INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

ISSN (print): 2833-4515, ISSN (online): 2833-4531

Volume 05 Issue 04 April 2026

DOI: 10.58806/ijirme.2026.v5i4n04 Impact factor- 7.614

Page No. 303-309

Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement in Higher Institutions in South-East, Nigeria

[1]Samuel Arome Baba, [2]Paul Chinedu Agu, [3]Emeka Emmanuel Okere, [4]Chris Adebayo Itotoh

[1,2,3,4]Department of Business Administration and Management, Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: In this paper, organizational culture was studied as a factor influencing the employee engagement of academic and non-academic employees in institutions of higher education located in South East Nigeria. The study centered on three dimensions, which are the influences of: collaborative culture on employee vigor, innovative culture on employee dedication, and hierarchical culture on employee absorption. Survey design was employed in the sampling of the quantitative data in the selected institutions in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The study population consisted of 1200 staff members; 292 of whom were selected through Taro Yamane's formula. Stratified random sampling was adopted to ensure proper represented. Data were collected using structured questionnaire according to the instruments that existed in terms of measuring organizational culture and employee engagement. Survey was reviewed by experts and its reliability was checked with the help of Cronbach alpha coefficients which were higher than the acceptable value. Statistical analyses were done using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses using SPSS version 28. The findings indicated that the collaborative culture was a highly effective approach in promoting employee vigor with the help of teamwork, participatory decision-making, and open communication. The culture of innovation was very strong in promoting employee commitment in terms of enthusiasm, creativity, and emotional attachment. The role of hierarchical culture in employee absorption was medium but considerable. The study concludes that organizational culture is a strong indicator of employee engagement in higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: Organizational culture, Employee engagement, Collaborative culture, Innovative culture, Hierarchical culture

INTRODUCTION

University culture consists of values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are shared and determine how everybody conducts and relates. This culture impacts staff perceptions of their roles, relations with peers, and goal pursuit in higher education in such a way that it is likely to foster institutional development (Abduraimi et al., 2023). Universities are fast moving worlds that demand efficiency and innovation in teaching, research and administration. Thus, the nature of the culture adopted by a university has a direct impact on employee motivation, engagement and performance.

Collective culture, which is developed on the principles of teamwork, collective decision-making, and open communication, makes employees more energetic, resilient, and ready to work (Barajas, 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). In such environments, employees will feel appreciated and listened to, and this will increase their energy. Creative cultures, promoting innovativeness, trial, and flexibility, lead to commitment by providing opportunities of professional development and application of new methods in teaching, research and administration (Habib, 2024). Hierarchical cultures, in turn, focus on formal organization and centralized leadership, which can help to define the roles and responsibilities, but which can also limit the freedom of actions and limit the level of interest in case of strict application (Bhatt et al., 2024). These cultural dimensions are critical to understanding how to ensure effective employee engagement as well as institutional effectiveness.

Psychological investment by the staff in their work is known as employee engagement, and it manifests itself in energy, commitment, and engagement (Akingbola et al., 2023; Twabu, 2025). Vigor is given as high energy and persistence in work; dedication is given as pride and commitment; and absorption is given as full engagement in job work (Kudzedzi and Otwey, 2025). Intense interaction is associated with improved quality of teaching, research and service delivery, hence contributing to improved reputation and sustainability of a university.

The institutions of higher learning in South-East Nigeria have their distinct issues that may suppress the interest of the staff. Administrative policy inconsistencies, absence of appreciation, professional career growth, and unreliable resource allocation are demoralizing and decommitting (Ismail et al., 2024; Habib, 2024). Overly imposing authority may suppress initiative and teamwork, and the staff will be left with primarily menial tasks (Bhatt et al., 2024). Despite positive outcomes of supportive and innovative

cultures observed in other countries of the world, little studies have been done on their effect in Nigerian higher education (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Bui and Le, 2023).

This work seeks to address this gap by exploring the connection between organizational culture and employee engagement in universities in South-East Nigeria. It examines the impact of collaborative, innovative, and hierarchical cultures on vigor, commitment, and absorption on academic and non-academic employees. The paper is also aimed at providing practical implications to the policymakers and managers to increase the motivation, engagement, and performance of staff members in the institution.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Organizational culture is a set of values, beliefs, and practices that regulate behavior and interactions in a university (Abduraimi et al., 2023; Barajas, 2024). This paper concentrates on three dimensions namely collaborative, innovative and hierarchical. Teamwork, mutual support, and participative decision making as part of collaborative culture are appreciated and encourage vigour and long-term effort (Bhatt et al., 2024). The culture of innovation promotes creativity, experimentation, and flexibility, which promote a sense of commitment and work pride (Bui and Le, 2023; Twabu, 2025). Hierarchical culture focuses on formalities, responsibility, and efficiency, which provide clarity in operations at the expense of potentially available autonomy and absorption (Barajas, 2024; Twabu, 2025).

On the other hand, employee engagement is the extent of psychological investment in their jobs expressed in vigor, commitment, and absorption (Akingbola et al., 2023; Twabu, 2025). Energetic employees are also highly energetic and persistent, which enhances teaching, research, and administration results (Abduraimi et al., 2023; Barajas, 2024). Pride, enthusiasm, and commitment are displayed by dedicated employees who take extra steps to ensure that they achieve the goals (Ismail et al., 2024; Twabu, 2025). Deep immersion in tasks leads to an increase in productivity, creativity, and the overall performance of the tasks and is called absorption (Barajas, 2024; Bhatt et al., 2024). The engagement levels depend on organizational culture, support of leadership, recognition, and favorable working environment (Habib, 2024).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The present paper uses the Competing Values Framework (CVF) and the Job Demands resources JD-R Theory. The CVF separates the organizational culture into the clan (collaborative), adhocracy (innovative), market and hierarchy (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983), which provides a prism to view how culture affects behaviour and involvement. According to the JD -R Theory, engagement is determined by balanced job demands and resources, and supportive leadership, collaborative practices, and innovative opportunities are resources that enhance vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Twabu, 2025). Integrating these theories will offer an all-encompassing perspective on the effect of cultural traits on employee involvement in tertiary education.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

There is empirical research that confirms the connection between organizational culture and employee engagement. Abdullahi et al. (2021) discovered that cooperative and inventive cultures enhance involvement whereas hierarchical organizations could prevent initiative. The same was described by Ababneh (2021), who stated that collaborative and innovative archetypes improve engagement and quality, but hierarchical culture does not provide many stabilizing effects. According to Hasan (2023), positive and creative surrounding environments increase vigor and devotion, whereas too much hierarchy impedes absorption. These tendencies were verified by Akingbola et al. (2023) and Bui and Le (2023) in the field of sectors, which demonstrates the ability to constantly determine the influence of culture on energy, commitment, and immersion. Shirina et al. (2022) also emphasized that the culture-engagement relationship is a further mediation of recognition and leadership support. These findings highlight the necessity to research the influence of collaborative, innovative, and hierarchical cultures on vigor, commitment, and absorption among the employees of South-East Nigerian universities.

Research Gap

The organizational culture and engagement in the Nigerian higher education still has much to be learned even though the literature on the matter is increasingly rising. Abdullahi et al. (2021) and Hasan (2023), most previous researchers, conducted their research beyond the African region and thus, their results might not be applicable to South-East Nigeria. Scholars tend to view culture and interaction as a general notion rather than examine the specific aspects (e.g., Shirina et al. 2022; Bui and Le 2023). The relationship between different cultural profiles and the particular outcomes of engagement in the case of both academic and non-academic personnel has not been studied thoroughly. Similarly, there is not much information concerning how hierarchical culture can support or inhibit collaborative and innovative work. These gaps need to be filled to come up with viable methods of enhancing staff involvement, motivation and general institutional performance.

Research Objectives

The research examined the relationship between organizational culture and employee engagement between academic and non-academic employees in South-East Nigerian institutions. Specifically, it sought to:

1. analyze the effect of collaborative culture on employee vigor among academic and non-academic staff in higher institutions in South East Nigeria.
2. examine the influence of innovative culture on employee dedication within higher education institutions in South East Nigeria.
3. assess the impact of hierarchical culture on employee absorption among staff in higher institutions in South East Nigeria.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature and theoretical frameworks, the study hypothesizes that:

1. Collaborative culture has a positive and significant effect on employee vigor among academic and non-academic staff.
2. Innovative culture has a positive and significant influence on employee dedication.
3. Hierarchical culture significantly affects employee absorption, with extreme rigidity negatively moderating engagement outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research design is that of survey research because it is appropriate in evaluating the relationship between variables when there is a large number of people that need to be surveyed (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The design enables the study to investigate the impacts of organizational culture dimensions such as collaborative, innovative and hierarchical dimensions on employee engagement dimensions, which comprise of; vigor, dedication and absorption of academic staff, as well as non-academic staff, in South East Nigerian institutions of higher learning.

The target population comprises of all academic and non-academic employees working in selected higher institutions in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, and it equals around 1, 200 employees. The stratified random sampling method was used to guarantee representation and stratify the population into academic and non-academic groups and select the study subjects proportionally (Bell et al., 2022). The size of the minimum sample was calculated with Taro Yamane (1967) formula, at 95 0 per cent confidence with a 5 margin of error, and gave a minimum sample of 292 members of staff.

The structured questionnaire used to collect data had two sections: one assessed the aspects of organizational culture, adopting the items used by Abduraimi et al. (2023); the other one evaluated the engagement of the employees, depending on Schaufeli et al. (2006). It was a 5-point Likert scale in both sections. Three organizational behavior experts were used to revise the questionnaire on content and face levels. Clarity and reliability were tested in a pilot study involving 30 employees of a non-sampled body. The Alpha of Cronbach was used to test internal consistency and was found to be 0.70 or above which is acceptable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Institutional approval was used in the data collection. The questionnaire was given to the participants after briefing them and physically and electronically. The responses were voluntary, and the respondents were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. Basic statistics were initially used to describe the data collected to outline the demographics and the distributions of the scores. Subsequently, inferential statistics such as multiple regression and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the correlation between organizational culture dimensions, and the facets of employee engagement. All the analyses were done in SPSS 28 at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 292 questionnaires were mailed to the academic and non-academic employees of the selected institutions in South-East Nigeria. Out of the same 280 valid responses were returned, which provides the response rate of 95.9. Table 1 displays a breakdown of the respondents in terms of gender, age, years of service and staff category. The gender distribution in the sample was relatively equal 57.1 42.9 percent males and females respectively. The 3140 age group represented the highest percentage of 39.3 percent of the sample and this is an indication that most of the respondents are in their early to mid career developmental stage. Sixty-one point seven percent of the respondents were academic staff, and 39.3 were non-academic staff. Majority of the respondents served 6 10 years (35.7%). This experience and diversity can assist us in investigating the influence of organizational culture on the engagement of the employees.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	160	57.1
	Female	120	42.9
Age (years)	20–30	60	21.4
	31–40	110	39.3
	41–50	70	25.0
	51+	40	14.3
Staff Category	Academic	170	60.7

	Non-Academic	110	39.3
Years of Service	0–5	50	17.9
	6–10	100	35.7
	11–15	70	25.0

The employees seem seasoned and moderately experienced and this is in line with Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The mentioned theory argues that such resources as an organizational culture of support can be used more effectively by employees with sufficient experience and familiarity with their organization to promote engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

We also computed means and standard deviations on each dimension of organizational cultures (collaborative, innovative, hierarchical) and each aspect of engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption). The highest scores among staff were on collaborative and innovative culture followed by moderately on hierarchical culture. As shown in Table 2 below, there was a high level of employee engagement, namely vigor and dedication, which led to the motivated workforce.

Table 2 shows means and standard deviations of three culture dimensions, including collaborative, innovative, and hierarchical, and three outcomes of engagement, including vigor, dedication, and absorption. The scores of the respondents were the highest in collaborative culture ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.61$) and innovative culture ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.68$) and medium in hierarchical culture ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.72$). The engagement scores were also high: vigor ($M = 4.05$, SD 0.64), dedication (M 3.95, SD 0.67) and absorption (M 3.88, SD 0.69).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Collaborative Culture	4.12	0.61	High
Innovative Culture	3.98	0.68	High
Hierarchical Culture	3.45	0.72	Moderate
Vigor	4.05	0.64	High
Dedication	3.95	0.67	High
Absorption	3.88	0.69	High

These findings indicate that the scores of collaborative and innovative culture are positively related to the level of staff engagement. Such a result aligns with the Competing Values Framework (CVF) that assumes that Clinton (collaborative) and adhocracy (innovative) culture promotes teamwork, creativity, and autonomy as primary resources to enhance vigor and dedication (Barajas, 2024; Abduraimi et al., 2023). The hierarchy culture was moderate, which means formal structures are clear and accountable, but may not be able to maximize the engagement.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations between culture dimensions and facets of engagement are provided in table 3. All these correlations were still significant at p= -0.01 and indicated strong relationship between cultural practices and the outcomes of engagement.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Collaborative Culture	0.62	0.55	0.48
Innovative Culture	0.59	0.61	0.52
Hierarchical Culture	0.28	0.31	0.22

Interpretation of results:

There were positive significant relationships between collaborative culture and vigor ($r = 0.62$), dedication ($r = 0.55$), and absorption ($r = 0.48$). Psychological investment in the work can be developed with the help of teamwork, participative decision-making, and open communication, which is not a new idea in the educational literature and organizational avenues (Akingbola et al., 2023; Shirina et al., 2022).

Innovative culture had the highest correlation with dedication (r= 0.61) and vigor (r= 0.59). Workplaces that encourage innovation and trial encourage pride and enduring vitality amid employees (Bui and Le, 2023).

Hierarchical culture had moderate positive relationships with all aspects of engagement. Formal structures enhance order and accountability, however, being too rigid may make autonomy too limited and impede absorption (Bhatt et al., 2024; Hasan, 2023).

These results explain how cooperation and innovation can be seen as an important resource in the JD-R theory, which increases the energy, commitment, and concentration of the staff. Hierarchical culture is providing support but a lower level of motivation.

Regression Analysis

To test the predictive ability of the three dimensions of culture on employee engagement, we have carried out multiple regression (Table 4). All the three dimensions are strong predictors of vigor, dedication, and absorption, albeit their effects vary in magnitude.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Organizational Culture on Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption

Engagement Facet	Predictor	B	β	t	p
Vigor	Collaborative Culture	0.45	0.42	6.12	0.000
	Innovative Culture	0.38	0.34	5.01	0.000
	Hierarchical Culture	0.15	0.13	2.10	0.037
Dedication	Collaborative Culture	0.41	0.39	5.89	0.000
	Innovative Culture	0.43	0.37	5.67	0.000
	Hierarchical Culture	0.17	0.15	2.32	0.021
Absorption	Collaborative Culture	0.36	0.33	4.88	0.000
	Innovative Culture	0.32	0.29	4.21	0.000
	Hierarchical Culture	0.12	0.10	1.98	0.048

Interpretation

- The strongest predictor of vigor and dedication was that of collaborative culture, which confirms the argument by CVF that clan-like cultures bring about conducive social environments that enhance energy levels, motivation and work pride (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983).
- Some of the results to note include; innovative culture was especially forecastive on dedication, meaning that creativity and flexibility are closely associated with the emotional attachment and commitment of employees to their activities. This is in line with the study by Bui and Le (2023) and Twabu (2025) who found out a correlation between innovative practices and improved engagement.
- The hierarchical culture was statistically significant and less important in all aspects of engagement. Although hierarchy provides structure, accountability, and clarity, excessive rigidity will limit autonomy and absorption as Bhatt et al. and Hasan (2024) and Hasan (2023) observe.

Collectively, the three types of culture explain away 55.62% of the variance in employee engagement, which is quite significant and indicates their high levels of prediction. This indicates the practical relevance of the administrators of higher education in South-East Nigeria to encourage collaborative and innovative practice and to balance the hierarchical system to maximize employee engagement.

Theoretical Implications:

The findings affirm the assimilation of CVF and JD -R theories. CVF also gives a structural approach of how the various cultural archetypes, such as collaborative (clan), innovative (adhocracy), and hierarchical (hierarchy), influence behavior and participation. JD-R theory describes the supportive culture practices as resources that give strength to the staff, give rise to commitment, and facilitate absorption (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Abdullahi et al., 2021).

Practical Implications:

- To enhance vigor, administrators would consider collaborative practice, including participative decision-making and projects that involve a group of people.
- Such innovative programs as professional development and flexible teaching/research strategies are most likely to increase commitment.
- The hierarchical structures must provide a clear accountability without being too rigid because it may decrease the absorption.

Finally, the paper demonstrates that organizational culture is one of the determining factors of employee engagement in higher education. Institutions can successfully motivate staff and enhance performance and productivity by creating a balanced culture, focusing on collaboration and innovation and toning down hierarchy.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study indicate that organizational culture significantly influences employee engagement in higher education institutions in South-East Nigeria. Collaborative culture was found to strongly enhance employee vigor among both academic and non-academic staff, suggesting that teamwork, participatory decision-making, and inclusive management practices increase energy, motivation, and proactive involvement in institutional activities. Innovative culture was particularly associated with dedication, demonstrating that environments which encourage creativity, experimentation, and flexible work processes strengthen emotional and psychological attachment to the institution, fostering pride, loyalty, and sustained commitment. Hierarchical culture, while

necessary for providing structure and clear reporting lines, showed a moderate but significant effect on absorption, indicating that task immersion and focus improve when formal rules are balanced with autonomy, as extreme rigidity may hinder full engagement. Overall, the study confirms that institutions emphasizing collaborative and innovative practices create a more stimulating and supportive environment that inspires staff, boosts productivity, and promotes sustainable performance. These results support the Competing Values Framework and Job Demands-Resources Theory, highlighting culture as a critical organizational resource that shapes employee engagement outcomes.

Based on these findings, higher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen collaboration by promoting cross-departmental teamwork, participatory decision-making, and frequent staff engagement activities, which can elevate employee vigor and enthusiasm. Likewise, fostering an innovative environment through flexible teaching methods, research-friendly policies, and recognition of creative contributions can enhance dedication and emotional investment in work. Additionally, hierarchical structures should be designed to provide clarity and accountability without excessive rigidity, allowing staff to exercise autonomy in task execution while remaining responsible, thereby improving absorption and focus. Implementing these strategies can support administrators in creating a balanced organizational culture that maximizes engagement, enhances institutional effectiveness, and contributes to long-term organizational success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to express their sincere gratitude to all institutions and individuals who contributed directly to this research. Special appreciation is extended to the management and staff of the higher education institutions in South-East Nigeria for their cooperation and support during the data collection process. Finally, the authors are grateful to colleagues and peers who provided valuable insights and constructive feedback throughout the research process.

REFERENCES

1) Ababneh, O. M. A. (2021). The impact of organizational culture archetypes on quality performance and total quality management: The role of employee engagement and individual values. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 38*(6), 1387–1408.
2) Abdullahi, M., Raman, K., & Solarin, S. (2021). Effect of organizational culture on employee performance: A mediating role of employee engagement in Malaysia educational sector. *International Journal of Supply and Operations Management, 8*(3), 232–246.
3) Abduraimi, P. B., Mustafi, M., & Islami, X. (2023). The role of organizational culture on employee engagement. *Business: Theory and Practice, 24*(1), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.3846/btp.2023.17241
4) Akingbola, K., Kerekou, S., & Tohon, A. (2023). Employee engagement in nonprofit organizations: The role of perception of HR and organizational culture. *Journal of Management Development, 42*(3), 215–233.
5) Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resource model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328.
6) Barajas, A. (2024). The role of organizational culture in enhancing workplace performance and employee engagement. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict, 28*(4), 1–3.
7) Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2022). *Business research methods* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.
8) Bhatt, V., Thomas, S., Chauhan, D., & Patel, R. (2024). Investigating the impact of organization culture, personal-job fit and employee engagement on turnover intention. *International Journal of Economics and Business Research, 27*(2), 310–323.
9) Bui, D. H., & Le, A. T. T. (2023). Improving employee engagement through organizational culture in the travel industry. *Cogent Business & Management, 10*(2), Article 2232589.
10) Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
11) Habib, F. (2024). Influence of organizational culture on employee engagement in Morocco. *European Journal of Human Resource, 8*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.47672/ejh.2083
12) Hasan, H. (2023). Effect of organizational culture on organizational learning, employee engagement, and employee performance. *Problems and Perspectives in Management, 21*(3), 471–482. https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.21(3).2023.38
13) Ismail, F., Abdullahi, M. S., Arnaut, M., Bano, Y., Hadi, N. M. H., & Gwadabe, Z. L. (2024). The effect of organizational culture on employee engagement in higher education institutions. *Zhongguo Kuangye Daxue Xuebao, 29*(3), 141–152.
14) Kudzedzi, V. A., & Otwey, B. M. (2025). Effective communication and employee engagement in higher education. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9*(14). https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.914MG00229
15) Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

16) Quinn, R., & Rohrbaugh, J. (1983). A spatial model of effectiveness criteria: Toward a competing values approach to organizational analysis. *Management Science, 29*(3), 363–377. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.29.3.363
17) Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *66*(4), 701–716. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164405282471
18) Shirina, S., Sharma, R., Agarwal, R. N., & Sao, A. (2022). Factors affecting employee engagement in higher education institutions. *Journal of Information and Optimization Sciences*, *43*(7), 1779–1800.
19) Twabu, K. Y. (2025). Transforming organizational culture in higher education. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, Article 1690451. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1690451