AN ANALYSIS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION: EVIDENCE FROM THE GAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The quantitative research seeks to explore the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention. A total of 300 questionnaires were collected from The Gambia Public and private sector employees at all levels. A quantitative survey based correlational research design was used to answer to the research questions and test the hypothesis. The data was analyzed using SPSS. A factor and reliability analysis was done to test the variation and internal consistency of factors. In testing the research hypotheses correlational and regression analysis was conducted. The results of the regression showed that organizational climate factors relations and participation had a strong relationship to employee retention and employee engagement mediates this relationship. The findings of the research revealed the importance of having good organizational practices in order to retain employees and boost organizational effectiveness. The research will add to wealth of existing literature on organizational climate and retention.

Keywords: Human Resource Management.

1. Introduction

The increasing competition between organizations to retain talented employees that drive performance has influenced employees demanding more from their employers. Retention of employees is becoming an increasing worry for organizations as employee turnover rates surge (Ballinger et al, 2011). The Climate of an organizational coupled with other variables like culture and leadership has been the driving force impacting the turnover of employees. How employees perceive their organization can largely contribute to their turnover intentions (Stewart et al, 2011).

Organizations, both public and private are aware of the consequences of losing employees. High employee turnover can weaken an organization leading to under performance, demotivated employees and low productivity. Retaining talented employees is a difficult issue especially in The Gambia where there is a high brain drain in the public sector, Young vibrant employees are lost to private sector organizations and experienced skilled employees are lost to NGOs and International organizations. Private sector organizations, on the other hand, are also losing skilled employees to other organizations but the turnover rate is not as rapid as the Public sector. Organizations when trying to increase retention and decrease turnover, are faced with multiple difficulties. Difficulties encountered include employee's lack of skills and knowledge, experience, Job satisfaction and how they perceive the organization's environment among other issues can hinder the retention of valuable and skillful employees (Iqbal, 2010).

Organizational Climate as described by (Diekhoff et al, 2006) is the psychological environment of an organization that affects the organization in numerous forms. It can be said from the definition that organizational climate is how the work environment makes employees feel, and their perception of it. Therefore if employees feel that they are valued in an organization, their efforts are appreciated and rewarded, and they are treated fairly leads to employee job commitment thus referred to as engaged employees. Employee engagement asdefined by (Schaufeli et al, 2002), is a 'positive fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, absorption, and dedication '(P. 465). From the above-stated definitions one can say that if a pleasant organizational climate exists in an organization, an employee is likely to possess vigor and dedication in carrying out their work in the organization. Furthermore, the organization would be held to a high standard, when this happens employees will find it hard to leave the organization, as they feel a part of it. This study aims to explore if organizations in The Gambia, both public and private are able to use favorable organizational climate and engaged employees to retain talented and skillful employees, which in the long term not only increase organizational development but the overall development of the Gambia.

Research Questions

The quantitative investigation will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How influential is organizational climate on employee retention?
2. Does employee engagement compliment the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention?

3. Are engaged employees more likely to stay with the organization?

Hypothesis:

Ha₁: There is an influential relationship between organizational climate and employee retention

Ha₂: There is a relationship between a positive organizational climate and employee engagement. (Engaged employees are elements of a good organizational climate)

Ha₃: There is a relationship between employee engagement and employee retention

Ha₄: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Climate

Organizational climate as the independent variable in this research has been studied since the 1930s and the concept has broadened in academics studies over the years, however, there is still some aspects of it that have not been explored in regards to its relationship with employee engagement and employee retention. As human beings, the environments we find ourselves in can rapidly influence our actions. Thus, the same goes for employees in an organization, the environment they are faced with can influence every aspect of their work either negatively or positively. The organizational climate concept has been used to study work and organizations situations for a better understanding of the behaviors of individuals and organizations (Asif, 2011, Ostroff, Kinicky, & Tamkins, 2003). Given that organizations seek to have effective employees to assist in the attainment of objectives, the effectiveness of an employee is a consequence of many factors, which includes organizational psychological climate (Williamson et al, 1997). Ostroff (1993) stated that climate could exist at two different levels for the employee: it can be the shared opinions of employees about the overall organization environment or the psychological level opinions of an employee about the work environment.

2.2 Employee Engagement

The concept of Employee engagement was derived from the study of khan (1990) on personal engagement at work. In his study, Khan described how employees could be found either engaged or disengaged in their work. Employee engagement as defined by (Harter et al, 2002) is a "person's involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work "(p, 269). Schaufeli and baker (2010) further defined employee engagement as the state at which an employee possesses a positive behavior and invests positive energy in his or duties in an organization. That is to say, the employee is mentally and emotionally attached to an organization, values the objectives of the organization and does all that it takes to achieve them. For Thomas (2009), employee engagement is when an individual is so involved in his/her work to an extent that he/she is found self-managing at the job. Thomas added that at this level the employee is fully aware of the mission and vision of the organization and carry out duties diligently, ensuring that whatever is required of them is accomplished. Employees, when engaged will invest in their jobs and the overall organization way beyond what is expected of them because there tends to be a link between the employee and the organization (Gebauer and Lowman, 2009).

2.3 Employee Retention

Employee retention is becoming significantly important for the organization. The changing global environment coupled with improved access to higher education has avail individuals the possibility to not remain with an organization but can choose to change jobs whenever they find an organization unfavorable. Employee retention is the process by which organizations create an environment were in employees are motivated to stay with the organization (Sandhya andPradeep Kumar, 2014). Retention is the work organizations put in on their employees to drive organizational objectives (Frank et al, 2004).

According to Delong & Davenport (2003), employee retention avails organizations the opportunity to maintain a competitive workforce. Mor barak et al, (2001) highlighted that organizations factors such as work stress, role definition, co-worker support, superior support, individual and professional development, organizational working conditions strongly influence the retention of employees.

According to (Van knippenberg, 2000), employee would be more inclined to stay in an organization when they identify themselves as part of a group and contribute to the overall group objectives. Research over the years has identified various reasons for employees to stay in an organization. According to (Birt et al, 2004) some of the factors that influence retention are the availability of challenging and meaningful work, opportunities for growth, empowerment, managerial advancement and integrity and responsibility.

3. Methodology

The study utilized a survey instrument developed by the researcher based on different conducted surveys of the research variables.The study sample consisted of employees from all levels of Public and private sector organizations. 150 were anticipated from each sector however 119 were collected from the private sector and 181 from the Public sector. 6-Likert-scale questionnaire developed by the researcher based on organizational climate questionnaire (Pena-Suarez, et al, 2013), employee engagement questionnaire (Schaufeli et al, 2002) and employee retention questionnaire(Govaerts et al, 2011) was utilized for the collection of data.

The research posed three questions and four hypotheses. A quantitative correctional non-contrived field study will be utilized to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The consistent statistical approach to be used will allow for the clear analysis of the relationship between variables. And it will further show the influence the relationship has on Gambia public and private sector institutions. Given that the target participants for the survey are full-time employees of these institutions, it would reflect a general view of other institutions. A multiple regression and Pearson correlation analysis was use in this research to test the relationship between variables
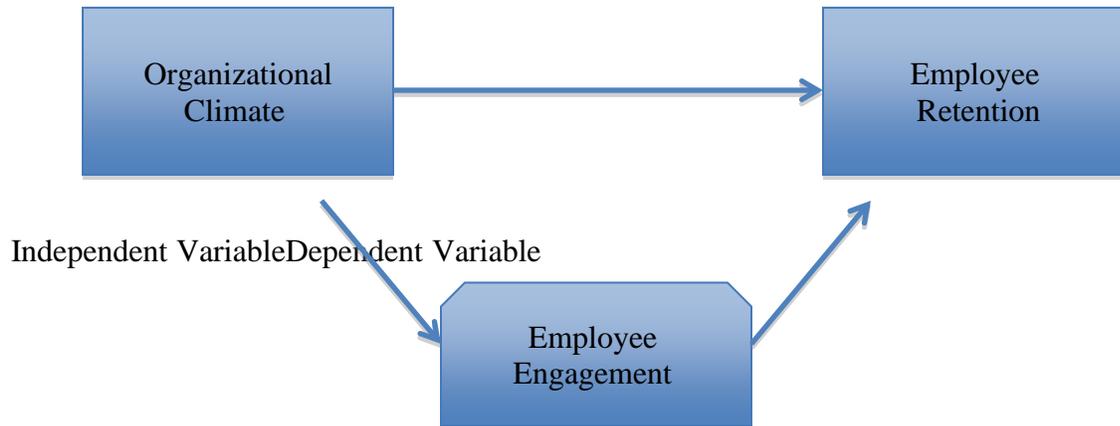
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Finding

4.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

A factor and reliability analysis for the three variables organizational climate, employee engagement and employee retention was conducted the first factor analysis was done for the organizational climate variable, Relations contained 18 items, it recorded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.950, and percentage variance explained was 32.981%. Work organization contained 8 items and recorded a Cronbach of 0.864, and percentage variance explained of 14.246%. Rewards had 2 items, a Cronbach of 0.920 and a percentage variance explained of 7.072%. Participation had 2 items, a Cronbach of 0.723 and Percentage variance explained of 5.706%. The total variance explained amounted to 60.005% indicating a large variation amount factors. The **KMO** and **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity** were used to test the appropriateness of the factor analysis. The approximate Chi-Square recored at 5588.434 at a 435 degree of freedom and significance of .000.The KMO statistic of 0.933 is >0.50 denoting the adequacy of the sample.

The second factor analysis was for the employee engagement variable. Dedication registered Cronbach of 0.903 indicating internal consistency with a percentage variance explained of 36.539% and Absorption had a Cronbach of 0.732 showing high internal consistency with a percentage variance explained of 18.842%. Total variance explained was 55.381% showing a high variation between factors. The **KMO** and **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity** showed appropriateness of the factor analysis.

The approximate Chi-Square recored at 1909.695 at a 91 degree of freedom and significance of .000. The KMO statistic of 0.914 is >0.50denoting the adequacy of the sample. Factor analysis for the third varible Employee retention shows

Intention to stay recorded Crombach Alpha of 0.828, showing internal consistency of items and Percentage variance of 36.87%. Intention to leave recorded Cronbach Alpha of 0.626, given that it was a 3 item factor 0.60 Cronbach is acceptable thus internal consistency existed. Percentage variance of 19.665 was recored. Total variance percenatge variance explained for the two factors

amounted to 56.535% showing high variation between factors. The **KMO** and **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity** showed appropriateness of the factor analysis.

The approximate Chi-Square recored at 779.518 at a 36 degree of freedom and significance of .000. The KMO statistic of 0.832 is >0.50 denoting the adequacy of the sample.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Ha1: *There is an influential relationship between organizational climate and employee retention*

The model summary table from the regression analysis showed that Relations and Participation had an influential relationship to employee retention registering R= .739, R^2= .546, F= 178.894 and Significance (P)= .000

Relations and Participation as registering R= .201, R^2=. 040, F= 6.238, and significance (P)= .002. Some factors of the organizational Climate variable Relations and Participation showed to have a relationship with Intention to leave. The relationship however is a negative directional relationship meaning that if Intention to leave Increases relations or participation would decrease.

Table 1: Regression for organizational Climate and Employee Retention

	Dependent Variable: Employee Retention (Intention to Stay)			
	Independent Variable	**Beta**	**T-value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .546
	Relations	.744	17.958	.000	F= 178.894
Ha1	Participation	.094	2.185	.003	P= .000
	Dependent Variable: Employee Retention (Intention to Leave)			
	Independent Variable	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .040
	Relations	-.215	-3.430	.001	F= 6.238
	Participation	-.139	-2.211	.028	P= .002

Ha2: *There is a relationship between organizational climate and employee engagement. (Engaged employees are elements of a good organizational climate)*

A regression analysis was conducted putting Dedication as dependent variable and Work organization, Rewards and participation as independent variables.

The model summary table shows R= .462, R^2= .214, F= 26.829, Significance (P)= .000. A second regression was done putting Absorption as dependent variable and Relations, Work organization, Rewards and Participation as independent variables. R=. 407, R^2= .165, F= 59.045 and Significance (P)= .000

From the results of both regression analyses, Rewards is shown to have a strong relationship with Dedication, Participation and Work organization also have a relationship but not at a same directional level rather when Dedication increases they decrease. Relations is strongly related to Absorption, thus **Ha2** would be accepted.

Table 2: Regression for Organizational Climate and Employee Engagement

	Dependent variable: Employee Engagement (Dedication)			
	Independent variable	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	
	Work organization	-.182	-3.205	.002	R^2= .241
	Rewards	.259	4.754	.000	F= 26.829
Ha2	Participation	-.204	-3.741	.000	P= .000
	Dependent Variable: Employee engagement (Absorption)			
	Independent variable	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .165
	Relations	.407	7.684	. 000	F= 59.045 P=. 000

Ha3: *There is a relationship between employee engagement and employee retention*
The model summary table from the regression showed that both Dedication and Absorption have a relationship with Intention to stay registering R= .691. R^2= .477, F= 135.362 and Significance (P)= .000
Regression analysis between Dedication, Absorption and Intention to leave showed R= .251, R^2= 0.63, F= 9.975, Significance (P)=. 000
The results of the regression showed that a significant relationship exist between employee engagement and employee retention. However Dedication is more influential to Employee retention F1 (Intention to stay) than Absorption. On the other hand Dedication has a negative relationship with Intention to leave, showing that if intention to leave increase, dedication decreases and vice versa. Absorption has a relationship with intention to leave but at a very low level. Based on the regression **Ha3** would be accepted.

Table 3: Regression for Employee Engagement and Employee Retention

Ha3	Dependent Variable: Employee Retention (Intention to stay)			
	Independent variable	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .477
	Dedication	.560	11.489	.000	F= 135.362
	Absorption	.210	4.321	.000	P=. 000
	Dependent Variable: Employee Retention (Intention to Leave)				
	Dedication	-.260	-3.985	.000	R^2= 0.63
	Absorption	.245	3.760	.000	F= 9.975
					P= .000

Ha4: *Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention*
Four sets of hierarchical regressions were run with the dependent variable Employee retention Intention to leave and Intention to stay. For the first regressions Relations, Work organization, Rewards, Participation and Absorption were independent variables, the results showed that Relations, Participation and Absorption were significantly related to Intention to stay registering Beta of .682, .107, and .240 respectively. It further showed that Relations registered the strongest relationship with to Employee retention Intention to stay and Absorption mediates this relationship.
For the second regression showed Work organization, Rewards, participation, Dedication, and Absorption were independent variables, the results from the regression showed Rewards, Work organization, Dedication, and Absorption to have significant relationships with Intention to stay, registering Beta of .272, -.079, .454, and .179 respectively. The mediating role of Dedication is higher than Absorption, and both Rewards and Work organization have a relationship with Intention to stay however Work organization has a negative relationship, which means that as Intention to stay increases Work organization decreases and vice versa.
The third regression Work organization, Rewards, Participation, Dedication, and Absorption were independent variables, the results showed that Dedication, and Absorption were significantly related to Intention to leave registering Beta's of -.260 and .245 respectively, however Absorption mediating effect was a negative one, meaning if Intention to leave increases Absorption decreases and vice versa.

The fourth regression-included independent variables Relations, Work organization, Rewards, Participation and Intention to leave, the results showed that Relations, Participation and Absorption had a significant relationship with Intention to leave registering Beta of -.294, -.128 and .205 individually. It can be deduced that Absorption has a mediating effect however Relations and Participation has a negative relationship with Intention to leave. Denoting a different directional relationship in which if intention to leave increases, relations and participation would decrease.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression

	Dependent Variable: Intention to Stay			
	Independent variable	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	
	Relations	.682	15.604	.000	R^2= .594 F=144.616 P=. 000
	Participation	.107	2.621	.009	
	Absorption	.240	5.920	.000	
	Dependent Variable: Intention to Stay				
	Independent Variables	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	
	Rewards	.272	6.355	.000	R^2= .555 F= 91.939 P= .000
	Work organization	-.079	-1.880	.061	
Ha4	Dedication	.454	9.443	.000	
	Absorption	.179	3.937	.000	
	Dependent Variable: Intention to leave				
	Independent Variables	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .063 F=9.975 P= .000
	Dedication	-.260	-3.985	.000	
	Absorption	.245	3.760	.000	
	Dependent Variable: Intention to leave				
	Independent Variables	**Beta**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	R^2= .075 F= 8.045 P= .000
	Relations	-.294	-4.454	.000	
	Participation	-.128	-2.066	.040	
	Absorption	.205	3.351	.001	

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The Research examined the influence of organizational climate on employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement on The Gambia Public and Private Sector organizations. With regards to the research questions *"How influential is organizational climate on employee retention"* it can be concluded that *"Relations and Participation"* climates are the factors that influence employee retention. There was no research that investigated this relationship (organizational climate and employee retention), however (Shim, 2009) identified that organizational climate and culture influences turnover intentions. It should be noted that *"Relations and Participation"* have a positive influence and in the case of Intention of stay and In the case of intention to leave a negative influence. Having positive relations between employees and their supervisors and participative organizational climate influences intention to stay with an organization and if these are absent intention to leave increase. Therefore it can deduce from this research that if organizations want to retain their employees, there should be a strong supervisor-employee relationship climate and participative climate. The relationship between employees and their supervisors affect the psychological conditions of employees in the workplace (May et al, 2004). May further stated that Psychological conditions include the employee being in a state of meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness allows the employee to give his/her all to the job, being able to work without fear and the availability of resources to carry out the job. Strong employee –supervisor relations can boost employee job

commitment and engagement and thus retention. A participative climate is an important element in success of organizations, Employees feel valued if they are involved. According to (Gallon, 2005) employee participation in the organization facilitates employee commitment and engagement, which drives organizational effectiveness. It was also stated by (Benn et al, 2015) that promoting employee participation in the organization encourages employee commitment and retention. Organizations should ensure that relations and participative climates are ones that encourage knowledge acquisition and skills development, given that they influence retention can help employees develop themselves and serve as knowledge banks that can easily transfer acquired skills to new employees.

The second research Question, *"Does employee engagement compliment the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention"?* It can be concluded that *"Dedication and absorption"* compliments relationship between Relations, work organization, rewards and participation and Intention to stay/ leave. *"Absorption"* positively compliments the relationship between Relations, Participation and Intention to stay. Both "dedication and Absorption" positively compliments the relationship between rewards; work Organization and Intention to stay. The research shows that engaging employees is a significant factor in retaining them. An organizational climate that is relations, Participative, rewards and organizing work in a manner that increase employee dedication and absorption to their jobs boost job satisfaction, commitment and intention to stay.

"Absorption" positively compliments the negative relationship between relations, participation and intention to leave. This shows that employee's intention to leave is not affected by the absorption in their jobs. Intending to leave whilst absorption is positive is due to a reduced participation and relation's levels thus reducing commitment and satisfaction. This shows that employees might have a degree of engagement in their jobs but still want to leave due to organizational climate factors that affect them psychologically in a negative way.

With regards to the research question "Are engaged employees more likely to stay with the organization" It can be concluded that "Dedication and Absorption" does influence intention to stay in an organization. This was in line with (Kingcade, 2010) study, which outlined that employee engagement affects the turnover rates of employees.

This study shows that when employees are dedicated and absorbed in their jobs they tend to want to stay in the organization. As Highlighted by (Schaufali and Bakker, 2004) engaged employees are likely to be attached to their organizations and have a lower propensity to leave the organization. "Dedication" negatively influences intention to leave; however "Absorption" positively influences intention to leave. It further explains that when employees are dedicated they would not think of leaving the organization but Absorbed in their jobs they would still want to leave the organization. It could be that even though they are absorbed, the job is not as challenging as expected thus influencing intention to leave.

The overall study is in line with organizational support and Social exchange theory. The study showed that employees perceived organizational climate influences them to stay in the organization. If participation in the organizations process and relations between supervisors are

good they feel valued and hold positive perceptions that their ideas are appreciated and the supervisors respect them. And when engaged, they are dedicated and absorbed in their jobs there is a feeling of reciprocity, in that the organization trusts and values their participation and relations are held in high regards, they in turn return positive attitudes and intentions towards the organization.

Implications

The results of the research analysis provided answers to the research questions and did prove that organizational climate has an influential relationship with employee retention and employee engagement mediates this relationship.

It is of great importance that leaders work hard in creating organizational climates that favors employees, making sure to engage employees in all aspects of the organization that way when skilled individuals leave the organization, knowledge is not lost. This also helps in reducing the amount spent on training new employees. In order for leaders to effectively implement favorable climates there has be in place proper systems that tracks employee performance and also were employees are able to voice out problems being faced with the organizations / their individual supervisors this can eliminate disengagement and promote retention. The study contributed to the body of knowledge in organizational climate, employee engagement and employee retention. It was the first study conducted on the relationship between organizational climate and employee retention with the mediating role of employee engagement and also the first to examine these factors in the Gambia public and private sector institutions.

The study utilized a one – dimensional climate construct, which was based on multiple dimensions, the results of the factor analysis revealed it to have 4 dimensions (Participation, relations, rewards and work organization) and the UWES 3-dimensional (Dedication, Absorption, vigor) employee engagement instrument was utilized, however the factor analysis revealed 2-dimensions (Dedication and Absorption) to exist in our sample. There is need for further research utilizing other organizational climate and employee engagement instruments to ascertain other factors that might influence Retention in Gambia organizations.

This study revealed the influence of organizational climate on employee retention and how employee engagement is a good factor in strengthening the relationship. Further study needs to be done to look at the relationship between organizational climate and organizational performance with the mediating role of employee engagement.

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