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Employee Engagement and Workplace Wellbeing: Examining the Role of Leadership and Organizational Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract

In an uncertain labour market, companies are more focused than ever on employee engagement and workplace wellbeing. These are particularly relevant in Nigeria where the work environment is characterized by high levels of work pressure, economic insecurity, inconsistent management capacity, limited infrastructure, and rapid digitisation and variations in organizational maturity. This article critically makes an examination on the role of leadership and organizational culture, in relation to employees' engagement and wellbeing in Nigerian workplaces. It is based on the Job Demands-Resources theory, Kahn's psychological conditions of engagement and on social exchange theory, the paper combines international evidence with studies in Nigeria carried out in non banking, telecommunication, healthcare, non banking, manufacturing, hospitality and non profit organizations. Clarity, support, fairness and meaningful participation by the leaders, generally, increases vigor, dedication, psychological safety and trust, as reflected by the review. The review reveals that generally, providing clarity, support, fairness and meaningful participation by leaders increases vigor, dedication, psychological safety and trust. In contrast, poor leadership, such as abuse, inconsistent or laissez-faire leadership, exacerbates uncertainty and resource depletion. These leadership effects are reinforced or neutralized in the context of the broader social architecture – the organizational culture. Involved, fair, learning, recognizing, communicating and concerned cultures have been linked to increased employee engagement and health, while politicized, rigid or fear-based cultures have been linked to decreased employee engagement and health. Evidence from Nigeria also indicates that when workload is too high and work-family boundaries are not well managed, high engagement can go hand-in-hand with strain. The article, therefore, challenges the notion that engagement is an absolute productivity goal. Joint job resource management is essential to sustainable engagement, alongside joint psychosocial risk & cultural norm management. Adopting manager development, redesigning workloads, employee voice systems, psychologically safe communication, wellbeing metrics, fair performance management and culture interventions in different sectors are among the practical recommendations. Finally, the paper identifies a research agenda, with special focus on longitudinal, multilevel and intervention-based studies in Nigeria.

Key words: *employee engagement; workplace wellbeing; leadership; organizational culture; Nigeria; job demands-resources; psychological safety*

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1. Introduction

Employee engagement has shifted from an ancillary human-resource issue to a measure of organizational ability. When people are engaged, they put their thoughts, feelings, and actions into their work, and when they are disengaged, they withdraw, put less effort into their work, and are less likely to feel connected to organizational objectives. The argument that individuals become personally engaged when work provides psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability is provided by Kahn (1990). Subsequent studies defined engagement as a positive work-related state of mind reflected in vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Task performance, contextual performance, retention, and broader organizational effectiveness have been correlated with engagement in a meta-analysis (Christian et al., 2011). However, engagement does not equate to wellbeing. Committed workers can also feel exhausted, overworked, experience work-family conflict and/or suffering from poor mental well-being. This separation is important because it could be that while an organization celebrates hard work, they might not be paying attention to the price paid for the hard work.

The tension is very appropriate to the Nigerian workplace. 17% of Nigerian workers were employed in 2025, lower than the Sub-Saharan African average of 19% and the world average of 20%, while 55% of workers reported feeling a lot of stress during the day, compared to 33% at the Sub-Saharan African and 35% at global level, and only 19% described their overall life conditions as thriving in 2025, compared to 23% at Sub-Saharan Africa and 25% at global level (Gallup, 2026). These are not accurate reflections of the size of a single sector, but rather an indication of the challenging environment for employees. There are pressures in the Nigerian context that can impact on engagement and wellbeing too: inflation and financial burden for households, long commuting times in major cities, power and connectivity issues, skills shortages, job insecurity, the transition to remote and hybrid working arrangements, customer demands and in some industries, a strong hierarchy. What management needs to do is not only to get more effort but to make effort sustainable and psychologically healthy.

In particular, leadership and organizational culture play a significant role on this. How employees feel about immediate priorities, workload, recognition, fairness, change and interpersonal treatment depends on leadership. These experiences become internalised within a culture of shared assumptions regarding what is valued, tolerated and rewarded. A supportive leader in a punitive culture has a limited ability to influence, and so too does an organisation that values wellbeing one that has a culture that promotes incivility or unrealistic workloads. The most useful view is then relational and multi-level, how the provision of resources and psychological safety is nurtured by leadership, how the norms, to which those leadership behaviours are related, are maintained in an organizational culture.

This article investigates the relationship between leadership and employee engagement and wellbeing in the workplace in Nigeria. It answers four questions: How does leadership contribute to engagement and wellbeing? How does organizational culture impact those outcomes? How do leadership and culture relate to one another? What can organizations in Nigeria do to foster sustainable engagement instead of extractive engagement? The discussion combines the existing international evidence with recent Nigeria-specific studies. The article is integrative review approach, as it is not a research that aims to acquire new empirical data, but is explanatory and evaluative; in this way, it is possible to make a distinction between the empirical findings and the theoretical interpretation.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

Employee engagement is the term for a motivational, energetic, and intentional relationship between an employee and work. Kahn's (1990) model focuses on the desire to engage the self in role performance when the work is meaningful, psychologically safe and is compatible with physical and emotional resources. The

Utrecht tradition defines work engagement as the experience of vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). A common theme in these formulations is the concept of engagement as an expression of active investment, not just job satisfaction. Satisfaction can be without a high activation, while engagement requires energy, identification and persistence. Based on the social exchange theory, Saks (2006) further divided job engagement from organizational engagement and found that employees' return for positive exchanges with their organization is reflected in greater job engagement.

Wellbeing in the workplace is wider. It encompasses positive affect, mental and physical performance, controllable stress, positive social engagement, autonomy, safety and ability to bounce back from work demands. The World Health Organization (2022) sees mental health at work as an organisation-wide as well as an individual concern and suggests interventions that mitigate psychosocial work risks, improve managerial capacity and promote work engagement. This aligns with evidence showing that wellbeing is not only about resilience workshops or coping programmes for individuals – if workload, unfairness or harmful leadership is not changing. In this review, wellbeing in the workplace is defined as the ability to sustain good psychological, social and functional health as it pertains to work rather than absence of diagnosed disease-conditions.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory serves as the main integrative lens. Job demands refer to job-related tasks that require prolonged effort, and therefore lead to psychological and/or physiological costs, whereas job resources are those that enable employees to attain goals, to lower demands and facilitate learning or growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). One of the key resources is leadership, and leadership is defined as the allocation of information, autonomy, feedback, recognition, support and developmental opportunities. Organizational culture affects the normal and predictable nature of those resources or their discretionary and unpredictable nature. JD-R theory also explains why, despite having lots of resources, one could feel engaged and at the same time feel strained as well, because lots of strain, if not followed by adequate recovery, may lead to a depletion of resources and consequently to poor wellbeing.

This explanation is enhanced with three complementary theories. Firstly, the social exchange theory implies that when employees feel supported, treated fairly and invested in, they feel their commitment to their company and give back with discretionary effort (Saks, 2006). Second, psychological safety is the reason that employees are more likely to be engaged when they are able to ask questions, admit mistakes, raise concerns, and propose ideas without fear of humiliation or punishment. Third, according to organizational culture theory, values and norms are shared, as are expectations of behavior. Denison and Mishra (1995) recognized involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission as cultural characteristics of effectiveness. The dimensions are pertinent in the context of engagement as they relate to participation, coherence, learning and strategic meaning for employees. In combination, these attitudes forecast engagement that is most likely to be sustainable when leadership equips people with resources, fosters psychological safety, and creates a culture that continually promotes fairness, voice, learning, and employee well-being.

3. Review Approach

The article uses an integrative evidence-review design. Peer-reviewed literature was identified from the management, organizational psychology, occupational health, and human-resource studies with an emphasis on meta-analysis, systematic reviews, and large theory papers or empirical studies in Nigeria. The Nigerian evidence was used recently to put the literature in perspective, not as an indicator that the results of one state, sector or organisation is representative of all work in Nigeria. Institutional evidence from the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization and Gallup was introduced where it added relevant context to the workplace-health or workplace-engagement aspects.

The synthesis was structured in four analytic areas: leadership and engagement, leadership and wellbeing, organizational culture and employee outcomes, and the interaction between organizational culture and

leadership and job demands. Special emphasis was placed on methodological weaknesses. The majority of engagement research, such as a significant portion of leadership research, is cross-sectional in nature and based on self-reported perceptions. In a meta-analysis of 45 countries, Li et al. (2021) pointed out that the rigorous use of cross-sectional designs can limit causal inference. A similar trend occurs also among the studies conducted in Nigeria, where cross-sectional surveys are used. Therefore, this review does not attempt to state that associations are causal effects.

4. Leadership as a Driver of Engagement and Wellbeing

The link between leadership and engagement first is in meaning and direction. Transformational leaders are leaders who communicate a vision, demonstrate behaviours that are valued, foster learning, and focus on individual development. These behaviours enable employees to tie their day-to-day work to a bigger purpose, a condition that is very similar to psychological meaningfulness as defined by Kahn. Positive leadership styles (transformational, authentic, empowering, ethical and servant) have positive correlations with work engagement based on summary evidence from meta-analysis. Nevertheless, an overall correlation of r = .47 was found by Decuypere and Schaufeli (2021) between the overall positive leadership forms, which indicates that the underlying mechanisms might be more important than the name of the specific leadership form. Similarly, although in different contexts, Li et al. (2021) reported positive links between a variety of positive leadership behaviors and engagement and negative links with abusive supervision.

Patterns are generally observed across Nigeria. Akinbobola and Dalyop (2019) reported that the transformational leadership and employee engagement were relevant to role-based performance among civil servants in Jos. Nigeria's consumer-goods industry, which is characterized by a high level of dynamism, has also proven to be relevant for the study of transformational leadership attributes and employee engagement and job satisfaction, a study that confirms the importance of individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and related leadership behaviours in a developing-economy context. More recent Nigerian literature associates transformational leadership with engagement in context of service sector and financial institutions, but some of this newer literature is based on small samples and cross-sectional designs, and therefore requires cautious interpretation.

Leadership influences wellbeing in the allocation of resources, and in psychosocial climate. Ambiguity can be minimized by explaining priorities, demands can be buffered by modifying workloads, autonomy can be added to give more control and problems can be addressed respectfully to reduce emotional strain by a manager. On the other hand, a non-consistent or authoritarian approach to leadership can transform simple requirements into ongoing stressors. Employees expecting to be blamed may cover up errors, those given conflicting priorities may adapt to uncertainties, and those who feel they are being favoured may result in psychological withdrawal despite a level of formal pay that is competitive. It is therefore not only mental-health support that is needed at the individual level, but also wellbeing-based manager training and organizational interventions, as per the WHO (2022) guidelines.

Wellbeing is a topic that is closely connected to servant and ethical leadership, which focus on dignity, fairness, care and development. Such attributes are not necessarily an indicator of low performance expectations. Instead, they affect the way that expectations are transmitted and whether employees feel that the organization is being successful at the cost of their people. In recent times, studies on servant leadership in Nigeria have connected it to employees' wellbeing, thereby further establishing the servant leadership's role as a resource in challenging service settings. But, supporting leadership is effective in certain structural conditions. A good supervisor can only make up for years of under-staffing, unsafe conditions, poor equipment and a broken compensation system for so long as they can.

Leadership also has an impact on wellbeing in terms of the boundaries of work and family. Balogun and Afolabi (2019) found that working mothers in Nigeria had a positive relationship between work engagement

and work family conflict, with job demands and job resources changing their relationship. Theories of engagement which result are theoretically important: engagement is not protective by default. With high demands, highly engaged employees can put more time and mental effort in their work, which can spill over into work-related activities. Leaders must therefore recognise the difference between a healthy commitment and boundary creep. Being available at any time, answering calls late and working overtime could raise the risk of turnover in the long term and result in fatigue and resentment in the short term.

Resource generating and boundary aware is then the most sustainable leadership model. It's a blend of rigor and independence, acknowledgment and growth-oriented feedback, responsibility and psychologically safe culture, challenging targets and capacity building. Therefore, the focus of leadership development should not only be on communication charisma, but it should also involve the area of workload decisions, conflict management, fair treatment, mental-health literacy and the capacity to establish work environments where employees feel free to discuss limitations before they turn into crises.

5. Organizational Culture and the Employee Experience

Organizational culture also affects employee engagement in light of practical issues that are not always addressed by formal policy: 'Whose voice is heard?', ‘How are mistakes dealt with?', ‘Does the manager keep their promises?', ‘What sort of behaviours are rewarded?', ‘Does teamwork get rewarded?', ‘Is employee well-being taken seriously if it distracts from short-term output? Culture is thus felt in the form of recurring patterns, not slogans. The dimensions of involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission from Denison and Mishra (1995) are helpful. Involvement can encourage participation and ownership, while mission can give purpose and direction, and adaptability can help in the learning process and consistency can help in providing predictability. These characteristics put in a balanced way are conducive to engagement.

Leadership culture can be particularly significant in Nigeria because there is a lack of equal institutionalization of formal systems. The positive relationships between constructive culture and employee engagement, motivation, job satisfaction or performance have been reported in recent studies in telecommunications, higher education, manufacturing, etc. In an investigation of telecommunication organizations in Delta State, Ofune et al. (2025) drew connections between organizational culture and employee engagement and job performance. In a Nigerian Coca-Cola plant, Omigie and Ehigie (2026) discussed perceived culture and worker engagement, motivation and job satisfaction. Such sectoral studies are not nationally representative but the convergence of these supports the overall hypothesis that employees react to cultures that are clear, fair and participatory.

Culture is also important to wellbeing. A culture of performance can be an energizing one when employees are provided with resources, developmental support, and procedural fairness. When targets are impossible to achieve, communication is based on fear and rest is perceived as a failure, the same performance attitude can be unhealthy. Just as with individualism, collectivism can also generate a sense of belonging and social support; however, it can also put pressure to conform or not mention issues. Strength of culture is not necessarily a good thing; the substance of the norms is important. A culture where intimidation or 'over-doing it' is accepted as a norm can lead to behavioural compliance but at the expense of wellbeing and also to the stifling of real engagement.

Psychological safety is an essential cultural lever. Staff become more committed when they know that they will not jeopardize their position or working relationship if they are honest. When there is a distinct hierarchy within an organization in Nigeria, there's often a greater level of sensitivity in communicating up. Leaders might think that if they are not talking, they are not disagreeing, but they may be taking a cautious approach. Voice systems and anonymous reporting systems and town-hall meetings are only useful where employees

notice that opposition is treated fairly and that if they point out risk, they are not retaliated against. Culture is ultimately learned from consequences.

6. The Interaction of Leadership and Organizational Culture

The concepts of leadership and culture should not be separated and used as independent predictors. Leaders are consumers and creators of culture. Senior leaders shape priorities, rewards and symbols, and line managers shape the 'employee lifecycle'. This is probably why sometimes formal wellbeing policies have a minimal impact: employees assess the organisation by the behaviour of their immediate supervisors. The enacted culture cannot support the espoused culture if a policy is intended to support flexible work but a manager is making negative comments about the use of flexible work. In contrast, a supportive manager can temporarily shield a team in a challenging organisation, but only if there are norms that are supported by the promotion system, the workload system, and the reward system that are opposite to the norms supported by that manager.

This interaction may be depicted as a resource cycle. Constructive culture allows leaders to be given permission and incentives to give autonomy, voice, learning and support. Those behaviours enhance psychological safety and job resources, thereby boosting engagement. These engaged employees then share more ideas, leading to an adaptive culture. A negative cycle is also possible: Fear driven culture reinforces control, managers limit voice, employees hide concerns, errors go uncorrected, and trust erodes. The engagement is not real and stress builds up.

The context, both national and local, also influences this interaction. Leadership–engagement relationships in organizations have been found to be mediated by national cultural dimensions by Li et al. (2021). Rattrie et al. (2020) also found that cultural values do affect the relationship between job demands and job resources with burnout and engagement. This is not to say that the Nigerian employee must have a different "psychology of engagement", because that is not so. In fact, it is the notion that leadership should be context specific. Leader behaviour can be particularly salient due to the need for respect for hierarchy, and interpersonal treatment and belonging can be important due to communal values. Meanwhile, younger, more highly skilled workers can be more likely to get a voice than a hierarchy model would give them, and they can enjoy more flexibility and developmental mobility than a hierarchy model would offer.

What is being suggested is that Nigerian institutions could not import in any leadership programme without making necessary adjustments for the sector, workforce and institutional context. In a very strictly regulated bank, empowerment can be expressed in one way, for instance, while in a technology start-up or public hospital it can be expressed in another way. While the principles are the same (clarity, fair treatment, meaningful voice, support and manageable demands), implementation should be based on operational risk and professional norms and employee expectations.

7. Evidence Synthesis and Key Pathways

Based on the literature that has been reviewed the factors of leadership and culture have a recurring set of mechanisms that impact engagement and wellbeing. Table 1 summarizes the most critical pathways and risks that form when organizations go for engagement without protecting employee health. The table also shows why engagement surveys should not be understood by themselves. Dedication can be reported as a team and a culture can be dedicated to high short term output only, at the cost of retention and trust.

8. Sectoral Implications for Nigeria

The banking and financial-services sector illustrates the importance of combining engagement with strain management. Employees frequently operate under aggressive targets, compliance requirements, long customer-service hours and technological change. Increase in meaning and confidence can be achieved through transformational and ethical leadership, but if the target intensity results in insufficient staffing and

recovery, it can lead to exhaustion. Banks should thus incorporate overtime hours, absenteeism, utilization of employee-assistance, and turnover and psychosocial-risk indicators into engagement data. Managers need to know how to differentiate between performance coaching and embarrassing or threatening employees.

The situation is different for telecommunications and technology companies. With rapid innovation, service outages and customer expectations and continuous connectivity, work can be exciting and unbounded. There is evidence that culture is important in engagement and performance, as is suggested by the Delta State telecommunications evidence (Ofune et al., 2025). For these companies, the adaptive culture needs to be coupled with norms that safeguard recovery. Communication during after hours, adequate escalation and team learning following service incidents can keep the pace high without the sense of chronic availability.

Healthcare organisations are under high emotional and workload demands. The negative associations between perceived workload and work engagement were found in hospital nurses in southeast Nigeria, which were potentially moderated by person-job fit. This argument underlines the JD-R theory that leadership is not effective in inducing employees to work when the demands are too high within the structure. In addition to recognition and inspirational leadership, hospital managers must provide staffing realism, role clarity, safe reporting and opportunities for recovery. Wellbeing interventions without consideration for workload risk being symbolic instead of therapeutic.

Meaning, fairness, and bureaucratic constraints are important considerations for public-sector organizations. Civil servants can feel very fulfilled in their roles and find their work to be quite frustrating due to lack of resources, slow decision-making or politicization of the system. While transformational leadership can affect role performance positively, role performance is also affected positively when procedural justice and the credibility of the performance management systems are maintained. Effective communication of reform objectives and shared involvement of workers in the process of implementation can minimize uncertainty and cynicism on the part of the leaders.

There is also a need for sector-specific approaches in the manufacturing and hospitality and non-profit organizations. Safety climate and consistency of supervisors are at the heart of manufacturing. Emotional labour and customer incivility are factors that make the supportive leadership role in hospitality even more critical. Non-profit workers can be deeply motivated to do the right thing but overworked, as dedication to social purpose can de-normalize self-giving. In all these areas, the thread that runs through the threads is that for meaningful work to exist there must be suitable resources and expectations of a fair cultural understanding.

9. Practical Framework for Sustainable Engagement

Measurement architecture is the starting point for a sustainable engagement strategy in Nigerian organisations. Engagement scores could be combined with wellbeing measures like stress, burnout risk, workload, recovery, psychological safety and intention to leave. Organizations should break down the data by business unit, length of service, employment arrangement and job family while maintaining the confidentiality of the data. The goal is to find combinations that will call for different actions. High engagement with high stress is a sign of overextension; low engagement with low stress is a sign of under-stimulation or a weak meaning and low engagement with high stress is a more severe breakdown of resources and motivation.

Second, organizations should make an investment in manager ability as employees live culture locally. Education and training should include supportive performance discussions, workload prioritization, inclusive decision-making, conflict management, recognising and understanding mental health and responding to employee voice safely. Leadership Development should be measured by behavioural change and results – not workshops. Multi-source feedback can be used to pinpoint leaders with teams that have recurring patterns of fear, turnover or overload.

Last but not the least, culture interventions should focus on systems and not slogans. These values should be reinforced throughout recruitment and onboarding, through performance management, promotion, and recognition, as well as disciplinary processes. Promoting the spirit of collaboration while incentivizing only individual competition will lead to a culture of competition. Wellbeing is promoted but managers are rewarded for success based on long-term overtime, then employees will assume that wellbeing is not a top priority. There must be a sync between the stated values and managerial consequences.

Fourth, employee voice should be placed as an operational tool in every employee's hands. There must be regular mechanisms for employees to "report" process issues, safety concerns, issues regarding workload and ethical concerns. While anonymous mechanisms are effective for sensitive topics, when there is sufficient trust, direct engagement can be achieved via team retrospectives, improvement forums and representative committees. Management needs to close the feedback loop by communicating what was heard, what will change and what will not change.

Fifth, as much care should be given to job design as to motivational messaging. The JD-R framework indicates that engagement increases when employees are given autonomy, feedback, learning opportunities, social support, and have opportunities to recover, and wellbeing is enhanced when demands are manageable and opportunities to recover are present. Ambiguity of role, excessive bureaucracy, poorly ordered objectives and constant digital disruptions therefore should be seen as problems of design. Eliminating friction can yield long-term benefits that are greater than having people grow more resilient to avoidable demands.

Last but not least, wellbeing support should incorporate prevention, promotion and care. WHO and ILO (2022) suggest intervention strategies at the organizational level, training of managers and mental-health awareness and support of workers in mental-health situations. Nigerian entities can implement these principles in a variety of ways, including providing confidential employee assistance, mental-health coverage, anti-stigma communication, being flexible with return-to-work policies and training managers to identify distress but not take on the role of clinician.

10. Research Gaps and Future Directions

Engagement and wellbeing research in Nigeria has begun to expand, yet there are some barriers to the accumulation of knowledge. First, self-report designs are cross sectional and prevail. To establish the predictive power of leadership and culture on changes in engagement and wellbeing in the years to come, longitudinal studies are needed, as it could be that engaged employees simply rate their workplaces more positively. Second, there are few intervention studies. Nigerian organisations offer a valuable chance to assess the longer-term impacts of manager training, job redesign, psychological-safety interventions or culture change programmes.

Thirdly, multilevel analysis is required. Personal resources, leadership of the team, unit climate and systems throughout the organization are factors that impact engagement. Research that draws samples of employees from teams/intentional groups and/or organizations can distinguish these effects. Fourth, there needs to be a better measurement of wellbeing. Numerous studies use measures of job satisfaction or generic mental-health instruments, but other dimensions of sustainable wellbeing are recovery, work-family functioning, and psychological safety and physical health. Fifth, casual and informal work arrangements need to be explored. The vast majority of formal organizational literature ignores the majority of workers in Nigeria whose work arrangements are less secure, but whose experiences of leadership, social exchange and workplace norms nonetheless occur.

Sixth, further study is needed to look at demographic and generational differences without stereotyping. Early-career professionals might consider development and flexibility, and employees with caregiving responsibilities might be particularly impacted by control of schedules. Access to resources can be different

for gender, people with disabilities, unemployed, and by geographic location. Last, but not least, digitalization needs to be addressed. Autonomy and surveillance can be increased through remote and hybrid working, algorithmic monitoring, algorithmic performance systems and constant messages. They will have a significant impact on engagement and wellbeing if they are implemented with transparency, and if there is a culture of trust.

Economics of sustainable involvement in Nigeria must also be considered. Organisations often defend engagement programs on the basis of the potential improvement to productivity, but there is still little hard evidence to back up the links between engagement and wellbeing to absenteeism, errors, customer outcomes, safety, innovation and voluntary turnover locally. Future research could also relate validated measures of engagement and wellbeing to objective indicators from the business unit, accounting for sector and workforce composition and economic conditions. These designs would enable organizations to go beyond general statements and determine which investments offer the highest value. Cost-benefit analysis should reflect avoided harm as well as increased output: preventing employee burnout, replacement costs, avoiding safety events and improved retention of a scarce skill set can be as valuable as boosting productivity in the near term.

The seventh gap is related to the measurement of organizational culture, itself. Although employees can feel high levels of team support, low levels of corporate justice, and high levels of performance pressure, Nigerian studies tend to lump these feelings together under the culture umbrella. Future research should clarify dimensions of culture and explore the interaction between enterprise values and individual outcomes through the lens of local team climate. This would explain why within the same organization, employees might be having different experiences. It would also help fine-tune interventions: a voice issue would call for a different type of intervention than a workload issue, and a recognition issue would call for a different type of intervention than a psychological-safety issue. Survey data and interviews can be combined with administrative records and behavioural indicators to minimise common-method bias and provide a more believable view of the employee experience.

11. Conclusion

Employee engagement and wellbeing are related but not synonymous, and Nigerian organisations should not focus solely on achieving high levels of engagement at the cost of not maintaining good levels of wellbeing. Engagement is about being active in what you do, wellbeing is about being active without being depleted. Because leadership and organizational culture influence the resource, meaning, fairness, voice and psychological safety employees receive, they lie at the heart of this relationship.

Based on the evidence presented in this article, there is a strong association between transformational, servant, ethical and empowering leadership with higher levels of engagement, and supportive leadership can be associated with protecting wellbeing by improving resources and decreasing uncertainty. However, leadership impacts are contingent upon the organizational culture and the structural needs. Cultures that are constructive foster participation, consistency, learning, fairness and mission. Commitment can become overwork if there are harmful cultures, voice can be suppressed and employee-support programmes become ineffective. Nigerian studies in public service, telecom, healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and other industries are consistent with these mechanisms and also highlight the importance of enhanced longitudinal and intervention studies.

The priority for practice should be to ensure sustainable engagement (clear purpose, competent and respectful leadership, fair systems, meaningful employee voice, psychologically safe teams, manageable demands, credible wellbeing support). Those organizations that view these as an operating system, not just HR projects, are more likely to develop trust, sustain the capability, and deliver enduring performance.

Table 1 Leadership and Culture Pathways to Engagement and Wellbeing

Organizational condition	Primary mechanism	Likely engagement effect	Wellbeing implication
Supportive/transformational leadership	Meaning, recognition, developmental support	Higher vigor and dedication	Usually positive if demands remain manageable
Servant/ethical leadership	Fairness, care, trust, dignity	Higher identification and discretionary effort	Stronger psychological safety and lower relational strain
Empowering leadership	Autonomy, voice, competence	Greater ownership and proactive engagement	Can improve control; may increase strain if responsibility is added without resources
High-involvement culture	Participation and shared ownership	Stronger organizational engagement	Positive when voice has real influence
Learning/adaptive culture	Experimentation, feedback, skill growth	Higher curiosity and persistence	Supports efficacy during change; reduces uncertainty
Target-driven culture with excessive demands	Pressure, competition, constant availability	May produce short-term visible effort	Higher exhaustion, work-family conflict and turnover risk
Fear-based or politicized culture	Silence, unfairness, low trust	Compliance without authentic engagement	Higher stress and lower psychological safety

Table 2 Priority Actions for Nigerian Organizations

Priority	Example action	Indicator to monitor
Manager capability	Train supervisors in workload prioritization, feedback, conflict, psychological safety and mental-health literacy	Team engagement, stress, turnover, upward-feedback scores
Work design	Reduce role ambiguity, unnecessary bureaucracy and chronic after-hours demands	Overtime, workload, recovery, absence
Culture and justice	Align promotion, recognition and discipline with stated values	Fairness perceptions, grievance patterns, promotion transparency
Employee voice	Use confidential reporting, team retrospectives and visible feedback loops	Voice participation, issue-resolution rates, psychological safety
Wellbeing system	Combine prevention, support services and flexible return-to-work practices	Stress, burnout risk, EAP uptake, retention
Integrated analytics	Read engagement and wellbeing metrics together	High-engagement/high-stress hotspots by unit

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