

Exploring the Nexus between Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement in the Public Service Sector in South-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study focused on organizational culture and employee engagement. The study explored the effect of organizational culture on employee engagement in the public service sector in South-East, Nigeria. This study adopted a survey research design. The staff of the selected public institutions in Southeastern states of Nigeria constitute the study population. The sample size of the study was 431 employees from the five states. Data obtained were presented in tables and percentages. Hypotheses were tested using structural equation model. Findings showed that adaptability culture has a significant positive effect on employee social engagement in the public service sector. Findings further revealed that involvement culture has a significant positive effect on employee emotional engagement in the public service sector. The study concluded that organizational culture significantly enhances employee engagement in the public service sector in South-East Nigeria. The study recommended that public service institutions should promote an adaptability culture by encouraging flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to change, and that they should strengthen involvement culture by actively engaging employees in decision-making and organizational processes.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, Adaptability Culture, Involvement Culture, Inclusive Culture

JEL Classification: M14, H83, O15

Introduction

When managing employees, organizational leaders rely not only on formal policies and procedures but also on shared beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that shape daily interactions—commonly referred to as organizational culture (OC) (Driskill, 2018; Ertosun & Adiguzel, 2018; Halilu et al., 2016; Warrick, 2017). This culture influences how information is interpreted, tasks are prioritized, and relationships are managed, often shaping employee engagement in ways that go beyond formal incentives or directives (Sharafizad et al., 2020; Tyagi, 2021). For instance, an adaptable culture may encourage employees to collaborate and respond flexibly to changing demands, an inclusive culture may foster a sense of belonging and reduce absenteeism, and recognition-oriented practices may enhance cognitive engagement by signaling the value of employees' contributions. These dynamics reflect broader findings in organizational research, where culture is shown to guide

behavior, motivate performance, and generate competitive advantage (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022; Khan et al., 2020).

The study of organizational culture has a rich intellectual history, with its modern conceptualization emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as researchers sought to explain why some firms outperformed others even within the same national context (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Pandya, 2019). Scholars such as Schein (2010) highlighted that culture operates both to integrate employees internally and to adapt to external environmental pressures, shaping decision-making, leadership, and everyday work practices. Complementary models, such as Tedla's (2016) framework of mission, involvement, consistency, and flexibility, emphasize the mechanisms through which culture can be cultivated to enhance organizational effectiveness. Despite its long-standing recognition, culture remains a complex and multifaceted construct, encompassing formal and informal rules, shared assumptions, and emotional attachments to the organization (Saleem et al., 2020).

Employee engagement—defined as the physical, emotional, and cognitive investment employees make in their work—is closely linked to organizational culture (SMRM, 2022; Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2019). Engaged employees exhibit vigor, dedication, and absorption, translating cultural alignment into higher productivity, improved work quality, and sustained organizational performance (Huang et al., 2022; Nafiu et al. 2023; Nugraha & Rukhviyanti, 2024). From a social exchange perspective, when employees perceive that their organization fosters supportive norms, recognition, and inclusive practices, they are more likely to reciprocate through increased commitment, proactive behavior, and retention (Saleem et al., 2020; SHRM, 2022). Conversely, misalignment between employee values and organizational culture may result in disengagement, absenteeism, or turnover (Turner & Turner, 2020; Salamon et al., 2022).

In the context of Nigeria, and specifically the public service sector in South-East Nigeria, employees operate within environments shaped by bureaucratic processes, resource constraints, and policy inconsistencies (Akpa et al., 2021; Agbo & Okeoma, 2020). Existing studies have largely focused on administrative efficiency and performance metrics, leaving the cultural underpinnings of engagement underexplored. For instance, while research has examined productivity, less attention has been given to how adaptability, involvement, inclusiveness, recognition, teamwork, and communication collectively influence social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. This creates a significant knowledge gap between international theories of organizational culture and the lived realities of public service employees in South-East Nigeria.

The present study addresses this gap by applying organizational culture theory to explore how shared beliefs, norms, and values shape engagement outcomes. It emphasizes that employee engagement is not merely a technical outcome of policies or incentives but a culturally mediated process influenced by social norms, organizational support, and relational dynamics. By examining the specific components of culture—adaptability, involvement and inclusiveness—this study seeks to illuminate how organizational culture drives engagement in the Nigerian public service sector.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to explore the effect of organizational culture on employee engagement in the public service sector in South-East, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the extent to which adaptability culture affects employee social engagement in the public service sector in South-East, Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain how Involvement culture affects employee emotional engagement in the public service sector in South-East, Nigeria.
- iii. Identify the extent to which inclusive culture affects employees' low rate of absenteeism in the public service sector in South-East Nigeria.

Literature review

Theoretical foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in Schein's (1985) theory of organizational culture, which posits that culture comprises three interrelated levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions, all of which collectively shape employee behavior and organizational outcomes. In the context of the public service sector in South-East Nigeria, Schein's model provides a lens to understand how organizational culture influences employee engagement across social, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. At the artifact level, observable practices such as teamwork, communication, and recognition mechanisms manifest the organization's values and directly affect employees' social and emotional engagement (Makumbe & Washaya, 2022; Nanayakkara & Wilkinson, 2021). Espoused values, including adaptability, involvement, and inclusiveness, guide employees' attitudes toward work and their interactions with colleagues, fostering a sense of belonging, commitment, and reduced absenteeism (Akpa et al., 2021; Pell & Amigud, 2023). At the deepest level, shared assumptions about the importance of collaboration, organizational loyalty, and professional responsibility underpin cognitive and affective engagement, shaping how employees internalize organizational goals and respond to institutional norms (Asare-Obeng et al., 2025). Empirical studies demonstrate that a strong, well-aligned culture can enhance engagement by providing clear behavioral expectations, promoting psychological safety, and motivating employees to contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives (Quinn et al., 2025; Makumbe & Washaya, 2022). Specifically, adaptability culture encourages employees to adjust to evolving policies and work demands, thereby increasing social engagement; involvement culture fosters emotional attachment and dedication to work; and inclusive culture promotes equity and recognition, which reduces absenteeism (Akpa et al., 2021; Nanayakkara & Wilkinson, 2021). By applying Schein's theoretical framework, this study provides a structured approach to examining how the layers of organizational culture interact to influence employee engagement, highlighting the interplay between visible practices, declared values, and deep-rooted assumptions in shaping workforce attitudes and behaviors in public sector organizations in South-East Nigeria.

Hypothesis development

Adaptability culture provides organizations with flexible structures and behavioral norms that enable employees to adjust to changing circumstances, collaborate effectively, and respond proactively to challenges (Akpa et al., 2021; Nanayakkara & Wilkinson, 2021). Such cultures encourage open communication, experimentation, and interdepartmental cooperation, which create opportunities for employees to build strong social networks, exchange knowledge, and support colleagues (Putri et al., 2021; Dasgupta & Dey, 2021). By fostering a climate of flexibility and responsiveness, adaptability culture reduces rigidity in work processes and allows employees to engage with peers in ways that promote teamwork, trust, and shared responsibility (Febrian &

Solihin, 2024; Hernandez, 2022). However, while adaptability culture facilitates social engagement, its effectiveness may be influenced by organizational structures and individual perceptions; employees may still resist collaboration if underlying assumptions or informal norms do not fully align with adaptive practices (Kuronzwi, 2019; Joseph & Kibera, 2019).

Empirical studies highlight the dual role of adaptability culture in social engagement. For example, organizations with highly adaptive cultures report increased peer-to-peer interaction, higher participation in group initiatives, and stronger relational bonds among employees, all of which contribute to organizational cohesion and performance (Tannady et al., 2019; Umemezia & Osifo, 2021). Conversely, without clear guidance or alignment with espoused values, adaptability may create ambiguity, leading employees to struggle with prioritization or engagement in collaborative tasks (Heslina & Syahrini, 2021; Smith & Jones, 2021). In the context of public service organizations in Nigeria, where hierarchical structures and resource constraints are common, adaptability culture can enhance social engagement by promoting flexibility and relational support, yet it may also be limited by entrenched routines or bureaucratic inertia (Akpa et al., 2021; SHRM, 2022). Therefore, adaptability culture functions as both an enabler of employee social engagement and a potential constraint when structural or perceptual barriers inhibit the full realization of adaptive behaviors. Hence the hypothesis that:

H1: Adaptability culture has a significant effect on employee social engagement.

Involvement culture emphasizes employee participation, empowerment, and shared responsibility in decision-making processes (Akpa et al., 2021). By promoting inclusivity in organizational processes and valuing employees' input, involvement culture strengthens employees' emotional attachment to their work and the organization, fostering a sense of ownership, pride, and commitment (Putri et al., 2021; Dasgupta & Dey, 2021). Emotional engagement, characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and identification with one's role, reflects the degree to which employees invest affective energy in organizational activities and relationships (Huang et al., 2022; Turner & Turner, 2020). Organizations that cultivate involvement culture encourage open communication, collaboration, and participatory decision-making, which create opportunities for employees to express concerns, share ideas, and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals, thereby enhancing their emotional connection to the workplace (Johnson & Lee, 2020; Febrian & Solihin, 2024).

Empirical studies suggest that when employees perceive high levels of involvement in organizational processes, their emotional engagement increases, leading to higher motivation, morale, and commitment to performance objectives (Saks, 2022; Umemezia & Osifo, 2021). Conversely, lack of involvement can result in disengagement, emotional detachment, and decreased commitment, highlighting the mediating role of culture in shaping affective work outcomes (Heslina & Syahrini, 2021; Singh, 2019). Research further demonstrates that involvement culture is associated with trust, psychological safety, and perceived fairness, which are critical determinants of emotional engagement (Tannady et al., 2019; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). In public service organizations, where hierarchical structures and bureaucratic constraints often dominate, fostering an involvement culture can counteract emotional alienation, encouraging employees to participate actively and develop stronger affective bonds with their work (Joseph & Kibera, 2019; SHRM, 2022). The literature indicates that involvement culture operates as a driver of emotional engagement by embedding employees in meaningful organizational processes,

cultivating affective attachment, and reinforcing intrinsic motivation to contribute to organizational success (Saleem et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022). Thus, we hypothesize that:

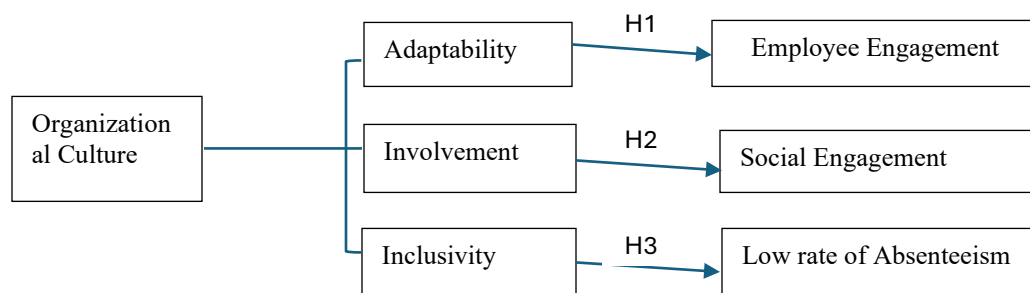
H2: Involvement culture has a significant effect on employee emotional engagement.

Previous studies have shown that organizational culture dimensions, including adaptability, involvement, and inclusivity, significantly influence employee engagement outcomes in public service organizations (Akpa et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2021). Adaptability culture—the degree to which organizations encourage flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation—enables employees to adjust to changing work conditions, collaborate effectively, and engage socially with colleagues (Dasgupta & Dey, 2021; Febrian & Solihin, 2024). Employees in highly adaptive environments are more likely to participate in knowledge sharing, peer support, and cooperative tasks, which fosters social engagement and strengthens relational networks across the organization (Hernandez, 2022; Umemezia & Osifo, 2021).

Involvement culture, which emphasizes participation, empowerment, and shared decision-making, plays a critical role in shaping employees' emotional engagement. By creating opportunities for employees to contribute to organizational decisions and express their perspectives, involvement culture enhances affective attachment, pride, and commitment to organizational goals (Pandya, 2021; Dasgupta & Dey, 2021). Studies indicate that when employees perceive their voices are heard and their input valued, their emotional investment in work increases, resulting in higher motivation, enthusiasm, and dedication (Huang et al., 2022; Johnson & Lee, 2020). Conversely, limited participation or weak involvement structures can lead to disengagement and reduced emotional commitment, highlighting the mediating role of organizational culture in fostering affective work behaviors (Saks, 2022; Tannady et al., 2019).

Inclusive culture, which prioritizes equity, recognition, and fair treatment of all employees, has been shown to reduce absenteeism by strengthening employees' sense of belonging, trust, and organizational commitment (SHRM, 2022; Akpa et al., 2021). Research suggests that inclusive practices—such as equitable opportunity, acknowledgment of contributions, and supportive peer relationships—encourage employees to attend work consistently, as they perceive the organization as fair, supportive, and responsive to their needs (Joseph & Kibera, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). Moreover, inclusive culture enhances engagement by aligning employees' intrinsic motivation with organizational expectations, thereby reducing withdrawal behaviors and promoting consistent attendance (Febrian & Solihin, 2024; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Inclusive culture has a significant effect on employees' low rate of absenteeism.



Source: Researchers, 2025.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design to obtain quantitative data on the nexus between organizational culture and employee engagement. The survey was carried out systematically. An initial approval and introduction letter was sent to the management of the selected organizations, followed by direct contact with departmental heads to facilitate access to respondents. Respondents were adequately informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was strictly voluntary. Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to survey. These procedures were implemented to ensure accuracy of the data collected for subsequent analysis.

Population and sampling

The staff of the selected public institutions in Southeastern states of Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states), constitute the study population, and were randomly selected from various ministries. The selected employees, their states of engagement, and their population are presented below:

Table 1 Population of the Study

States	Employees
Abia	1300
Anambra	1700
Ebonyi	1000
Enugu	1500
Imo	1700
Total	7200

Source: Researchers adopted a population based on 2016 National Population Census figures distribution among South-Eastern states in Nigeria.

The sample size of the study was 431 employees from the five states that made up South-East, Nigeria. The sample was determined using a proportionate sampling technique, and Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical formula for sample size determination from a finite population was used to determine the sample size for the study. The formula is stated as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 NP (1-P)}{d^2 N - 1 + X^2 P (1-P)}$$

Where: $d^2 N - 1 + X^2 P (1-P)$

n = Sample size

x^2 = The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = The population size.

P = The population proportion (assumed to be 0.5 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05).

The sample size was divided among the five states in South-East, Nigeria, using the proportionality formula.

$$\text{Thus, } Q = \frac{An}{N_x 1}$$

Where:

Q = the number of questionnaires to be allocated to each state.

A = the adopted employees' population of each of the five states.

N = the total population of the five states.

n = the estimated sample size to be used in the study.

Table 2 Sample Size Distribution

S/N	State	Number of Employees	Sample Size Determination	Sample Size for Each State
1	Abia	1300	1300 x 431/7200	77
2	Anambra	1700	1700 x 431/7200	102
3	Ebonyi	1000	1000 x 431/7200	60
4	Enugu	1500	1500 x 431/7200	90
5	Imo	1700	1700 x 431/7200	102
	Total	7200		431

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2025

Description of Research Instrument

A self-structured questionnaire was used as the tool for gathering data for this study. The questionnaire was developed to improve data collection for the study. It is divided into two sections; the first section comprises the respondents' demographic data, while the second section contains questions structured in line with the variables as stated in the objectives of the study. To rate the respondents' responses to the items in section two of the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was used.

To confirm the validity of the research instrument, content validity was used. This ensured that basic aspects of the variables were covered in the research instrument. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used as the test statistic to measure the construct's reliability, and it was used to determine the questionnaire's internal consistency. Table 3 shows that the instrument is reliable (given that the variables have values above 0.7).

Table 3 Reliability of the instrument

S/N	Variables	Items	Results (α)
1	Adaptability culture	5	0.771
2	Involvement culture	5	0.722
3	Inclusive culture	5	0.864
4	Social engagement	5	0.920
5	Emotional engagement	5	0.725
6	Low rate of absenteeism	5	0.881

Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained were presented in tables and percentages. The hypotheses were tested with a structural equation model, and data were analyzed with the aid of AMOS-IBM.

Data Analyses and Results

This section presents demographics, model fit and test of hypotheses. Out of the 431 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 378 were successfully returned, representing a high response rate of 87.7%. This high return rate was considered reliable for data analysis.

Table 4 Demographics of Respondents

Demography	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	214	56.6
Female	164	43.4
Age		
18 – 25 years	79	20.9
26 – 35 years	107	28.3
36 – 45 years	105	27.8
46 – 55 years	61	16.1
56 years and above	26	6.9
Education		
OND/Equivalence	89	23.5
HND/B.Sc	141	37.3
MBA/M.Sc	102	27.0
PhD	46	12.2
Experience		
Less than 1 year	45	11.9
1 – 5 years	41	10.8
6 – 10 years	78	20.6
11 – 15 years	103	27.2
Above 15 years	111	29.4

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 4 shows the gender of respondents. The results show that 214 respondents (56.6%) were male, and 164 respondents (43.4%) were female. The implication is that the majority of the respondents in the study area were male. The table shows that 79 respondents (20.9%) were between 18–25 years; 107 respondents (28.3%) were between 26–35 years; 105 respondents (27.8%) were between 36–45 years; 61 respondents (16.1%) were between 46–55 years; and 26 respondents (6.9%) were 56 years and above. The result shows that the majority of the respondents in the study areas were within the age group of 26–35 years.

Table 4 shows that 108 respondents (28.6%) were single; 190 respondents (50.3%) were married; 30 respondents (7.9%) were widowed; 27 respondents (7.1%) were separated; and 23 respondents (6.1%) were divorced. The implication is that the majority of respondents in the study area were married. It indicates that 89 respondents (23.5%) had OND or its equivalent; 141 respondents (37.3%) held HND or B.Sc degrees; 102 respondents (27.0%) possessed MBA or M.Sc qualifications; and 46 respondents (12.2%) had PhDs. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of the respondents had attained higher education, with the majority holding HND/B.Sc

degrees. Specifically, 29.4% have worked for over 15 years, making this the largest group, followed by 27.2% who have served between 11–15 years. Those with 6–10 years of service represent 20.6% of the respondents, while 11.9% have less than one year of experience, and 10.8% fall within the 1–5 years range. This distribution indicates that the sample includes a balanced mix of both long-serving and newer employees, which contributes to a well-rounded perspective in the study findings.

Table 5 Model Fit

Fit Indices	Model	Default Model	Saturated Model	Independence Model
CMIN	NPAR	75	465	30
	CMIN	512.380	.000	7918.807
	DF	390	0	435
	P	.000		.000
	CMIN/DF	1.314		18.204
RMR, GFI	RMR	.065	.000	.398
	GFI	.918	1.000	.373
	AGFI	.902		.330
	PGFI	.770		.349
	NFI	.935	1.000	.000
Baseline Comparisons	(Delta1)			
	RFI (rho1)	.928		.000
	IFI (Delta2)	.984	1.000	.000
	TLI (rho2)	.982		.000
	CFI	.984	1.000	.000
Parsimony-Adjusted Measures	PRATIO	.897	.000	1.000
	PNFI	.839	.000	.000
	PCFI	.882	.000	.000
	NCP	122.380	.000	7483.807
	LO 90	67.794	.000	7198.321
FMIN	HI 90	185.069	.000	7775.691
	FMIN	1.359	.000	21.005
	F0	.325	.000	19.851
	LO 90	.180	.000	19.094
	HI 90	.491	.000	20.625
RMSEA	RMSEA	.029		.214
	LO 90	.021		.210
	HI 90	.035		.218
	PCLOSE	1.000		.000
	AIC	662.380	930.000	7978.807
AIC	BCC	675.819	1013.324	7984.182
	BIC	957.497	2759.726	8096.853
	CAIC	1032.497	3224.726	8126.853
	ECVI	1.757	2.467	21.164

LO 90	1.612	2.467	20.407
HI 90	1.923	2.467	21.938
MECVI	1.793	2.688	21.178

Source: Amos-IBM

Table 5 shows that the chi-square test (CMIN) is significant (512.380, $p = .000$), indicating some discrepancy between the model and the observed data. The Chi-Square/df Ratio (1.314) is well below the commonly accepted threshold of 3, suggesting a good model fit, with values closer to 1 considered ideal.

The RMR value (.065) is relatively low, which is desirable, as smaller residuals indicate better fit between the observed and predicted values. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = .918) exceeds the .90 threshold, indicating a good model fit. Similarly, the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI = .902) also meets the recommended minimum, confirming the adequacy of the model. The Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI = .770) suggests a favorable balance between model fit and simplicity.

Baseline comparison indices further support the model's fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI = .935), Relative Fit Index (RFI = .928), Incremental Fit Index (IFI = .984), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = .982), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .984) all surpass the recommended threshold of .90. These values indicate that the default model represents a substantial improvement over the independence model.

Parsimony-adjusted indices, including the PRATIO (.897), PNFI (.839), and PCFI (.882), indicate a good balance between fit and model complexity. High PRATIO values close to 1 suggest that the model uses a reasonable number of parameters relative to its fit. The Non-Centrality Parameter (NCP = 122.380) reflects some deviation from perfect fit but is substantially lower than that of the independence model (7483.807), indicating a major improvement. The Fit Minimum (FMIN = 1.359) and its associated F0 value (.325) are relatively low, suggesting a strong alignment between the model and observed data.

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .029) is well below the critical value of .08, indicating excellent model fit. The confidence interval for RMSEA (.021–.035) reinforces this conclusion, and the PCLOSE value (1.000) suggests a high probability that the RMSEA is less than .05, indicating very close fit. The fit statistics support the model's adequacy. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC = 662.380), consistent with other indices such as the BCC, BIC, and CAIC, is markedly lower than the values from the independence model, suggesting better model performance. The Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI = 1.757), along with its confidence interval, is substantially lower than that of the independence model, indicating that the model is likely to perform well on other samples.

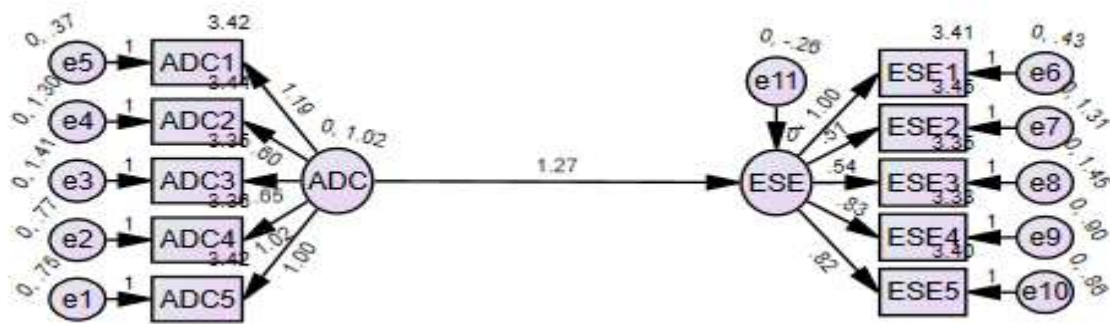


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model on adaptability culture and employee social engagement

Source: Amos-IBM

Table 6 Regression Weights on adaptability culture and employee social engagement

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
ESE	<---	ADC	1.268	.062	20.389	0.000

Source: Amos-IBM

Table 6 shows the results of the regression analysis examining the effect of adaptability culture on employee social engagement. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 1.268$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in adaptability culture, employee social engagement is expected to increase by 1.268 units. This implies a strong positive relationship between adaptability culture and employee social engagement. Figure 2 shows the strength of the measuring parameters of adaptability culture and its explanatory power over employee social engagement. This resonates with the regression coefficient in Table 6. The standard error (S.E. = 0.062) represents the standard deviation of the regression coefficient, reflecting the accuracy of the coefficient estimate. The smaller S.E. indicates a more precise estimate.

The Critical Ratio (C.R. = 20.389) is the ratio of the regression coefficient to its standard error ($\beta/\text{S.E.}$). It is equivalent to the t-value in traditional regression analysis. The C.R. value greater than ± 1.96 indicates statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. The p-value indicates the probability of observing the relationship by chance. The p-value (p-value < 0.01) shows that the effect of adaptability culture on employee social engagement is statistically significant.

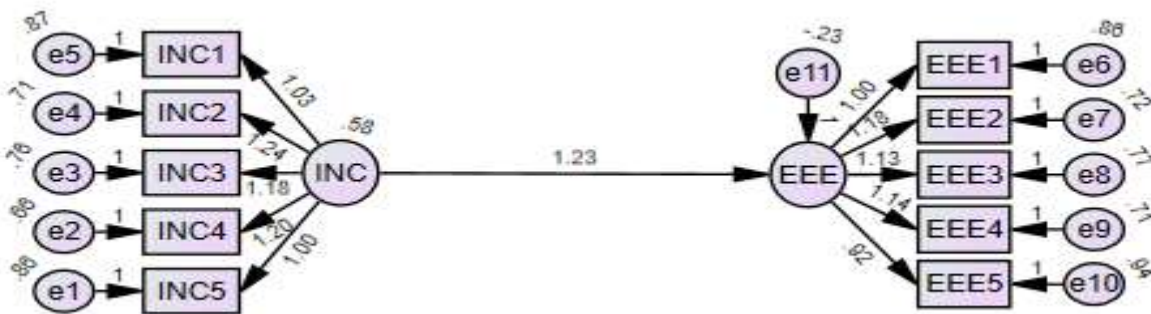


Figure 3. Structural Equation Model on involvement culture and employee emotional engagement
Source: Amos-IBM

Table 7 Regression weights on involvement culture and employee emotional engagement

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
EEE	<---	INC	1.232	.093	13.196	0.000

Source: Amos-IBM

Table 7 shows the results of the regression analysis examining the effect of involvement culture on employee emotional engagement. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 1.232$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in involvement culture, employee emotional engagement is expected to increase by 1.232 units. This implies a strong positive relationship between involvement culture and employee emotional engagement. Figure 3 shows the strength of the measuring parameters of involvement culture and its explanatory power over employee emotional engagement. This resonates with the regression coefficient in Table 7. The standard error (S.E. = 0.093) represents the standard deviation of the regression coefficient, reflecting the accuracy of the coefficient estimate. The smaller S.E. indicates a more precise estimate.

The Critical Ratio (C.R. = 13.196) is the ratio of the regression coefficient to its standard error ($\beta/\text{S.E.}$). It is equivalent to the t-value in traditional regression analysis. The C.R. value greater than ± 1.96 indicates statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. The p-value indicates the probability of observing the relationship by chance. The p-value ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$) shows that the effect of involvement culture on employee emotional engagement is statistically significant.

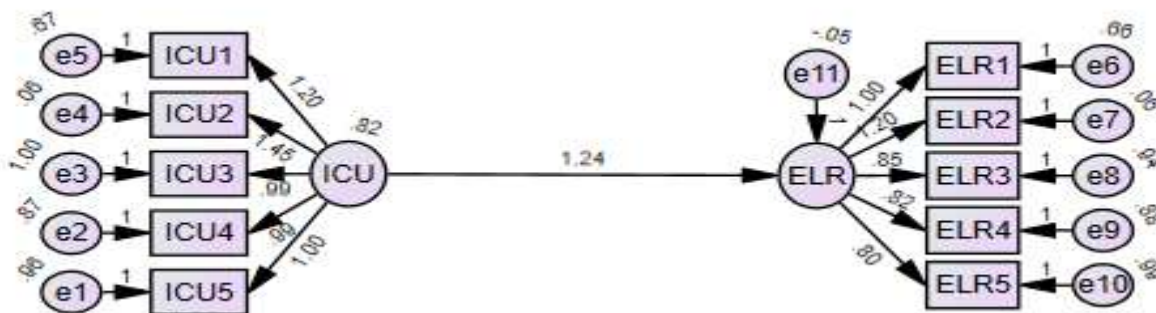


Figure 4. Structural Equation Model on inclusive culture and employees' low rate of absenteeism
Source: Amos-IBM

Table 8 Regression weights on inclusive culture and employees' low rate of absenteeism

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ELR	<---	ICU	1.239	.082	15.070	0.000

Source: Amos-IBM

Table 8 shows the results of the regression analysis examining the effect of inclusive culture on employees' low rate of absenteeism. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 1.239$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in inclusive culture, the rate of absenteeism among employees is expected to decrease (i.e., absenteeism becomes lower) by 1.239 units. This implies a strong positive relationship between inclusive culture and reduced absenteeism. Figure 4 shows the strength of the measuring parameters of inclusive culture and its explanatory power over employees' low rate of absenteeism. This resonates with the regression coefficient in Table 8. The standard error (S.E. = 0.082) represents the standard deviation of the regression coefficient, reflecting the accuracy of the coefficient estimate. The smaller S.E. indicates a more precise estimate.

The Critical Ratio (C.R. = 15.070) is the ratio of the regression coefficient to its standard error ($\beta/\text{S.E.}$). It is equivalent to the t-value in traditional regression analysis. The C.R. value greater than ± 1.96 indicates statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. The p-value indicates the probability of observing the relationship by chance. The p-value (p-value < 0.01) shows that the effect of inclusive culture on employees' low rate of absenteeism is statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

Findings showed that adaptability culture has a significant positive effect on employee social engagement in the public service sector. This implies that a culture which encourages learning, openness, and responsiveness helps foster stronger social bonds among employees, resulting in greater participation in organizational activities and a sense of belonging. Ghani and Taylor (2023) and Abduraimi et al. (2023) affirm the importance of organizational culture in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, particularly social engagement. This finding supports Schein's Three Levels of Organizational Culture theory, which posits that organizational culture influences behavior through shared values and underlying assumptions. In adaptable cultures, the shared belief in responsiveness and innovation becomes embedded in daily practices, influencing how employees connect with each other socially. Donley (2021) showed that in environments where adaptability is valued, employees report higher levels of collaboration, morale, and job satisfaction. Studies by Ejaz et al. (2024) and Khan et al. (2024) found that adaptability culture was associated with increased employee involvement and team cohesion. Similarly, research (Billett & Le, 2024; Moşteanu, 2024) in other contexts has demonstrated that adaptability leads to a more engaged, communicative, and resilient workforce. Compared to existing research, this study confirms and reinforces the broader literature by demonstrating that the same cultural dynamics found in corporate or Western contexts also apply to public institutions in Nigeria.

Findings revealed that involvement culture has a significant positive effect on employee emotional engagement in the public service sector. This implies that public service organizations in Southeast Nigeria can enhance employee emotional engagement by fostering a culture where collaboration, empowerment, and employee voice are prioritized. Oladimeji et al. (2023) confirmed that involvement culture creates an environment where employees feel trusted and appreciated, which increases motivation and commitment. The finding supports the Self-Determination Theory, which posits that individuals are more motivated and emotionally engaged when their basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are fulfilled. This finding is consistent with research showing that involvement and participative management lead to higher emotional

engagement across various sectors. Studies by Pathan (2023) and Oladimeji et al. (2023) have demonstrated that organizations with strong involvement cultures experience higher morale and organizational commitment.

Findings showed that inclusiveness has a significant positive effect on employee low rate of employee absenteeism in the public service sector. This implies that inclusive workplace practices in the public service sector not only boost morale but also translate into tangible organizational benefits such as improved attendance. When employees feel that their voices matter and that they belong, they are less likely to disengage or be absent without cause. Nishii and Leroy (2020) highlight the practical value of inclusiveness in reducing unplanned absences. In many public institutions, absenteeism can be a chronic issue due to low motivation, perceived marginalization, or lack of recognition. This finding supports the Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that people are more intrinsically motivated to act when their needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence are met. AlMunthiri et al. (2024) and Shafaei et al. (2024) assert that an inclusive workplace nurtures relatedness by building social connections and psychological safety, which in turn promotes higher levels of commitment and presence at work. It also aligns, to a degree, with Schein's Three Levels of Organizational Culture theory, particularly the espoused values and basic assumptions levels. A culture that truly values inclusiveness embeds it in everyday behaviors and expectations, shaping a norm where attendance is seen as both a responsibility and a reflection of engagement. This finding is consistent with existing research indicating that inclusiveness reduces absenteeism. Studies in both private and public sectors have shown that inclusive practices increase job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviors—factors that are inversely related to absenteeism (Kim, 2023).

Conclusion

The study concludes that organizational culture significantly enhances employee engagement in the public service sector in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, adaptability culture fosters social engagement by enabling employees to interact confidently and adjust to changes in a dynamic work environment. Involvement culture promotes emotional engagement by making employees feel valued and included in decision-making processes, enhancing their emotional commitment. Inclusiveness contributes to a low rate of absenteeism as employees experience a sense of belonging, leading to improved attendance and dedication to their roles. These elements of culture provide a foundation for loyalty, enthusiasm, and dependable workforce participation.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Public service institutions should promote an adaptability culture by encouraging flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to change. This will enhance employees' social engagement, fostering collaboration and stronger interpersonal relationships in the workplace.
2. Public service organizations should strengthen involvement culture by actively engaging employees in decision-making and organizational processes. This approach will deepen emotional engagement, leading to greater loyalty, motivation, and a sense of belonging among staff.

3. Public service institutions should foster an inclusive work environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and heard. This will reduce absenteeism by increasing employee satisfaction, commitment, and a sense of belonging.

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