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## **The Influence of Employee Engagement on the Performance of Higher Educational Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to unveil the influence of employee engagement on the performance of colleges and universities in Ghana. Using a quantitative survey, data was collected from 400 staff and both SPSS and AMOS were used to run the analysis. It was found that the three main components of engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) have significant positive impact on colleges and university performance in Ghana. Hence, all the three hypotheses were accepted. On future research areas, current study, which successfully evaluated work vigor, dedication, and absorption, advances that future researchers may instill a further assessment of the mediating role of workers' engagement particularly for workload, community, and social support, perceived fairness, and values. It was concluded that staff engagement is a good predictor of colleges and university performance in Ghanaian context.

**Keywords:** higher education, colleges, university, performance, employee, engagement

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## INTRODUCTION

The industry of education services that includes higher education institutions (HEIs) is still vital. Deloitte (2019) asserts that, particularly for Ghana's HEIs, the pressure from a low-yield environment and the possibility of an economic recession could have a negative influence on teaching and learning. These HEIs might keep raising their fee-based IGF while putting more of an emphasis on cost control. While the industry has struggled with a shortage of resources, the picture of expansion around the world is ambiguous. Therefore, HEIs' emphasis on employee engagement is essential to their success. Managers grew interested in employee engagement strategies in the 1980s and 1990s because it may result in better job performance and higher production (Purcell, 2014). When Kahn (1990) first proposed the idea of employee engagement, it was met with skepticism. However, since then, the marketing, administration, sociology, and advancement of human resources (HRD) areas have seen an explosion of interest in the practical applications of employee engagement (Shuck, Osam, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2017). Throughout the years, researchers and practitioners have maintained a strong commitment to investigating the engagement construct (Zang et al., 2020). The literature has proposed the concept of employee engagement as a new way of reinventing the employee - company connection; it is characterized by strong energy and deep dedication (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Employees who are "engaged" are dedicated to the success of their company or institutions and go above and beyond in their usual responsibilities (Zang et al., 2020).

The level of employee involvement significantly affects how well a business performs (Bhatt & Sharma, 2019). Employee engagement is becoming increasingly important as a means of differentiating and competing in the global markets of today. People who are invested in their jobs are more likely to have a favorable attitude toward their work, the company, their coworkers, and the items they produce (Aftab, Monowar, & Luo, 2019). Employee engagement is a top priority for business leaders around the world (Loerzel, 2019). Managers can't hope to boost employee engagement without first understanding what makes it tick. There have been a number of studies done on the topics of employee commitment, engagement, and organizational output (Afaire et al., 2017; Wellins et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of scholarly investigation into this topic (Gems, 2015). No research has been conducted on the extent to which workers in the sugar business are engaged in their jobs. There is a lack of data on employee engagement and productivity in Ghana's colleges of education and technical universities. In the context of higher education in Ghana, there is no data to support the claim that a highly engaged workforce produces better good results. In the field of higher education, engagement (involvement) among workers has not been demonstrated to be a predictive factor in terms of productivity by previous researchers. Therefore, the study's focus is on the influence of staff engagement on college and university performance. In this analysis, we look at how much employee enthusiasm within the

Colleges of Education and a University setting affected institutional effectiveness. Organizational leaders would benefit from this understanding since it might lead to improved job design and employee engagement. The primary value and significance of this study is that it will allow colleges and universities in Ghana to better understand the range of employee engagement and job satisfaction among their staff, which will in turn aid in the development of policies, the creation of effective systems and structures, and the maintenance of a positive organizational culture. In addition, businesses will learn how employees' participation contributes to their overall sense of job happiness. By developing a self-aware and accountable leadership and workforce, an inspiring culture can be fostered and the organization's potential can be maximized. Therefore, the study is extremely important for all administrators at Ghanaian colleges and universities. Third, it will serve as a guide for energizing workers to improve output as a whole.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

Based on the dedication, absorption and vigour (DAV) model of engagement, the following objectives were developed

1. To examine the influence of dedication on the college and university performance
2. To assess the influence of absorption on the college and university performance
3. To understand the influence of vigour on the college and university performance

#### *Research questions*

1. What is the influence of dedication on the college and university performance?
2. Does absorption influence college and university performance?
3. Does vigour influence college and university performance?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Underpinning Theory*

#### *Social exchange theory (SET)*

Social exchange theory (SET) by Homans served as the theoretical foundation for this investigation (1959). According to social exchange theory, a relationship exists between two parties when they engage in a series of interactions that reveal their mutual interdependence and obligation to one another (Aktar & Pangil, 2017). Saks (2006) developed SET further by showing that two-way communication between managers and workers is necessary for employee engagement to take place. Trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment are the three constructs for employee engagement developed by Kamau and Sma (2016). The core values of SET, as stated by Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard, and Bhargava (2012), are "vigor, dedication, and absorption." Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, and Hall (2017) developed SET by proposing that if workers believe they are a good match for an organization, they will be more engaged than is healthy for the business. This study's use of SET is appropriate because it aims to understand how managers

can inspire employee engagement by fostering an atmosphere of trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment.

Employees with high SET are those who are aware of the rewards they can earn and who work to maximize their contributions to the company (Xiong & King, 2019). By definition, SET involves at least two people exchanging benefits or rewards in exchange for overt and covert actions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Managers can rely on SET, a powerful method for increasing employee engagement, when hiring new staff. Engagement was defined by researchers as a "two-way relationship" between employees and managers within an organization, with employees repaying their employers' investment in them through their commitment to the workplace (Neuhofer, Kittel, & Reindl, 2016; Saks, 2006). There are specific factors that can help small business owners and managers increase employee engagement that are included in SET.

#### *Employee Engagement*

What we mean when we talk about "employee engagement" is a combination of three concepts: (a) enthusiasm, or how energized workers are because of their jobs; (b) commitment, or how invested they are in their work; and (c) immersion, or how engrossed they are in their work that they fail to notice the time passing (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Energy, concentration, and commitment are all characteristics of an actively engaged workforce. According to Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2016), all three factors that contribute to employees' sense of involvement are beneficial and enjoyable. In a similar vein, Singh, Burgess, Heap, and Al Mehrzi (2016) stated that vigor happens when an engaged worker exhibits high energy as a result of resilience in the job. The capacity to put forth effort at work, resistance to exhaustion, and resolve to deal with challenges are all examples of vigor, as discussed by Mazzetti, Biolcati, Guglielmi, Vallesi, and Schaufeli (2016). Engagement occurs when an employee cares about and contributes to their work (De Carvalho Chinelato, Ferreira, & Valentini, 2019). According to Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker, and Sung (2018), employees that show enthusiasm, a sense of significance, pride, and inspiration for their contributions to the organization's success are dedicated. Bakker (2017) agreed that time flies when an individual is fully interested in their work, and that it might be tough to tear oneself away from the task at hand. In order to inspire a favorable shift in attitude about one's work in a small firm, executives often emphasize the need of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption.

#### *Firm Performance*

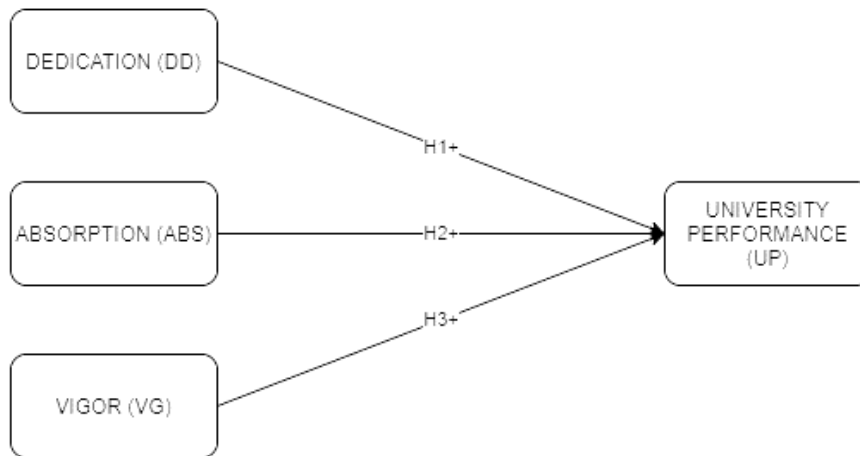
*Firm Performance in this study is referred to college and university performance*

When workers are vested in the success of the company, it shows in the bottom line, in the quality of the product or service they receive and in their devotion to the brand. Profits and output will rise thanks to a more actively engaged workforce. Organizations that experience rapid expansion and rising profits are more likely to have highly engaged employees because of the positive

impact engagement has on morale and productivity (Matare, 2019). If workers are given more chances to shine, product quality will improve. When a company makes a conscious effort to involve its employees, productivity and satisfaction both rise (Matare, 2019).

Loyal clients are more likely to be produced by contented workers. Customers are more likely to remain loyal to companies if the workforce is enthusiastic about its mission to meet their demands (Matare, 2019). A greater impact on the organization's bottom line can be expected when workers are actively engaged in their work. Employee engagement is a leading indicator of business success, satisfaction rates, and bottom-line results (Matare, 2019). Efficiency in work done by workers: a direct result of their level of engagement. When workers are invested in their work, they tend to put in longer hours, show greater loyalty, and are more willing to "go the additional mile" for the company (Bakker, 2017). To push oneself to perform at one's best, engagement serves as an "illusive force" (Matare, 2019).

#### *Empirical Review and Conceptual Framework*



*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

#### *Employee Engagement and Firm Performance*

Researchers in the field of employee welfare can be tracked as they strive to make sense of the correlation between enthusiastic workers and a variety of performance outcomes (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). It is well-established that a highly engaged workforce improves business results. Ali et al. (2018) describe employee engagement as a feature of the organizations' connections with their staff. Simply put, "employee engagement" describes the level of mental and emotional investment that person has in their job and the company. Employee engagement, according to Ali et al. (2018), is "a restricted, intensive conceptualization of the relationship between the employee and his or her job." According to research by Rich et al. (2010), participation in work activities and good corporate citizenship are both positively correlated with employee

engagement. Werner (2013), on the other hand, states categorically that the long-term benefits of employee engagement consist of a larger number of satisfied and loyal consumers, more earnings, higher-quality outputs, and more opportunities for expansion. Employee involvement has been shown to have a significant effect on business success in a number of studies (Singh & Karki, 2015).

Having engaged personnel who are driven to work toward the organization's stated aims and objectives is crucial, claim Pillay and Singh (2018). To maintain market dominance, businesses must actively foster employee engagement as a strategic tool for gaining a competitive edge. The quality of the customer experience and customer loyalty are two measures of a company's success, and research by Robertson-Smith & Markwick (2013) and others has shown that employee engagement can influence both factors. Other studies have shown a connection between engagement and productivity.

Engaged workers typically beat their less-motivated counterparts by a margin of 22% to 21% in profitability and customer satisfaction (Sorenson, 2013). In this way, it represents the average worth of a company's workforce. Further supporting the centrality of employee engagement in harnessing business performance is empirical evidence presented by Ahmed, Khalid, et al. (2017), which may be viewed as a mediating model. Accordingly, a meta-analysis report also detailed how employee engagement contributed to a rise in the business performance index. Reputable organizational scientists have recently testified that businesses benefit from having workers who are "*engaged*" because they show "active involvement and immersion" in their work.

Research conducted by Pillay and Singh (2018) on a South African insurance company found that high levels of employee engagement have a positive effect on business outcomes for both the company and its employees. Anecdotes abound from those who have experienced the positive effects of employee engagement on organizational performance, including increased profits, a healthier bottom line, higher productivity, a more proactive approach to increasing revenue, and better customer service. Employees who are invested in their work are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty. This data suggests that workers who feel an emotional investment in their jobs are more likely to stay actively engaged in their work. Research has shown that when workers are invested in their work, they produce better results. According to these studies, employees whose actions demonstrate engagement can outperform those whose actions do not. In light of these findings, we argue that a highly engaged workforce is beneficial to businesses as a whole because it leads to higher productivity and efficiency overall. Hence, the following three hypotheses have been formulated:

*H1: There is a significant positive impact of dedication on college and university performance*

*H1: There is a significant positive impact of absorption on college and university performance*

*H1: There is a significant positive impact of vigour on college and university performance*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Design and Sampling*

This study is a quantitative survey with two main variables. Employee engagement is an independent variable and college or university performance is a dependent variable. The researcher used quantitative method because the goal was to measure the influence of Employee engagement on college and university performance. Data was collected from 400 staff of Colleges of Education and Technical Universities in Ghana. Convenience sampling technique was utilized to ensure willingness, accessibility and availability of respondents (Etikan et al., 2016). In principle, the convenience of the research subjects to the investigator at the time determines who gets to participate in the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Because the researcher has a history of selecting components based on their proximity to the data gathering process, convenience sampling is sometimes referred to as unintentional sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Despite the fact that convenience sampling is feasible and economical, there are still worries that the sample may be skewed or unrepresentative of the population under study (Etikan et al., 2016).

### *Data collection*

Data was collected using closed ended questions. Specifically in Likert scale format; that is from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The participants were both academic and administrative staff of Colleges of Education and Technical universities. Keeping in mind the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the researcher uploaded the questions in a standardized online portal (qualtrics) and distributed through online modes (social media, text message and emails) to the respondents. The researcher identified one or more individuals from each College and technical university and shared the questionnaire link and those people re-distributed to colleague staff.

### *Data Analysis*

Data was downloaded from qualtrics platform after two months of gathering. The total collected was 450 since the researcher did not have control over the responses online. However, after cleaning the data, a total of 395 formed the dataset. After downloading the data to SPSS, I tested for reliability, validity and loadings. In order to perform the hypotheses testing, I used AMOS version 24. The paths were measured using t-values, probability values and beta values. Employee Engagement is the independent variable with DAV model (dedication, absorption and vigour) as constructs, whilst Firm Performance is the dependent variable.

*Measures*

All the items used in this study were adapted from existing literature. The 3-item scales of college and university performance were borrowed from Deshpande et al. (1993) and Umrani et al. (2018). The employee engagement items were adapted from Ahmed et al. (2021). All the constructs were measured using 5-point Likert Scale.

**RESULTS***Reliability and Validity*

The researcher assessed the internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha. Since the alpha values exceeded the 0.7 threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2011), the measures in the instrument met the reliability criteria. Similarly, the analysis show adequacy of convergent validity of all constructs and variables since Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded the 0.7 benchmark (Hair et al., 2014) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also exceed the 0.5 threshold as recommended by Hair et al. (2016).

**Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b>Dedication</b>			<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.68</b>
	DD1	0.77			
	DD2	0.82			
	DD3	0.74			
	DD4	0.73			
<b>Absorption</b>			<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.71</b>
	ABS1	0.74			
	ABS2	0.80			
	ABS3	0.74			
	ABS4	0.76			
	ABS5	0.77			
<b>Vigour</b>			<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.66</b>
	VG1	0.71			
	VG2	0.72			
	VG3	0.74			
	VG4	0.73			
<b>University Performance</b>			<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.59</b>
	UP1	0.81			
	UP2	0.82			
	UP3	0.77			



**Table 2: Discriminant Validity**

Constructs	AVE	DD	ABS	VG	UP
Dedication	0.68	0.82			
Absorption	0.71	0.52	0.84		
Vigour	0.66	0.46	0.47	0.81	
University Performance	0.59	0.62	0.55	0.60	0.77

*Discriminant Validity*

In this research, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). After the correlation in Fornell-Larcker criterion, I assessed the difference using the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Per the threshold, the square root of AVE were all higher the inter-correlation values in table 2. Hence, the variances were detected confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs of this study (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015).

**Table 3: Hypothesis Testing**

Constructs	Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	p-value	Results
DD → UP	H1	0.53	11.58	0.000	Accepted
ABS → UP	H2	0.35	10.52	0.003	Accepted
VG → UP	H3	0.45	12.78	0.000	Accepted

After the preliminary analysis was satisfactory in the measurement model, the structural model was examined by testing the paths or the three hypotheses. According to the results in table 3, dedication has significant and positive influence on college and university performance in Ghanaian context ( $\beta = 0.53$ ;  $t = 11.58$ ; and  $p = 0.000$ ). Hence, hypothesis 1 was accepted. Similarly, absorption also demonstrated that it has a significant positive effect on college and university performance ( $\beta = 0.35$ ;  $t = 10.52$ ; and  $p = 0.003$ ), accepting hypothesis two. Consequently, vigour is also seen to have significant positive effect on college and university performance in Ghana's higher education sector ( $\beta = 0.45$ ;  $t = 12.78$ ; and  $p = 0.000$ ). This confirms hypothesis three.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The effect of staff involvement and college and university performance was examined in the current study. The study's initial test of the three hypotheses, which looked at the influence of dedication on college and university performance, produced significant and positive findings. The findings support the hypotheses that giving employees the chance to voice their opinions and participate in discussions about issues pertaining to their jobs improves their ability to serve, which in turn boosts performance. The results also support a prior study by Kim et al. (2010) that found that employee involvement contributes positively to improving performance-based

outcomes. The results also corroborate earlier studies showing how commitment can enhance performance (Jha et al., 2019).

The second hypothesis, which was evaluated in the current study, looked at the effect of absorption on college and university performance. The findings supported the hypothesis that employees who are given the chance to express their opinions, are engaged in their work, and are involved in decision-making are better able to complete tasks with fervor, which increases engagement and improves performance. The conclusion supports the findings of earlier research on this connection (Rees, Alfes & Gatenby, 2013; Ruck et al., 2017). In light of this, hypothesis two of the study also examined the relationship between vigor and company performance.

The findings supported the hypothesis that motivated workers were more proactive in carrying out their duties, which improved their college and university performance. According to results that have been proven (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020; Motyka, 2018; Bothma & Roodt, 2012), engaged workers perform better, which ultimately improves institutional performance. To put it another way, employee engagement is an internal mechanism that enables workers to raise their performance. Finally, the study has confirmed the significance of vigor in predicting employee engagement and college or university performance in Ghana.

#### *Implications*

In order to develop a connection with workers, college or university must first assure the accurate determinants of engagement. The study concluded that in order to increase employee involvement and attachment, firms should regularly engage in personal relationships of energy, commitment, and absorption with their workforce. As both employees and employers are eager to create an interaction connection based on exchange and mutual advantages, this study offers an empirical insight into the Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1961). From policy perspective, college or university should endeavour to develop scheme of service, staff welfare and other working documents that foster employee engagement.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of employee engagement on performance of higher educational institutions (universities and colleges) in Ghana. The study was able to bring to bear that employee engagement definitely has a greater effect on the performance of college or university. Engagement dimensions such as dedication, vigour and absorption have demonstrated significant impact on performance of college or university. According to **the** research, employee engagement in the firm is positively correlated with job satisfaction. From the theoretical standpoint, the trade or reciprocal link will develop an eagerness among employees to ensure their benefits. Hence, the main goal of the study was achieved.

*Limitation and future research*

Future research may be done to determine how employee engagement mediates over a longer period of time as the current study was cross sectional in nature. Therefore, examining employee engagement and its impact on marketing business success could be another fascinating area for future scholars since the study only took into account both financial and non-financial business performance. The present study, which successfully evaluated work vigor, dedication, and absorption, advances that future researchers may instill a further assessment of the mediating role of workers' engagement particularly for workload, community, and social support, perceived fairness, and values. Literature widely recognizes engagement as a positive antithesis of burnout. Finally, I advise future researchers to include control variables because they may rule out other possible causes for the research.

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