

Employee engagement in the public sector: a case study of Western Africa

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Abstract

Employee engagement and its relationship with organizational performance has recently gained immense attention amongst the scholars of organizational studies and human resource development. However, this relationship has widely been examined in the private sector organizations operating in the Western developed countries and its application in the African public sector still remains a major gap in the engagement literature. In order to address this gap, we investigate the different factors of employee engagement and their impact on organizational performance in the public sector of West Africa while taking the case of Gambia Ports Authority, one of the biggest public sector employers in Gambia. A case study approach was adopted with questionnaires designed and distributed to 327 employees of the Gambia Ports Authority, one of the largest public sector employer in the Gambia. The survey included employees at different levels including senior managers, directors, and junior level staff. Findings suggest that various factors have significant impact on employee engagement with the exception of team and co-worker relation. Amongst other factors, leadership had the strongest influence employee engagement in African public sector. Overall, a positive relationship was found between employee engagement and organizational performance. Findings also indicate that employees who feel engaged and connected with the organization attempt to reciprocate and show greater enthusiasm towards work (work engagement) and to the organization (organizational engagement), which could lead to improved performance.

Keywords: Employee engagement; performance; public-sector.

1. Introduction

The concept of engagement began to surface in the organizational and business literature around two decades ago and has attracted considerable attention from human resource development (HRD) scholars in recent years (see Kahn, 1990; Simpson, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Rurkkhum and Bartlett, 2012; Shuck and Wollard, 2010; Soane *et al.*, 2012; Wollard and Shuck, 2011; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). It is often acknowledged that engagement is predictive of employee outcomes, success, and financial performance of organizations (Macey and Schneider, 2009; Saks, 2006). Conversely, recent survey research (such as Gallup, 2013; Robertson and Cooper, 2010) reveals low levels of engagement in many countries and suggests that presently only 13% of employees around the globe are engaged in their jobs and that disengaged workers continue to outnumber their engaged counterparts at a rate of approximately 2 to 1 (Gallup, 2013). In the United States (US), for example, 52% of employees in the workforce are purportedly disengaged and 18% are actively disengaged in their jobs. Similarly, 68% of Chinese workers are reported to be disengaged in their work.

The scholars of engagement (see above) conceptualised that work engagement emerged from burnout research as an attempt to examine not only employee “unwell-being” but also “well-being” (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008, p.176). Unlike those who experience burnout, engaged employees are energetic and connected with their work activities and feel they are capable of accomplishing those tasks (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). Kahn (1990), one of the first scholars to study engagement, defined what he termed personal engagement as the “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance” (p. 694). Shuck and Wollard (2010) define engagement as individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes. These definitions suggest that engaged employees are committed, dedicated, and invested in their work roles cognitively, psychologically, and behaviourally, hence the need to study the factors that drive the notion of employee engagement. While research on employee engagement in both public and private sectors is abundant in the developed world (see Reissner and Pagan, 2013; Leeds and Nierle, 2014), there stands the need to investigate the phenomenon in the developing nations. Therefore, to fill this gap and to advance our understanding of the major factors impacting employee engagement in public sector institutions in the developing world (see for example, Siddiqi, 2013; Albdour and Altarawneh, 2014; Ghosh *et al.*, 2014; Talukdar, 2013; Ibrahim and Falasi, 2014), we have chosen the case of Gambia Ports Authority (GPA) as an example of a public sector institution in a developing country, the Gambia, that is investing in employee engagement and human resource development. While adopting the framework of psychological conditions of employee engagement (Kahn, 1990), this study will investigate the relationship between employee engagement and performance in GPA. The study will use the factors that facilitate engagement (see Anitha, 2014 and Kahn, 1990) including worker wellbeing, organisational policies, compensation, training and career development, team and co-workers relationship, leadership and work environment respectively.

Anitha (2014) has been a recent advocate of the significantly strong relationship shared between employee engagement and performance, which further highlights the importance of this study. She identified various factors that have a significant and direct correlation between engagement and performance. Her empirical work implies that improving work environment including physical and emotional environment requires effective leadership with improved team and co-worker relationship, which can result in employees having healthy engagement with their work. She also argues that employees' performance will increase as a result of these aspects of engagement and effectively contribute to increased organizational performance. However, her research only included a small industry in an industrial district in India and did not include the views of top managerial staff, hence unable to capture a holistic picture of engagement from the perspectives of top and lower level employees. The methodology also did not specify the type of sector the study was carried out from, which makes it difficult and inconclusive to weigh responses in an institutional or sectoral perspective to draw meaningful conclusions. Thus, we build on her study by attempting to fill the gaps her study has left by choosing a different context of public sector organization in West Africa while including top level managerial staff in our sample of respondents for the reason stated above. In the light of Anitha's (2014) study, we will examine similar factors in a different context to extend the theory in a unique and dynamic contextual perspective thereby contributing to the knowledge and understanding of employee engagement in developing countries.

The paper is divided into five sections. We begin by discussing the notion of performance leading on to a detailed discussion on employee engagement and the factors that drive the notion with particular reference to public sector organizations in the developing economies with an aim of developing our hypotheses. Next, the methodological design of the study is discussed. We then present the study's findings and discuss them. Further, we propose recommendations to our case organization, GPA. Finally, the limitations of the study are highlighted along with avenues for future research.

2. Employee engagement and organizational performance

While the concept of performance has been defined differently by scholars, most of them relate it with measurement of transactional efficiency and effectiveness towards achieving organizational goals (Stannack, 1996; Barney, 1991). The full process covers all organizational policies, practices, and design features that interact to produce employee performance. This integrative perspective represents a configurational approach to strategic human resource management (SHRM), which argues that patterns of HR activities, as opposed to single activities, are necessary to achieve organizational objectives (Delery and Doty, 1996). Employee engagement has been receiving attention as a key determinant of employee performance (Macey *et al.*, 2009). Mone and London (2010) suggest that developing employee engagement will lead to increased levels of performance. Thus, performance and organizational effectiveness will be improved by focusing on employee engagement as a key factor of performance. The notion that individuals can personally engage in their work, investing positive emotional and cognitive energy into their role performance, was first proposed by Kahn (1990). Since Kahn pioneered the concept, there

has been a gradually increasing stream of research, notably within the psychology field, that has sought to further explore the meaning and significance of this concept (Wollard and Shucks, 2011). The reason for the engagement gaining momentum lies in its dual promise of enhancing both individual well-being and organizational performance (Bakker and Schaufeli; 2008; Christian *et al.*, 2011; Harter *et al.*, 2002). Hence, we can argue that employee engagement is about employees willingly putting discretionary efforts into their work in the form of time, energy, and brainpower, beyond what is considered adequate, and hence promoting engagement is all about plans to increase performance, efficiency and company resilience. However, contentment alone can be viewed as having negative effect on engagement, thus consequences of both good and bad should be built into the organization to encourage and reinforce discretionary efforts (Macleod and Brady, 2007).

As engagement is a broad concept, perhaps an important issue in defining engagement lies in drawing the line about what elements to include and what to exclude from the definition. Macey and Scheider(2008)proposed an exhaustive synthesis of all elements that have been employed to define engagement. Their conceptual framework for understanding employee engagement includes (1) trait engagement (e.g. conscientiousness, trait positive affect, proactive personality) (2) state engagement (e.g. satisfaction, involvement, and empowerment) and (3) behavioural engagement (e.g. extra-role behaviour, proactive, role expansion). AsSaks (2008) has noted in his critique that engagement serves as an umbrella term for whatever one wants it to be, it reassures the subjectivity of this phenomenon and makes it easier for organizations to adapt their own versions of the concept to include what's relevant and exclude what's not.

Engaged employees are regarded as intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization as well as feeling passionate and committed to the goals and live to the values of the organizations (Schaufeli and Baker, 2010). The study on social exchange theory conducted by Cropanzano and Mitchel (2005) states that when employer and employee abide by the spirit of exchange rules, there will be more trusting and loyal relationship between them. Thus, social exchange theory requires actions dependant of the reaction of others which in the long run provides a stimulus for mutually, rewarding and beneficial transaction and relationship between employees and their organizations. The value in reciprocal exchanges enables employees to continue to engage fully to their roles and work. On the other hand, when employees feel they have been treated unfairly by their employers, they may likely feel aggrieved and withdraw from their roles and become disengaged leading to withholding efforts including coming to work late and other negative behaviours, such as looking for work elsewhere.

According to Saks (2006) and Gallup (2006),engaged employees are more likely to be committed, satisfied with their work as well as being more productive and investing lots of energy into performing their roles efficiently and effectively. It has been recognised that the reciprocation between organization and employees in relation to the support employees receive from the organization determines their willingness to go the extra mile in performing their roles to drive performance and innovation. This, too, supports the importance of social exchange theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005)that provides a theoretical base to justify

the reasons why employees engage or disengage with their organizations. In highlighting the importance of performance and productivity, studies by Saks (2006) and Gallup (2006) highlight that productivity, performance and innovation are at the heart of engagement. Also, there has been emphasis upon the importance of engaged workforce in engaging customers, which can consequently contribute to increase in sales, profit and shareholder value. However, with respect to causality within the study (Saks, 2006), it is not very certain that the antecedents cause engagement or that engagement causes the consequences. Although, these relationships are consistent with the literature on engagement (see Kahn, 1990, 1992), burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004) and social exchange theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), it is suggested that engaged employees have more positive perceptions of their work experiences and that some of the consequences lead to further engagement. Therefore, longitudinal and experimental studies are required to provide more definitive conclusions about the causal effects of employee engagement and to what extent does social exchange explains these relationships.

Scholars (such as Alfes *et al.*, 2010; Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2009; Bakker *et al.*, 2008) argue that employee engagement has a positive impact on organizational outcome influenced by satisfying and motivational state of employees and work related well-being. These studies argue that various factors drive employees' direct engagement with work and organization. This is important to ensure organizations get the best out of their employees in driving firm performance. Although, there remains the possibility that employees are satisfied in organizations that poorly perform, it suggests that satisfaction and motivational levels of employees may not always lead to engagement to increase performance. In the light of these constructs, work engagement is identified as highly involved in helping employees become more deeply engaged with their work and reduce the effect of job burnout. To wrap up our core argument for employee engagement, research by a number of scholars (see Fleck and Inceoglu, 2010; May *et al.*, 2004; Saks, 2006; Shuck and Reio, 2011) suggests that engaged employees are more likely to outperform disengaged employees. We now review the factors that influence engagement.

3. Factors influencing employee engagement

The focus of our paper will be around the different factors that influence engagement identified by Kahn (1990) and Anitha (2014) including workplace wellbeing, organizational policies, compensation, training and career development, team and co-worker, leadership, and work environment. We will discuss these factors briefly.

3.1 Work environment

Work environment in respect of both communication and physical environment is regarded as the most significant factor that influences engagement levels of employees (Miles, 2001; Harter *et al.*, 2002). According to Deci and Ryan (1987), employers who create a supportive work environment policy typically display concern for employees' needs and feelings. Given the importance of work environment to the employee, employers must establish positive communication and feedback system as well as informing employees of organizational goals and objectives towards success. Positive workplace environment will increase confidence and

ownership of the organization among employees thereby increasing engagement levels and improve performance (Robinson, 2006).

3.2 Leadership

Leadership is a highly regarded engagement factor (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Wildermuth and Pauken, 2008; Wallace and Trinkka, 2009), which is considered to have a significant impact upon the performance of employees. The above-mentioned studies concluded that effective leadership contributes to employee engagement when leaders appear inspiring to their employees. Thus, leadership is posited as having a positive impact in increasing employees' level of involvement, satisfaction and interest in the job itself and the organization, which can enhance performance. This line of reasoning is further supported by Schneider *et al.* (2009) whose study encapsulates the importance of authentic, transformational and supportive leadership, which plays an important role in nurturing the engagement and involvement of employees with exchanging relations between leaders and their subordinates. According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership arises when managers develop and raise subordinate interests so that they focus on the good of the organization and generate awareness and acceptance of the group's purpose. The study also argued that transformational leaders motivate employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the „common good“ of the group. Thus, transformational leadership is positively related to employee creativity and this relationship is moderated by both organizational climate and subordinate identification with the leader (Scott and Bruce, 1994). Authentic leadership on the other hand is related to positive psychology and positive organizational behaviour that emphasizes the development of strengths, virtues and acting in a way that is consistent with one's internal values (Avolio *et al.*, 2009). Authenticity is a concept that embodies a positive alternative to fear and helplessness in the workplace (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004), therefore authentic leadership is an important concept that satisfies a current public need for accountability, integrity and transparency because of its focus on leaders' own transparency, internal principles and a moral compass in the face of unbalanced and possibly ethically ambiguous business practices.

3.3 Team and co-worker relationship

Interactive relationship and coordination in the workplace is an equally important aspect of employee engagement that contributes to high performance. Numerous researchers (such as Kahn, 1990; May *et al.*, 2004; Locke and Taylor, 1990) have argued that helpful, trusting and interactive relationship, as well as helpful team, contributes to supporting and strengthening of employee engagement notion in an organization. These scholars have stressed on the importance of open and supportive workplace as an enabler to employees feeling relaxed, dedicated and involved with their roles, duties, and responsibilities.

3.4 Training and career development

Training and opportunities for career development is yet another means of engaging employees to achieve and sustain high performance levels. Training improves service delivery, accuracy and effectiveness in the workplace. When employees are well trained and

become competent in their jobs, their confidence and motivational levels increase as well, which drives them towards discretionary efforts and involves them further in various aspects of their work, thus driving performance. Therefore, Adlerfer(1972) argues that when organisations present growth opportunities to their employees, it is seen as an equivalent to rewarding them for their efforts. Training and development are essential interventions that should be part of an organization's policy to increase employees' level of competence, ability to cope with job demand, and motivation to perform better. This view is consistent with Kahn (1990) and Murphy & DeNisi's (2008) theories of psychological condition where training is considered as essential for providing employees with innate resources such as skills and knowledge to enable them to fully engage in their roles to increase performance. However, sometimes a lack of performance may have little to do with inadequate training and development of employees.

3.5 Compensation and remuneration

Saks and Rotman(2006) believe that recognising employees and rewarding their efforts is an important step towards engaging them. Their study observed that when employees are rewarded by their organisations, they feel indebted to the organisation, which promotes engagement and loyalty. The rewards system utilized by the public sector in Western Africa in general, including Gambia, often includes medical insurance and loan schemes comprising of vehicle and compound loans. Other rewards such as holiday pay and bonuses are not currently utilized as part of the public sector remuneration and compensations policies, hence potentially affecting engagement levels of staff. Unfortunately, the loan scheme is routinely provided on merits of positions and not weighted on performance. Thus, in some instances, the schemes may be provided to underperforming employees by virtue of occupying senior positions that may not always correlate with performance. These types of reward systems can be dangerous and lead to disengagement of hard working employees by making them ineligible for such rewards due to their lower positions in the hierarchy. The overall impact is negative for the firm and performance is seriously affected.

3.6 Organizational policies, structures and practices

Armstrong (2012) and Schneider *et al.* (2009) argue that organizational policies, structures and practices can also influence the engagement of employees. Organizations should employ fair recruitment and selection policies that encourage fair and equitable practices, which can foster a strong working environment and effectively contribute towards the overall firm performance. Although, in a close-knit social step up in Gambia, recruitment processes are often facilitated by internal means, such as family relations and acquaintances, which questions the principles of fairness and equity. This may have negative consequences such as deficiency in knowledge, skills and competence, which can lead to lower productivity and disengagement of other employees. The issues of human resource capacity and good recruitment practices are currently an agenda under consideration in the Gambia Civil Service Reform Policies (2009).

3.7 Workplace well-being

One of the most important drivers of engagement, as highlighted by Tower Perrin Talent Report (2003), is the interest of „management“ in employee well-being. Thus, organizations have to build harmonious environments to promote good team relationships and conducive work environments to sustain high level of performance. An empirical study was conducted by Robertson *et al.* (2012) on relationships between employee engagement, psychological workplace well-being, and performance in a survey among 9,930 employees in the United Kingdom. The study was scaled on five items of job and work attitudes to measure engagement. A single item by Robertson *et al.* (2012) to measure performance and an 11-item psychological health scale by Faragher *et al.* (2004) were used to measure psychological well-being. Multiple regressions were used to analyse questionnaire data. Employee performance (productivity) was better predicted by a combination of psychological well-being and employee engagement, which gives a score ($R^2 = .17$, $p < .001$) than employee engagement of score ($R^2 = .04$, $p < .001$) alone. Although, measures were self-reported, this places limitations on the choices of approach and methods. On the other hand, matters related to psychological well-being are often included in questionnaires to measure employee engagement or associated job and work related attitudes; psychological well-being is not placed as a key component in a few studies conducted by Harter *et al.* (2002), Schaufeliet *al.* (2006), and Macleod and Brady (2008). All these factors have strong and positive correlation with engagement that could lead to increased performance from employees in contributing towards overall organizational effectiveness.

3.8 Employee performance

Employee performance can be related to financial and non-financial outcomes. Numerous studies (see Christian *et al.*, 2011; Fleming and Asplund, 2007; Richet *al.*, 2010; Richman, 2006; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Holbeche and Springett, 2003; Leiter and Bakker, 2010) have outlined that the most important way to increase performance is to focus on building employee engagement as an important driver of increased performance. Empirical evidence from these studies concludes that the presence of increased level of employee engagement has a significant positive impact on job and task performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, productivity, increased level of psychological climate and improved customer service. Although, the evidence provided in these studies does not mention anything in regard to performance levels of individual employees, which is generally a pre-condition for human resource management processes. As discussed earlier, employee engagement can have a direct impact on employee performance; this line of argument is consistent with Kahn's (1992) model of psychological presence and Macey *et al.* (2009) model of employee engagement value chain. The argument whether employee engagement is related to individual or group performance has remained an important subject matter under debate in the extant literature (see for example, Leiter and Baker, 2010; Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2008). Also, research on burn-out, the opposite of engagement as explained earlier, is very limited too (Maslach *et al.*, 2001).

The studies discussed above provide us a platform to investigate this widely debated relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance with a particular focus on the public sector organization in West Africa, the Gambia Ports Authority. Two sets of hypotheses have been developed to test the predicted relationship between the factors of employee engagement and performance. When creating and testing hypotheses, it is claimed that the role of the theory is critical in order to accurately estimate the relationships among the variables (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). In this respect, the proposed hypotheses in our study are based on formal theory and prior research in the field. The premise of this study is that factors of employee engagement are necessary for the long term survival, sustainability and competitiveness of organizations. There is insufficient empirical evidence on the factors that predict employee engagement (discussed above) and their contribution to organizational performance in the public sector; hence we address this gap by showing some possible predictors for these factors and their impact on performance. Based on our extensive review of the literature, the following hypotheses have been developed.

H1 There is a statistically significant impact of the identified factors of workplace wellbeing, compensation, team and co-worker relationship, leadership, working environment, policies and procedures, training and career development on employee engagement..

H0 There is no impact of the identified factors of workplace wellbeing, compensation, team and co-worker relationship, leadership, working environment, policies and procedures, training and career development on employee engagement.

To further assess the strength of the impact of employee engagement on performance gives us a second set of hypotheses as follows:

Ha2 There is statistically significant impact of employee engagement on performance.

H02 There is no statistically significant impact of employee engagement on performance.

4. Methodology

A survey was designed to test the impact of employee engagement factors on performance. Questionnaires were designed to measure the engagement factors including working environment, leadership, workplace wellbeing, compensation and remuneration, team and co-worker relationship, and training and career development and organizational policies. Employee performance was also measured to test the impact of employee engagement on performance. The questionnaires were modelled on five point likert scale ranging from 1

(strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and were sent to respondents, including senior managers and junior level staff at GPA, to test and evaluate their views in respect of engagement and its contribution to performance. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, we sent the questionnaires to 327 employees of GPA including directors, managers, assistant managers and junior staff members. The response rate was 34% with 112 questionnaires returned. However, 12 questionnaires were discarded due to missing information thus leaving us with 100 questionnaires to be included in the study. The empirical testing of employees' views of engagement against the views of experts (senior management) shall enable the proposing of recommendations for the improvement of engagement conditions and organizational performance. To include appropriate staff members, convenience sampling technique was used owing to its simplicity and ease of access to the employees of the case organization.

From an analysis point of view, the calculation of the correlation was a yield figure known as *coefficient* that varies between 0 (i.e. no correlation and therefore no consistency) and 1 (i.e. perfect correlation and therefore consistency). Therefore, a result of 0.8 and above implied an acceptable level of reliability. Regression analysis was used to test hypotheses and to ascertain which among the factors had the most significant relationship with employee engagement and performance. According to Cohen *et al.* (2003), regression models are mainly used to achieve explanation through prediction and forecasting. Thus, regression analysis seemed the most relevant statistical technique for our study. The researchers also realize the critical role of the theory in planning the multiple regression analysis as well as the importance of developing a strong statistical model that will accurately estimate the relationships among the variables. Then, the researchers' task is to use regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Regression analysis was primarily used for estimating the relationships among various factors, engagement, and performance. The analyses included modelling and analysing various factors of engagement and the focus was on the relationship between a dependent variable (employee engagement) and the independent variables (factors of engagement). On the other hand, employee engagement was analysed as an independent variable whilst employee performance as a dependant variable.

5. Results: the influence of various factors on employee engagement

5.1 Work environment

The results found that the identified factor as a predictor of employee engagement had an adjusted r^2 value of 3.9% (0.039) presented in Table 1. This explains up to 3.9% of the variance in employee engagement. The ANOVA highlighted in Table 2 shows a significant probability value = (0.002^b). The p -value < 0.05 indicates that the dependent variable is significant, thus accepting that the factor strongly contributes to employee engagement. The Co-efficient in Table 3 indicates that working environment under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then work environment will be 1.384. If engagement goes up by 1, then work environment is predicted to go up by 0.109, hence indicating the strong influence of work environment on engagement.

Table 1. Regression model summary – Work Environment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.208 ^a	.043	.039	.5743

Table 2. Result ANOVA for Work Environment
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.322	1	3.322	10.075	.002 ^b
Residual	73.209	222	.330		
Total	76.531	223			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Environment

Table 3. Regression coefficient for Work Environment
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.384	.094		14.725	.000
WorkEnvironment	.109	.034	.208	3.174	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.2 Policies and procedures

The results of the regression analysis found that the identified factor as a predictor of employee engagement had an adjusted r^2 value of 10.2% (.102), as presented in Table 4. This explains up to 10.2% of the variance in employee engagement. The ANOVA highlighted in Table 5 shows a significant probability value = (0.000^b). Since the p -value < 0.05 , variable is statistically significant. Thus, accepting that the factor significantly contributes to employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 6 indicates that policies and procedures under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then policies and procedures will be 2.804. If engagement goes up by 1, then policies and procedures are predicted to drop by -223; hence indicating the influence of policies and procedures on engagement.

Table 4. Regression model summary – Policies and Procedures

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.328 ^a	.108	.102	.5276

a. Predictors: (Constant), Policies and Procedures

Table 5. Result ANOVA for Policies and Procedures

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.580	1	5.580	20.048	.000 ^b
1 Residual	46.205	166	.278		
Total	51.786	167			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Policies and Procedures

Table 6. Regression coefficient for Policies and Procedures

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.804	.302		9.287	.000
Policies and Procedures	-.223	.050	-.328	-4.478	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.3 Leadership

The results of the regression analysis found that the identified factor as a predictor of employee engagement had an adjusted r^2 value of 54.6% (.546), as presented in Table 7. This explains up to 54.6% of the variance in employee engagement. The ANOVA highlighted in Table 8 shows a significant probability value = (0.000^b). As the p -value < 0.05 , the variable is statistically significant, thus accepting that the factor significant contributes to employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 8 indicates that leadership under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then leadership will be -4.379. If engagement goes up by 1, then leadership is predicted to go down up by -.672; hence indicating a direct relationship between the variables.

Table 7. Regression model summary – Leadership
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.740 ^a	.548	.546	.6859

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership

Table 8. Result ANOVA for Leadership
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	128.675	1	128.675	273.515	.000 ^b
	Residual	106.321	226	.470		
	Total	234.996	227			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership

Table 9. Regression coefficient for Leadership
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-4.379	.389		-11.267	.000
	Leadership	.672	.041	.740	16.538	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.4 Team and worker relationship

The results of the regression analysis found that the identified factor as a predictor of employee engagement had an adjusted r^2 value of $-0.4\%(.004)$, as presented in Table 10. This explains up to -0.4% of the variance in employee engagement. The ANOVA highlighted in Table 11 shows a significant probability value = $(.712^b)$. As the p -value (>0.05), the factor is statistically insignificant to predict employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 12 indicates that team and co-worker relationship under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then team and co-worker relationship will be 1.351. If engagement goes up by 1, then team and co-worker relationship is predicted to go up by $.013$; hence indicating the low significance in the relationship of the two variables.

Table 10. Regression model summary – Team and Worker Relationship

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	.025 ^a	.001	-.004	.5701

a. Predictors: (Constant), TeamandCo-WorkerRelationship

Table 11. Result ANOVA for Team and Worker Relationship

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.045	1	.045	.137	.712 ^b
	Residual	70.842	218	.325		
	Total	70.886	219			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), TeamandCo-workerRelationship

Table 12. Regression coefficient for Team and Co-worker Relationship
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.351	.466		2.901	.004
1 Team and Co-worker Relationship	.013	.034	.025	.370	.712

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.5 Training and development

The results of the regression analysis found that the identified factor as a predictor of employee engagement had an adjusted r^2 value of 7.9% (.079), as presented in Table 13. This explains up to 7.9% of the variance in employee engagement. The ANOVA highlighted in Table 14 shows a significant probability value = (0.000^b). As the p-value (>0.05), the variable is statistically significant, thus accepting that the factor significant contributes to employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 15 indicates that leadership under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then training and development will be 4.552. If engagement goes up by 1, then training and development is predicted to go down by -.182; hence indicating the significant relationship between variables

Table 13. Regression model summary – Training and Development
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.291 ^a	.085	.079	.4914

a. Predictors: (Constant), Training and Development

Table 14. Result ANOVA for Training and Development
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	3.636	1	3.636	15.060	.000 ^b
Residual	39.358	163	.241		
Total	42.994	164			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Training and Development

Table 15. Regression coefficient for Training and Development
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.552	.797		5.708	.000
Training and Develop.	-.182	.047	-.291	-3.881	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.6 Workplace well-being

Work place well-being regression results in Table 16 also indicates an r^2 value of 4.4% (0.044) as predictor of employee engagement with a p -value of ($0.001^b < 0.05$). The ANOVA Table 17 signifies that the factor also significantly explains employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 18 indicates that work place well-being under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then work place well-being will be 3.986. If engagement goes up by 1, then work place well-being is predicted to go down by -.114; hence indicating the significant relationship between variables.

Table 16. Regression model summary – Workplace well-being
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.220 ^a	.048	.044	.5686

a. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Well-being

Table 17. Result ANOVA for Work place well-being
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.657	1	3.657	11.312	.001 ^b
	Residual	71.771	222	.323		
	Total	75.429	223			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Well-being

Table 18. Regression coefficient for Work place well-being
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.986	.698		5.713	.000
	Wellbeing	-.114	.034	-.220	-3.363	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

5.7 Compensation programmes

Compensation programme regression results in Table 19 indicates that the factor has r^2 value of 5.0% as predictor of employee engagement with a p -value ($0.000^b < 0.05$) in ANOVA Table 20, which also signifies that the factor significantly explains employee engagement. The Co-efficient Table 21 indicates that compensation programme under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if engagement is 0, then compensation programme

will go down by -1.102. If engagement goes up by 1, then compensation programme is predicted to go up by .109; hence indicating a significant relationship.

Table 19. Regression model summary – Compensation Programmes

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.233 ^a	.054	.050	.5097

a. Predictors: (Constant), Compensation Programmes

Table 20. Result ANOVA for Compensation Programmes

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.322	1	3.322	12.789	.000 ^b
	Residual	57.673	222	.260		
	Total	60.996	223			

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Compensation Programmes

Table 21. Regression coefficient for Compensation Programmes

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.102	.747		-1.475	.142
	Compensation Programmes	.109	.030	.233	3.576	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

With regards to the analysis of each of the factors of engagement, study by (Heiman 1998) suggests that a proportion of variance above 25% (.250) is considered substantial. Therefore, employee engagement as a combination and proportion of all the factors are statistically significant in relation to employee engagement with the exception of team and co-worker relationship. Therefore the null hypothesis, H₀, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, H₁ is accepted.

6. Results: the influence of employee engagement on performance

The cause and effect relationship between employee engagement and performance is identified below using regression analysis. The analysis is intended to study the impact and influence of employee engagement on employee performance.

Table 22. Regression model summary – Employee Performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.238 ^a	.057	.050	3.3764

a. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement

Table 23. Result ANOVA for employee performance

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	97.163	1	97.163	8.523	.004 ^b
	Residual	1618.837	142	11.400		
	Total	1716.000	143			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement

Table 24. Regression coefficient for employee performance model
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.270	.814		5.247	.000
Engagement	1.408	.482	.238	2.919	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The analysis indicated that employee performance and engagement show a variance in dependent variable, which indicates that employee performance is influenced by the independent variable, employee engagement, by 5% (as shown in Table 22). The ANOVA result in Table 23 shows a significant p value ($.004^b < 0.05$) thus indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. The Co-efficient Table 24 indicates that employee engagement under the unstandardised co-efficient column gives the value that if employee engagement is 0, then employee performance will go up by 4.270. If employee engagement goes up by 1, then employee performance is predicted to go up by 1.408. Therefore, the null hypothesis H02 is rejected and hypothesis Ha2 is accepted. The equation implies that employee performance depends substantially on employee engagement. The results show that ensuring high engagement of employee is imperative and has positive impact on employee performance.

7. Discussion

As per Schneider *et al.* (2009), leadership in inspiring employees is seen as having a positive impact on their level of involvement with the organization and increase in satisfaction and general contribution to the overall firm performance. Our study has further emphasized the importance of leadership with managers and supervisors raising employee interest in the work they do and equally motivating employees to look beyond their own interests for the benefit of the organization in general (Bass 1990). In respect to compensation programmes, it is important to note the type of compensation system that operates in Gambia public sector institutions may not always correlate with performance and hence could lead to disengagement of employees, contrary to the advice of Saks and Rotman (2006) who stress that employees should be rewarded for their efforts in increasing level of performance. Conversely, managers and directors could be receiving good remunerations and benefits due to their position in the hierarchy alone without any connection or measure to their level of performance in the organization. The results show that employees are showing a great deal of

interest in the remuneration and compensation policies of the organization as an influential factor in increasing their level of engagement. Thus, this should be an important factor in enriching engagement among junior level staff.

Similarly, a healthy work environment, both physical and emotional, will motivate employees to engage at work. According to Miles (2001) and Harter *et al.* (2001), work environment in respect of both communication and physical environment is significant in contributing to higher levels of employee engagement. They argue that employees actively seek meanings through their work and unless organizations try to provide a sense of meaning that employees are seeking, they are likely to disengage and eventually leave. Our findings are no different and strongly support the importance of work environment in motivating employees to increase their engagement levels and function effectively in their roles for better performance (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Thus, in order to have a positive perception about work, it is important to have a supportive environment.

Surprisingly, our results demonstrate that team and co-worker relationships have virtually little or no correlation with engagement. The negative correlation can be related within sufficient team work in the case organization. Normally, hierarchy in the public sector operates at departmental levels and only the senior management teams are strictly involved in strategic discussions where junior staff input is discouraged. These strategies are then communicated to employees via departmental heads for implementation without the need for teamwork in execution of the strategies. Kahn (1990) emphasized that interactive relationship and coordination is imperative in sustaining high level of engagement and contribution to increased performance. Another important factor is to promote and solicit special attention from employer's side (Bhogle and Bhogle, 2011) to improve team and co-worker relationship. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to invest in interactive relationships among employees to build strong and viable teams, facilitate enhanced co-worker relationships and provide ambience where collegiality would thrive.

Our findings also demonstrate a strong correlation between workplace well-being and engagement. The role of workplace well-being is significantly associated with a range of positive life and career outcomes and behavioural difference (Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2005). It seems quite plausible that these kind of behavioural differences are part of the causal mechanism that links improvement in well-being with improvement in individual performance and hence organizational effectiveness. Earlier research (Tower Perrin Talent Report, 2003) has revealed that good levels of workplace well-being must be supported by the top management and organizations must build harmonious working environment to promote strong employee relationships to not only enhance employee performance but also a wide range of organisational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction and reduced employee turnover.

Mone and London (2010) suggest that by improving performance management systems organizations can establish and sustain high levels of employee engagement and performance. As performance management systems play crucial part in the success of organizations (Cardy, 2004), they should be given high priority by the top management (Lawler, 2008). Christian *et*

al.(2011) argue that increased level of engagement has strong positive impact on task performance, increased productivity and improved customer service in contributing to the overall organizational performance. Conversely, Kahn (1990) argued about a difference between what constitutes engagement in respect of group or individual performance. Due to the current challenges faced by organizations in today's business environment, such as the global recession, most organizations have refocused their attention on strengthening their performance management systems (Buchner, 2007) and pursue ways of increasing efficiency and performance of their employees.

Findings of the current study also adds to our understanding that engaged employees tend to outperform their disengaged colleagues (Fleck and Inceoglu, 2010; May *et al.*, 2004; Saks, 2006; Shuck and Reio, 2011; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Harter *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, our findings too highlight the importance of employee engagement and suggest that engaging employees leads to increased organizational performance. Thus, the joint process of the two factors can create synergies for firms and enable employees to feel obliged to respond to the organization through engagement. A study by Kim *et al.* (2012) also confirms the direct and indirect positive effects of increasing organizational performance on employee engagement. It stresses the importance of in-role performance, which refers to the activities related to formal role requirements, and extra role activities that do not include formal role requirements "but are viewed as promoting organizational effectiveness" (p. 5).

Considering the nature of how employee engagement contributes to performance is a development in the performance management literature that is consistent with recent trends in organizational sciences. Therefore, emphasis on employee engagement in the performance management system may increase performance improvement beyond that is achievable through conventional focus on performance itself. Thus, the linkage between engagement and performance is consistent with theory and research as posited by scholars (such as Harter *et al.*, 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007; Salanova *et al.*, 2005; Saks, 2006). Recently, many organizations have shown interest in the importance of having a fully engaged workforce, however employee engagement and the factors of engagement that influence firm performance have been under-researched in the public sector institutions in developing countries, including Gambia in West Africa, which is an important gap that our study has addressed. The study demonstrates a strong relationship between employee engagement and performance even in our case of a public sector organization. It examined and discussed the various factors of employee engagement (see Khan, 1990; Anitha, 2014), which were empirically tested in a public-sector organizational setting in GPA. Our findings suggest that majority of the employee engagement factors have a significant relationship with organizational performance with leadership being the most significant and team and co-worker relationship being insignificant.

8. Conclusion

Our study has researched employee engagement and its influence on performance in the public sector, which was significantly under-researched. Moreover, the fact that we have studied the phenomenon in a developing African country makes it further relevant for

management scientists willing to expand their horizons to the countries out-with the Western developed economies. The results have suggested that a significant relationship exists between the various factors that affect employee engagement and the performance of employees even in the public sector and that senior managers must think about engaging their workforce despite having job contracts of permanent nature and other facilities that are normally associated with the public sector employment. If the public sector keeps on ignoring the importance of employee engagement, it will continue to remain under-performed in comparison to the private sector, hence the findings of the study have serious implications.

8.1 Recommendations for case organization

Based on our findings, we would like to propose some recommendations to the top level management of Gambia Ports Authority. Firstly, it is really important to bring employees together in teams to fully engage them with the organizational plans, particularly strategic plans that have long-term implications. In addition, informal and more interactive meetings should be conducted between employees and their managers since our findings suggest that there might be some gaps between these two groups (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Thus, managers should be equipped to offer them scope in engaging and getting the best out of their teams (Truss *et al.*, 2013; Shuck *et al.*, 2010). We also propose that team development and bonding will benefit the organization with integrated skills, resources and different experiences of team members towards increasing efficiency and productivity (Locke and Taylor, 1990). The teams will learn from each other in pursuit of achieving the overall goals. The benefit to be derived from working as a team will allow the teams to innovate, solve problems better and bring in different ideas and methods in dealing with different issues (Saks, 2005). By promulgating such understanding and team ethics among members, teams can be resourced to achieve better results and withstand the challenges of the volatile business environment and reduced risk of failure (Kahn, 1990). This will also enhance individual contribution and increase the sense of overall task accomplishment and interpersonal relationships among team members.

It is also proposed to create the opportunities for on-the-job development and career enhancing skills for employees (Den Hartog and Verbug, 2004). Such opportunities will allow employees to grow through training and development as one of the most important factors in employee motivation to increase level of engagement (Paradise, 2008; Keaveney, 1995). As a result, Gambia Ports Authority must pay attention to the various aspects of developing a highly engaged workforce through their HRD function. In so doing, the authority should consider encouraging various types of learning at work, including both formal and informal training and development programme, these processes can significantly and positively impact on the level of employee engagement and thus, increase performance (Shuck *et al.*, 2010). In order to remain competitive and increase employability, the employees' knowledge, skills and talent need to be continuously developed to ensure that their engagement levels remain high (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2011). Increasing employees' level of engagement through high level of leadership support, creating a vibrant physical and emotional environment recognising and rewarding the efforts of employees may help organization survive, specifically during hard and difficult economic times. In particular, to nurture employee

engagement, organizational leaders may consider creating a vibrant working environment that is full of vigour, supportive, empowering, safe and meaningful for employees to fully engage (Deci and Ryan, 1987). Finally, the senior management should consider providing employees with resources and benefits that would prompt an exchange rule amongst them. When employee feels the need to give back to the organization, they are more likely to continue to engage in their roles and work (Cropanzano and Mitchel, 2005). Support of individuals and team performance ultimately should lead to organizational performance improvement. If organizational leaders are truly concerned about increasing employee engagement, it should be regarded as part of the overall organizational and cultural strategy and involve all the levels of the hierarchy (Saks, 2006). Measures should be taken to create an engaged culture, thus, management has to anticipate if employees are happy to get to office, enjoy work and working with colleagues, superiors, and be satisfied with the general environment since these factors act like a glue and firmly bind people with the organization (Truss *et al.*, 2013).

8.2 Limitations and future research agenda

The study is entirely based on the staff working at GPA alone and does not include any other stakeholders, which may limit the validity of the research as it is not certain whether engagement of employees also affects the way they serve customers in contributing to the overall performance of the organization. Similarly, our findings are solely based on one public sector institution in Gambia, out of a total of 15, therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. Furthermore, convenience sampling has been used to collect data instead of choosing samples randomly, which would have had enhanced the study's validity. Finally, due to the non-availability of data on organizational performance, it was difficult to further determine the impact of employee engagement on the firm's performance. We encourage future researchers to explore employee engagement in both public and private sector institutions in Gambia to gain sufficient grounds for theory development. Hence, there is a need for extending the scope of knowledge on employee engagement by studying a larger sample in Gambia. We also expect other researchers to gain rich understanding of the employee engagement phenomenon by undertaking studies based on qualitative or mixed methods. This practice will add depth and detail to the findings (Swanson *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, future studies may look at engagement from the perspective of other stakeholders including customers and suppliers. Finally, it will be good to see researchers exploring the relationship between engagement and performance using longitudinal studies to grasp a better picture of engagement or disengagement in case organizations as engagement levels may vary at different time intervals, which can be captured using longitudinal studies.

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