25.551	1.251	.288
Within Groups	6251.228	306	20.429		
Total	6302.330	308			

Source: SPSS output of data analysis on assessment of intellectual, social and affective (ISA) engagement (2022).

ANOVA was performed to evaluate if there are statistically significant differences between the perceptions of lecturers in Federal, State and Private universities concerning engagement. The result of the one-way ANOVA ($F_{(2,0)} = 1.251, p = .288$) in Table 5 suggests that "there are no statistically significant differences in perceptions of lecturers in Federal, State and Private universities concerning engagement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study explored intellectual, social and affective engagement of academics in Nigerian Universities. Based on data from 310 lecturers from federal, state and private Universities, the results suggest that intellectual engagement (composite mean 4.56) and affective engagement (composite mean 4.23) are important dimensions of employee engagement in Nigerian universities. Also, results show that intellectual engagement and affective engagement ranked 1st and 2nd respectively. Intellectual engagement explains the extent to which lecturers are intellectually absorbed in teaching, research and external engagement. Arguably, Nigerian academics are focused on their work. Further, affective engagement measures the degree to which lecturers experience positive feelings about their work. Academics believe that a positive experience in their workplace is important to keep them engaged. In terms of social engagement, Nigerian lecturers are undecided and neutral. It can be inferred that social engagement does not matter to keep lecturers engaged. Social engagement suggests social connectedness with their Universities and share value of co-workers. Social connectedness describes the way people relate and interact with others (Sung & Mayer, 2012; Quigley & Thornley, 2011). Social connectedness has a positive effect on learning and students engagement (Hussain, 2016), social development and mental well-being (Walton & Cohen, 2007) of workers. The possible reason for the neutral position of sample lectures may be due to the lack of robust mechanisms, policies and practices that encourage social interaction among academics in Nigerian Universities. It may also be due to lack of interest in leveraging such platforms where they exist. The study shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of ISA engagement in the sampled academics. The possible reason for this may be due to similarities in HRM policies and practices in the sampled universities. It, therefore, follows that lecturers in federal, state and private Universities perceive ISA engagement the same way.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Empowering leadership and a work environment characterized by personal development opportunities can promote ISA engagement. This paper explored the perception of lecturers in Nigerian Universities concerning ISA engagement. The one way ANOVA result reveals that the perception of ISA engagement is the same for lecturers that took part in this study. The results of

the study have implications for lecturers, scholars and University administrators. The study contributes to ISA engagement (Soanes et al., 2012) by establishing that intellectual and affective engagements are important components of lecturers' engagement in Nigeria. Universities administrators need to develop more interest in factors such as in-service training, study leaves, research grants, short courses and regular meetings to develop lecturers' skills for better service delivery. The policies and practices that support these factors can promote intellectual and affective engagements in Nigerian Universities. Lecturers seem to be indifferent to social engagement. Nonetheless, Universities should provide the necessary platforms for academics to socially connect with peers and colleagues in the University. A platform that encourages personal and virtual interaction in the University is important to have engaged lecturers. Providing facilities such as access to the internet can be valuable for accessing and sharing up-to-date information and knowledge in the field among academics. More so, COVID 19 pandemic has altered the way people work and interact. As such, it becomes increasingly important for university administrators to develop robust IT capabilities to enable lecturers share knowledge and learning experiences among their networks (Jin, 2009). Doing this could enhance and stimulate lecturers' engagement in teaching and research. It has been argued that individuals that are focused, energetic and enthusiastic will perform better at work. Indeed, Universities with lecturers that are intellectually absorbed, socially connected and have positive experiences and feelings about their work will have a higher level of productivity. Lack of policies and practices that support lecturers' ISA engagement may result in abysmal performance of Nigerian Universities.

LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

The present study used a descriptive research approach in the education sector. Future research can conduct a correlational study of possible antecedents and outcomes of ISA engagement in other tertiary institutions (polytechnics and colleges of education) and sectors in Nigeria. Future research can also search for different mechanisms (moderators and mediators) through which ISA engagement flourish in Nigeria and elsewhere. Despite the huge interest in employee engagement research, few empirical studies exist that used ISA dimensions of engagement. As such, an empirical study using ISA engagement is timely and relevant. In spite of the limitations herein, this paper enriches organisational behaviour and HRM scholarship in developing economies context.

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