

The efficacy of high-performance-work-practices (HPWPs) in enhancing employee engagement and service-oriented organisational citizenship

behaviour:

A qualitative study of hotel managers and employees

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Various employee engagement strategies are proposed to boost organisational performance and business prosperity. Interestingly scholars criticize that these strategies may not always work and mixed views are proposed, leaving a glaring knowledge gap. Drawing on the theories of high-performance-work-practices (HPWPs), we conduct a qualitative study, aiming to explore how strategies affect employee engagement and analyse the underlying mechanism.

Method: We gather research data by interviewing five managers and fifteen employees in the hospitality sector. We analyse data through thematic analysis and adopt AMO model in improving the analytic rigour. Ethical practices are arranged throughout the project, including: consent form, anonymity in participation, confidentiality in responses, freedom to withdraw and data protection.

Findings: Research findings have advanced employee engagement literatures in two ways. On the one hand, when managers recognise employees' job ability and effort, employees support engagement strategies. On the other hand, however, if managers do not appreciate employees' job ability and effort, engagement strategies may not necessarily work.

Originality: The current research is the first in its kind, examining hotel employee engagement practice and its implications on performance management in the sector of Nigeria hospitality. Unlike prior studies which link HPWPs to performance directly, our research findings have

clarified how HPWPs affect performance through the underlying factors. These are: employee engagement and managers' attitude towards employees.

Practical implications: We suggest managers display a positive attitude towards subordinates, such as appreciating subordinates' effort and showing trust and support, if they wish their engagement strategies maximise to the full potential, particularly when managers' trust is perceived important by employees. Maintaining a healthy communication channel between managers and subordinates also benefits the employee engagement, working morale and overall performance.

Keywords: Engagement strategies; High-performance work system; Managers; Recognition.

Practitioners Points

- Engaged employees help organisations sustain and perform well.
- HPWPs affect employee performance through two underlying factors: Employee's level of engagement and managers' attitude towards employees.
- When managers recognise employees' job ability and effort, their engagement strategies are more likely to reach the maximum effect.
- Managers' recognition and listening means much to the employees.

INTRODUCTION

Managers like ‘engaged employees’, as they help the organisation achieve competitive advantage, improve work efficiency, and facilitate a sustainable organisational performance (Boccoli, Gastaldi & Corso, 2023; Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2016). To improve employee engagement, managers have proposed various managerial practices, such as strategic management, systematic management and AI-driven management (Arefin, Shamsul, Shariful *et al.*, 2020; Chang, 2020). Although different in nature, these practices have enhanced employee engagement, which in turn create better working conditions and boost employee performance (Jose, PM & Kuriakose, 2024; Li, Rees & Branine, 2019). Managers also combine different practices to improve the individual- and organisational-outcomes (Boccoli *et al.*, 2023; Salin, Stride, Smith & Santokhie, 2023). Gradually, these strategies have formed the foundation of ‘High-Performance-Work-Practices (WPHPs)’, benefiting employees and their organisations (Arthur, 1994; Cheng & Chang, 2019; Kirkpatrick & Hoque, 2022; Sheehan & Garavan, 2022).

HPWPs sound good, but scholars have mixed views about their efficacy, based on the following S-OCB studies. S-OCB stands for the ‘*service oriented organisational citizenship behaviour*’, describing one’s voluntary commitment within an organisation that is not part of his/her contractual tasks (Organ, 1988). S-OCB is the most renowned performance indicator, and S-OCB facilitates organisational dynamics and overall performance (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016; Organ, 1988). During the implementation of HPWPs, moreover, the presence of training, internal mobility and empowerment (*c.f. AMO model*; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000) gives employees the ability, motivation and opportunity to perform tasks. This realization can stimulates more positive performance behaviour, such as service-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour (S-OCB). Scholars therefore indicate that HPWPs are capable of stimulating S-OCB, but the underlying mechanisms are not always clear (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Pereira & Gomes, 2012). Moreover, HPWPs may not necessarily enhance OCB, as organisational policies, employee difference and performance measurement parameters

may affect the outcomes of HPWPs (Chang et al., 2016; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015). As such, scholars have called more studies of HPWPs, aiming to clarifying their efficacy (Kirkpatrick & Hoque, 2022; Sheehan & Garavan, 2022).

To respond to the calls above, we conduct a new research in the Nigerian Hospitality Industry, along with the following reasons. *Firstly*, crossover data has been referenced in the past for research analysis linked to S-OCB which makes it very difficult to understand the relationships between employee engagement and HPWPs. This suggests that further research should take a more comprehensive design to ensure a clearer understanding of the ‘HPWPs-SOCB relationship’ in the hospitality industry (*see exception in*: Lee & Ok, 2016). A new study will fulfill the knowledge gap and enrich the understanding of HPWPs’ efficacy (Sheehan & Garavan, 2022). *Secondly*, the growth of hospitality industry is crucial to the Nigerian national economy, as it contributes 1.56 billion dollars to the national economy, i.e., the second biggest contribution to the Nigeria’s GDP (Edeh et al., 2022). With a better understanding of HPWPs in mind, managers can manage their business and services more effectively, which in turn contribute to the development of Nigerian Hospitality (Kirkpatrick & Hoque, 2022). *Finally*, despite of its economic significance, the hospitality industry in Nigeria suffers from the un-engaged employees (Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Odiaka & Chang, 2019) and unskillful management practices (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). The current research arrives in time, as it will explore and clarify the efficacy of HPWPs in enhancing OCB through the lens of employee engagement in the Nigerian Hospitality Industry, bringing new insights to the HPWPs-OCB literatures. Research findings will also benefit managers in their design and implementation of employee management policies, particularly important to the managers in the Nigerian Hospitality Industry.

In view of what has preceded, more specific research objectives are proposed as follows: i). To understand employees and manager’s perception of the efficacy of High Performance Work

Practices (HPWPs) in enhancing Service Oriented Citizenship Behaviour; ii). To investigate how employee job engagement, stimulates Service Oriented Citizenship Behaviour in Nigerian hotels; and, finally, iii). To evaluate the HPWPs in Nigerian hotels making suggestions for improvement.

This article now turns to clarify the research rationale through literature review. Following the literature, we formulate research questions (Appendix 1) and elaborate research method. The interview-data are thematically analysed and, subsequently, discussed. Finally, the contribution and value of the current research for theory and practice are provided, as well as an overview of the methodological limitations and suggestions for future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1990s, managers revised their managerial practices from a ‘*control-based personnel management*’ to more ‘*commitment-based managerial practices*’, aiming to improve the employee engagement and performance. Gradually, these managerial practices have formed the foundation of high-performance-work-practices (HPWPs; Arthur, 1994). HPWPs can be seen as an amalgamation of various managerial practices, in which employees participate in decision-making-process and contribute to the policy implementation, hence maximising the employee potential (Sheehan & Garavan, 2022). Following the same logic, many strategies have burgeoned, such as High-Performance Human Resource Practice (HPHRP; Sun *et al.*, 2007), High Performance Work Environment (HPWE; Weinberg *et al.*, 2013), High Performance Work Systems (HPWS; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015) and High Involvement Work Systems (HIWS; Stephen *et al.*, 2020). Although different in names, these strategies are congruent with the construct of HPWPs, aiming to facilitate employee engagement and organisational outcomes (Boxall, 2012). Table I illustrates different terminologies used to represent High Performance Work Practices.

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HPWPs Theoretical background

To give perspective into the increased focus on HPWPs before highlighting the conceptualisation of HPWPs, the literature of strategic human resource management has identified various theoretical perspectives throughout the years. Some include the “Abilities Motivation Opportunities” (AMO) framework by Appelbaum et al. (2000), the “Resource Based View” by Barney (1991), and the “Human Capital Path” by Wright (2021). Although most theoretical studies stress the importance of HPWPs to employee performance, researchers have since acknowledged other issue particularly those relating to the process through which HPWPs influences organisational citizenship behaviour (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail 2020). In lieu of the abovementioned argument, recent studies suggest that Appelbaum et al. (2000) work provided a basis for a stronger conceptualisation of HPWPs through their AMO framework giving credence to the process through which HPWPs enhances OCB (Obeidat et al., 2016)

HPWPs: What is it?

To further understand the construct of HPWPs, we adopt the AMO model (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000) for discussion. The model comprises three components, stimulating the performance jointly. Three are: i). *ability* refers to the recruitment policies that ensure employees are qualified and capable of doing their jobs. It also refers to the management practices that employees are well trained or equipped with right skill-sets to carry out their jobs; ii). *motivation* refers to the job-motive, indicating that employees could be motivated with either an extrinsic, intrinsic or trust factor; and, iii). *opportunity* refers to the environment, indicating that the organisation shall provide employees sufficient opportunities to participate. Based on the AMO model, we propose employees to reach the optimum performance when they have right skill-sets, possess adequate motivation, and work in a welcome-to-participate environment. Our proposal is refined below:

In terms of ability, scholars highlight the significance of trainings to the employee development

and performance; for instance, employee trainings facilitate better relationships and learning atmosphere at work (Alatailat *et al.*, 2019). During the trainings, through the use of a systematic and planned instruction activities (e.g., cross-departmental trainings), employees develop their confidence in learning and acquire new job knowledge (Kroon *et al.*, 2013). Yen *et al.* (2016) also claim that cross-departmental trainings not only support career development, but also enable employees to establish goals; for instance, cross-trained employees can expand their exposure to task and enhance their ability to perform better. Namely, through the implementation of trainings (one practice of HPWPs; Boxall, 2012), employees can develop their job-ability, acquiring new knowledge and skills.

In terms of motivation, ‘internal mobility’ is added to the discussion, with the rationale below. Firstly, good organisations offer internal mobility to the employee, such as vertical mobility (e.g., promotion opportunities) and horizontal mobility (e.g., job re-assignment opportunities), as internal mobility allows employees to manage their career orientation and broaden their career paths; and when the career orientation is self-manageable, employees become more motivated (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000). Secondly, as per the ‘employee-organisation relationship’, employees also need internal mobility to satisfy their personal needs and career ambition (Sun *et al.*, 2007). Simply put, prior two studies affirm the importance of internal mobility. Through the provision of internal mobility (a practice of HPWPs; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000), employees can develop stronger motivation in their jobs too.

In terms of opportunity, scholars address the necessity of empowerment to the job commitment and performance. Empowerment is defined as freedom, opportunity and ability to make decisions and commitments, and empowered employees benefit from high autonomy and better wellbeing (Forrester, 2000). Empowerment enables employees to make creative judgment and fulfil their duties, providing quick and fair responses to customers’ request (Guchait *et al.*, 2012). Thus,

through the implementation of empowerment (a practice of HPWPs; Arefin *et al.*, 2020), employees become capable of executing tasks in their own ways, gaining more control at work.

To sum up, through the analysis of AMO model (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000), we have learnt that HPWPs involve different combinations of managerial strategies, and that HPWPs encourage the communication and collaboration across the employees with different ranks of position. Through the cognate studies (e.g., Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Stephen *et al.*, 2020; Weinberg *et al.*, 2013), we have observed the potential effect of HPWPs on employee engagement and performance. To continue this line of research, there is a need to scrutinise the efficacy of HPWPs. Details follows.

The efficacy of HPWPs: From the perspective of employee engagement

Employee engagement (EE) is defined as a fulfilling and motivating construct, which is highly influenced by physical-, affective- and cognitive-energy that leads to a high level of job and organisational performance (Arefin *et al.*, 2020). EE explains why employees feel committed to their work and where such commitment comes from (Ibid, 2016; Kahn, 1990). EE comprises two sub-dimensions: i). '*job engagement*' focuses on the engagement with job-relevant duties, which are often individual oriented; and, ii). '*organisational engagement*' focuses on the engagement with collective- and group-based missions, which are often organisation oriented (Malinen *et al.*, 2013). Although different in nature, both job- and organisational-engagement shall be valued equally and merged for analysis, particularly when both sub-dimensions contribute to the formation of employee engagement (*see discussion of engagement catchphrase in: Saks, 2006*).

Interestingly, scholars have mixed views about the influence of employee engagement. For example, business organisations with the prevalence of engaged employees may outperform their rivalries and gain competitive advantages (Chang *et al.*, 2022; Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2016).

Robinson et al. (2004) indicate that managers favor the managerial practices that stimulate EE, and these practices are largely similar to the implementation of HPWPs. To be exact, managers may apply HPWPs to their employee management practices, such as teamwork facilitation (Alatailat *et al.*, 2019), decision-making enhancement (Kroon *et al.*, 2013), development of employee well-beings and citizenship behaviours (Saridakis *et al.*, 2017). That is, through the combinations of different managerial practices (the idea of HPWPs), the workplace has become more supportive and healthier, which in turn facilitate higher levels of employee engagement and boost citizenship behaviours (*see common HPWPs in Table II*).

< Insert Table II Near Here >

The HPWPs-EE relationship can be further explained by the Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau, 1964). According to the SET, the relationship between two parties may sustain when the cost-benefit balance is reached, in which the concept of reciprocity explains why two parties continue to contribute to the mutual relationship, and benefit from the same relationship. Following the same logic, the interactions between HPWPs and EE may evolve overtime into mutual-trust, loyalty and commitment, given that HPWPs and EE stick to the rules of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Iteboje & Chang, 2021). Similarly, when the employees receive supports and resources from their organisations (e.g., outcomes of the HPWPs), they feel obligated to repay the gesture (Ibid, 2005). This phenomenon aligns with Robinson et al.'s (2004) interpretation of engagement as a two-way relationship, re-affirming the HPWPs-EE relationship.

The efficacy of HPWPs: From the perspective of OCB

We add OCB to discuss the relationship between HPWPs and employee engagement, with the rationale below. Firstly, OCB is defined as a person's voluntary commitment within an organisation that is not part of his/her contractual tasks (Organ, 1988). OCB is a salient and well-recognised performance indicator (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Pereira & Gomes, 2012), which is also widely utilized in the measurement of employee engagement (Lee & Ok, 2016; Nguyen et al.,

2016). OCB is a sensitive indicator of employee engagement and hence suitable to the current discussion. Secondly, supported by the AMO model (Applebaum *et al.*, 2000), HPWPs are capable of facilitating employee's ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform. When employees work in a HPWPs-prevailing environment, employees shall develop higher levels of EE, leading to more OCB (more engagement); in contrast, when the environment lacks HPWPs, employees shall develop lower levels of EE, leading to less OCB (less engagement).

To further analyse the relationship between HPWPs and employee engagement, this article now turns to review and discuss the cognate literatures. To begin with, Jiang, Hu and Baer (2012) indicate that people become more engaged in their job duties when they feel valued by the organisation. Similarly, employees may work diligently in exchange of organisational recognition, such as developing new ideas in tasks and problem-solving (Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Dhar & Dhar, 2021). Next, employees may continually participate in a give-and-take relationship with their employer, whereby one party gives a socio-emotional resource that is desired by the other in exchange for what the other party desires (Fletcher, 2015). As a result of this reciprocity, the organisation may adopt a flexible work arrangement where employees decide 'how' and 'when' they work, giving the individual the ability to balance work and life (Lambert *et al.*, 2008). During the implementation of HPWPs, moreover, the presence of training, internal mobility and empowerment (*c.f.* AMO model; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000) gives employees the ability, motivation and opportunity to perform tasks. This realisation can influence employee engagement, which subsequently stimulates more positive performance behaviour, such as service-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour (S-OCB).

S-OCB stems from citizenship-behaviour, which is a prominent engagement behaviour, contributing to the organisational dynamics, energy and overall performance; for instance, employees with such behaviour are more committed to their jobs and follow organisational rules

(Organ, 1988). The emergence of S-OCB is related to three factors. Firstly, extant studies tend to view citizenship-behaviour from a universal perspective leaving out its contextual nature. Yet, citizenship-behaviour often grows in a context and its discretionary behaviours may change depending on organisational cultures, group values and job characteristics (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016). Citizenship-behaviour may vary across employees, ranks of positions and job incumbents (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2004). Secondly, the understanding of S-OCB for employees who serve customers is vital (Odiaka, & Chang, 2019). Different from citizenship-behaviour which focuses on the general prosocial- and proactive-behaviours, S-OCB focuses on the discretionary behaviours of employees who have contact with customers in the service-oriented context that go beyond formal job requirements (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Thirdly, scholars explain S-OCB through three unique factors (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001): i). *loyalty*. S-OCB is displayed when employees actively advocate for the organisation; ii). *participation*. S-OCB is displayed when employees take the initiatives to improve their services; and, iii). *service delivery*. S-OCB is displayed when employees behave conscientiously in delivering services. Interestingly, despite of its uniqueness and importance, S-OCB does not draw much academic attention in the service industry, such as the hospitality sector in Nigeria (*see exception in*: Odiaka, & Chang, 2019). The majority of existing studies still focuses on generic forms of OCB, paying little attention to S-OCB in the service industry (Krishnan *et al.*, 2017). Our proposition is: conducting more S-OCB studies in the service-oriented industry is necessary (e.g., hospitality sector in Nigeria), as research findings will advance the knowledge of S-OCB and offer practical insights to the managers.

METHOD

For the purpose of data collection, we approached two hotels in Nigeria. Specifically, we selected one from Lagos and the other from Abuja, and both are well-known tourist destinations with numerous hotels. The rationale for the selection ranged from its accessibility to the hotels to their recognition as an award-winning hotel with the best value for money. In addition, these

locations (Lagos and Abuja), ranked top 10 in a recent survey carried out by Nwosu and Ward, (2016) in the United Nations Development Programme, highlighting the focus on the development of both employees and the hotel industries. Additionally, Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2018) referencing the Nigeria National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism [NIHT] in 2015 classified these hotels as four and five stars in Nigeria. The justification of selecting these hotels is based on the fact that they are top of the range in terms of the provision of hotel services and are regarded as ensuring a relatively high degree of provision of quality of work life.

Howe-Walsh *et al.* (2022) have highlighted the high turnover rates within these destinations. For example, Siyanbola and Gilman (2017) noted many employees left their organisations shortly after employment. Retention problems in the sector have been attributed to poor engagement, little or management support and inadequate reward. The recent COVID crisis amplified these issues, especially with a lack of security and inequitable human resources (HR) practices increasing the stress levels for the hotel staff (Howe-Walsh *et al.*, 2022).

After receiving the hotel consent, we commenced the project in accordance with the guidelines from a university ethics committee. Stepwise, we first probed whether hotels were implementing HPWPs and only HPWPs-operated hotels were selected for data collection. We then introduced the research aims to the hotel employees and managers. Participation was voluntary and encouraged with book vouchers as incentives. Participation-consent, data anonymity and confidentiality principles were practiced.

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We recruited frontline employees as research samples, along with mixed jobs, educations, tenures and hotel ratings (*5 managers, 15 employees; see Table III for details*). While considering the selection of research samples was based on the quality outcome and exploring the role of HPWPs as a factor in those outcomes, the rationale for the frontline employees stemmed from the daily and frequent interaction with customers (*see similar design in: Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016*). The frontline employees had ample opportunity in serving customers, so measuring their

experience of S-OCB were meaningful. The managers of frontline employees were also recruited, as they played a vital role in implementing HPWPs.

In light of this, recruitment of a sample occurred first by means of the purposive sampling technique, which was used to identify the respondents who match the criteria as closely as possible (Stake, 2005). The researcher consulted with personal contacts within the hotels and reviewed the organisations documents which identified several departments that consist of frontline employees and HR managers. Purposive sampling emerges as an attractive choice due to its cost effectiveness and time management. Having adopted a qualitative approach, identifying a sample size was not based on arithmetical rules and probability statistics but on the quality of information the researcher expected to obtain using the approach. However, following the identification of respondents that matched the research criteria, the researcher further adopted a snowball sampling technique to carry out a semi-structured interview. The snowball sampling technique started with a small number of respondents who were selected by the researcher on the basis of specific characteristics relevant to the study as mentioned above and also those who could identify other respondents potentially eligible for inclusion in the research. While in the field, we searched for “rich points” which led to saturation. In simple terms, we established that the information gathered at a point became repetitive and deemed sufficient in answering the research question.

We adopted semi-structured interviews to gather research data, as this method allowed for open-ended responses from interviewees for more in-depth information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To enhance the quality of data collection, we adopted a case-study approach to seek for the information (e.g., answers, cues) towards the knowledge gaps; specifically, we implemented a ‘social construction of reality’ approach, where a sample of HPWPs was utilised to facilitate the discussion between interviewees and interviewers, leading to deeper and more meaningful information collection (Yin, 2014).

We piloted interview questions (Appendix I) with 2 management scholars, 2 hotel managers and 2 hotel employees (separate from the research sample). Corrections were made to ensure the clarity of questions, in which confusing points and ambiguous expression were revised or dropped out. By doing so, the quality of interview questions were improved, contributing to the data analysis too (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In researching how employee job engagement strengthens the relationship between HPWPs and S-OCB, the researcher made use of the thematic analysis which involves the collection of data, developing themes, constant comparison, interpretation of data and summarising what has been learned and answering the research question. Social scientists believe that thematic analysis is relatively easy and quick to learn and researchers in social science, seem to agree that thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Research context

Based on the recent economic uncertainty and oil dependence in Nigeria Economy (Edeh et al., 2022), the Service Industry in Nigeria has become a niche for the current research, particularly when the research findings will have an important implication to the country's economic development and prosperity. As the Service Industry is too massive to be researched with limited research resources and time, we therefore focus on a representative part of the Service Industry – *hospitality sector*, along with the following reasons. Firstly, according to the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (2023), the Nigerian hospitality sector only has contributed 2.23 billion (Nigerian Naira) to the national economy between 2020 and 2023. These figures affirm Nigerian hospitality sector as one of the worst performers across Africa. Secondly, hotel employees in Nigeria suffer from low levels of employee engagement, which in turn compromises employees' capability to perform well (Adedipe & Adeleke, 2016). Thirdly, the sustainability of the hotel investment in Nigeria heavily relies on management committing to the development of its employees, but which

is not always valued or incorporated in the organisations' human resource strategies (Ibid, 2016).

To sum up, conducting a new research through the Nigerian hospitality sector can help understand employees' and employers' perception of HPWPs, as well as strategies needed to engage employees. The growth of the hospitality sector in Nigeria can have been faster and the quality of services better if the sector have access to a larger pool of motivated and engaged employees. Research findings can also clarify the efficacy of HPWPs, bringing new insights into the employee engagement literatures, particularly in the hospitality sector.

FINDINGS

We adopted thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the interview data, in which preliminary codes were identified from the interview transcripts, which were later refined and converted into themes (see Table IV). To improve the rigour of data analysis, we used AMO model as the reference model (*see similar strategy in: Podsakoff et al., 2000*). We then added newly-emerged themes into the reference model, explaining the position of themes and relevant relationships between themes. We also crafted Figure 1 to clarify the main findings for the readers.

< Insert Table IV and Figure I Near Here >

Following the three major themes (Importance of HPWPs to employee engagement, the role of employee job engagement in stimulating SOCB and HPWPs Improvement and Suggestions), a detailed discussion of each research objective was presented by comparing the result of the interviews with literature review

To begin with, we found that interviewees generally had positive experiences about the concept of HPWPs through the lens of the AMO model. Examples included: *HPWPs helped individuals carry out jobs, facilitated working morale and created job opportunities*. Congruent with our expectation, both employees and managers recognised the significance of HPWPs. Next, interviewees highlighted the importance of EE to an engaging environment. Specifically,

interviewees claimed two particular factors (themes), which affected their levels of engagement. These were: manager's appreciation of employees (e.g., *Managers appreciate my efforts, so I feel worthy and recognised*), and manager's trust in employees (e.g., *Manager trusts my value, capability and contribution, so I work diligently*). Namely, although managers implemented HPWPs to improve employees' ability, motivation and opportunity at work, their attitude towards employees also mattered. When managers showed positive attitudes towards subordinates, such as appreciating subordinates' effort and showing trust, subordinates felt more engaged at work (e.g., *my hotel values my skill sets. I feel I'm important member of the hotel. My hotel needs me. I feel I belong to the big family, I mean the hotel organisation*).

Interestingly, interviewees regarded S-OCB as an outcome of EE. They claimed that *hotel managers should give employees the opportunity, resource and support, motivating employees to put in extra work. Managers should design, strategize and implement sensible HR practices that advance employee's ability, encouraging employee's willingness to exert effort and opportunities to express their talents in work tasks. And, managers should invest optimally in employees, ensuring employees possess the right skillset, knowledge, motivation and opportunity needed for better performance*. To sum up, employees were willing to demonstrate S-OCB, but they argued that managers should value employees first, providing employees with sufficient support and resource. When employees felt supported and valued by their managers, they would show higher levels of engagement, which in turn led to more S-OCB. In contrast, when managers did not value employees, providing insufficient support, or not recognizing employees' contribution, employees would show lower levels of engagement, which in turn led to less S-OCB.

As per the implementation of HPWPs, hotel employees claimed that the management (inc. senior managers, stake holders, governing bodies) should pay more attention to the remuneration and trainings, which employees interpreted as signs of organisational trust and appreciation.

Sample remarks included: *I don't think I'd give all in as I do not feel well valued. If I am well valued by the hotel, I'd put in loads of efforts in my work. And, when the organisation properly introduces career advancement and progression, be rest assured I will be pleased... feeling valued... I am happy to go the extra mile...* The remarks from interviewees may sound sporadic but actually shared two important messages: i). organisational recognition (e.g., values, appreciation and remuneration) was vital to the employees, which in turn led to S-OCB; and, ii). when employees showed S-OCB, managers should ensure the continuous implementation of HPWPs. This is because: HPWPs played an important role in supporting employees, such as trainings, internal mobility and empowerment (as predicted by the AMO model and discovered in interviews). Our proposition is: HPWPs should not be treated as *one-off* managerial practice. Through the continuous implementation of HPWPs, managers could support their employees and improve the engagement, facilitating more S-OCB. Sample remarks included: *managers should ensure no 'belated pay', as it sucks. And, late payment does affect engagement and performance.*

DISCUSSION

Based on the AMO model (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000), the current research investigates how hotel employees experience HPWPs and how HPWPs affect EE and S-OCB. Through the interviews with hotel managers and frontline employees, we have observed the efficacy of HPWPs more closely. Through the data analysis and interpretation, we have better understood the mechanism underlying the 'HPWPs-EE-SOCB' relationship. These valuable discoveries have brought new insights to the employee engagement literatures. This article now turns to discuss the theoretical- and managerial-implications of new discoveries.

Theoretical implications

Research findings have first verified the significance of having engaged employees, as EE is found to be vital in stimulating S-OCB at hotels. Following the data analysis, we have learnt that

hotel employees are motivated by the ability and opportunity (stemmed from HPWPs), which in turn lead to more engagement. Engaged employees also show their desire to ‘engage in’ extra work (a sign of S-OCB). These new findings are different from previous studies of HPWPs, which are conducted in different sectors, such as education and public sectors (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Nguyen *et al.*, 2016), technology and manufacturing sectors (Mahmood *et al.*, 2019; Stephen *et al.*, 2020). Our viewpoint is: HPWPs shall work across sectors; at least, HPWPs work in the aforementioned sectors and hospitality sector. These findings have brought new insights to the efficacy of HPWPs in the hospitality sector, which is an emerging but little-known area (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016).

Next, we can infer from interview data that manager’s positive attitudes (e.g., trust in employees’ capability & appreciation of employees’ efforts) are crucial. Research findings indicate that, with manager’s appreciation and trust in mind, employees feel that they are valued and recognised by the organisation, which in turn increase their levels of engagement. These findings could be further discussed by two perspectives. Firstly, the AMO model (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000) predicts the relationship between HPWPs and employee engagement, i.e., HPWPs has an ability to facilitate engagement (*see details in literature review*), and our research has offered empirical evidence to support the concerned relationship. Secondly, manager’s appreciation and trust also increase EE. This phenomenon could be interpreted by the construct of *relational-contract* (Rousseau, 1990), which describes a situation where employees expect a long-lasting relational process with their managers and the organisation. That is, employee will be more committed to their jobs (a form of engagement; Kahn, 1990), if they perceive trust and appreciation from their managers. Similarly, when perceiving managers’ positive attitude, employees are more likely to show “job-crafting” behaviour, such as re-adjusting the ways they tackle the jobs, or re-evaluating the nature of jobs, so they can deal with challenging jobs more effectively (Tim *et al.*, 2022).

Our research findings also reveal that, when managers show positive attitude towards employees (e.g., trust in employees' capability at work), employees often return with more commitment and engaging behaviour. In contrast, if employees perceive limited trust or no appreciation from managers, they tend to keep their engagement to the minimum and show no career expectation. To our knowledge, our finding is the first in its kind, explaining the role of managers' attitude in the implementation of HPWPs at hotels, hence bringing new insights to the HPWPs literatures in the hospitality sector.

Prior studies have explored the function of HPWPs (Chang et al., 2016; Sheehan & Garavan, 2022) and called more research on S-OCB (Kirkpatrick & Hoque, 2022; Kuo et al., 2024; Podsakoff et al., 2000). To continue this line of research, we focus on the hospitality sector (such as hotels in the current research), aiming to observe how HPWPs influence S-OCB more closely. Research findings reveal that HPWPs are capable of developing employees' skills, motivating teamwork and allowing employees to participate in decision-making, which in turn lead to more engagement; and, engaged employees also demonstrate more S-OCB. Different from prior studies which link HPWPs to OCB directly (e.g., Lambert *et al.*, 2008; Nguyen *et al.*, 2016), our findings suggest to place 'employee engagement' between HPWPs and S-OCB (*as presented in Figure 1*). This suggestion is innovative in nature, adding an alternative explanation to the mechanism underlying the "HPWPs-SOCB" relationship. More importantly, as scholars have called for new research of HPWPs outside the American-European mainstream (Nwosu & Ward, 2016), the current research has successfully provided an alternative context for the HPWPs research, representing an emerging market among African countries. With the increased interests in the development and implementation of new management practices in African business organisations (Nwosu & Ward, 2016), the current research has stressed the importance of EE, as well as employees' efforts and contributions to the development of the organisations. These new discoveries have thus extended the EE literatures by claiming that, in the Nigerian Hospitality

Sector, EE is vital and important in strengthening the relationship between HPWPs and employee performance. Simply put, to facilitate the efficacy of HPWPs, managers and employees each play a role.

Practical implications

According to the research findings, we have learnt that employees are more engaged if the organisation provides a system of well-designed management practices, such as fairness in recruitment (Celse & Chang, 2024) and work-life balance support (Adisa & Chang, 2024). With this idea in mind, we advise managers to design and implement HPWPs that help advance the skills and knowledge of employees. When employees possess right knowledge and skill-sets, they are more likely to exert effort and express their talents in work tasks (Boxall, 2012; Talat et al., 2017). Similarly, organisations that value human capital management not only gain competitive advantage, but also create an engaged environment that positively influences S-OCB (Bae & Lawler, 2000). Our viewpoint is: by investing in employees through HPWPs, the benefits will amount from the returned contribution, thereby leading to better organisational performance as a whole.

From a managerial perspective, HPWPs increase organisational performance by creating conditions where employees became highly engaged (Odiaka & Chang, 2019), and our research findings have affirmed HPWPs as management strategies critical in today's uncertain market environment; specifically, our research findings indicate that, with manager's trust and appreciation in mind, employees tend to feel valued and work diligently, showing more S-OCB. Following this logic, we suggest managers to consider different engagement strategies, such as cohesion facilitation strategies (Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Nguyen *et al.*, 2016), teamwork and leadership trainings (Pereira *et al.*, 2012; Shen *et al.*, 2019), and AI-driven management strategies (Chang,

2020; Cheng et al., 2022). Although different in nature, these strategies are all designed to create a more supportive working environment, which in turn improves EE.

Finally, the subject of human resource development within the hotel sector in Nigeria has been a widely discussed topic since the recession. There is a need for synergy between hotel associations to give legitimate voice to the stakeholder's interest in the sector. The essence of hospitality and tourism relies heavily on the quality of employees (Nwosu, 2014). As the primary product, the role employees perform in service delivery becomes more critical for the growth, profitability and competitive advantage of the hotels. Fajana (2009) succinctly explains that "Nigeria has abundant labour and less engaged talents". With this in mind, the researcher suggested that the government in collaboration with Nigeria National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism place human resource development as top priority and a pressing need. In addition, the current study suggested a need to revisit existing HR practices in order to allow for the promotion of employee job engagement. In simple terms, the adoption of HPWPs needs to be practical for the hotel's needs.

Limitation and suggestion

Our research findings are the results of a single-case study and hence suffer from limited generalisability, and so carry the usual caveats associated with such a research design, in terms of their ability to generalise beyond the case itself. Adopting an interpretivist single-case approach implies that, data collected may produce snapshots of perspectives at a given time, so perspectives may change (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). To alleviate the impact of our research design, we recruit employees from different departments and ranks of position, and we believe the findings still convey detailed-and-objective information to explain the 'HPWPs-EE-SOCB' relationship. We suggest future studies to consider different research designs, analyzing the function of HPWPs in full spectrum (e.g., *think outside box approach*; Chang et al., 2023).

Another limitation is indicated in the homogenous nature of the sector, which is reflected by shared and similar job characteristics across the developing context of Nigeria. For example, some of HPWPs used in the existing research might not be so critical in other service contexts. With this in mind, future studies should tailor HPWPs specifically to the service context from which the sample would be derived. Based on this rationale, future studies can examine the efficacy of HPWPs within other service sectors such as malls and stores in Nigeria.

We have presented our research findings in Figure 1, explaining the mechanism underlying the concerned relationships. Yet, without empirical testing, the applicability of our research findings remains unknown. Future studies may adopt a quantitative approach to examine the applicability of our Figure 1. Moreover, we have adopted AMO model to elucidate the construct of HPWPs, analyzing the mechanism underlying the 'HPWPs-EE-SOCB' relationship. Although research findings have supported the concerned relationships, we should not assume that AMO model is the only theoretical framework to explain the efficacy of HPWPs. Future research may inspect the efficacy of HPWPs through different theories, using different contexts, advancing the knowledge of HPWPs and employee engagement.

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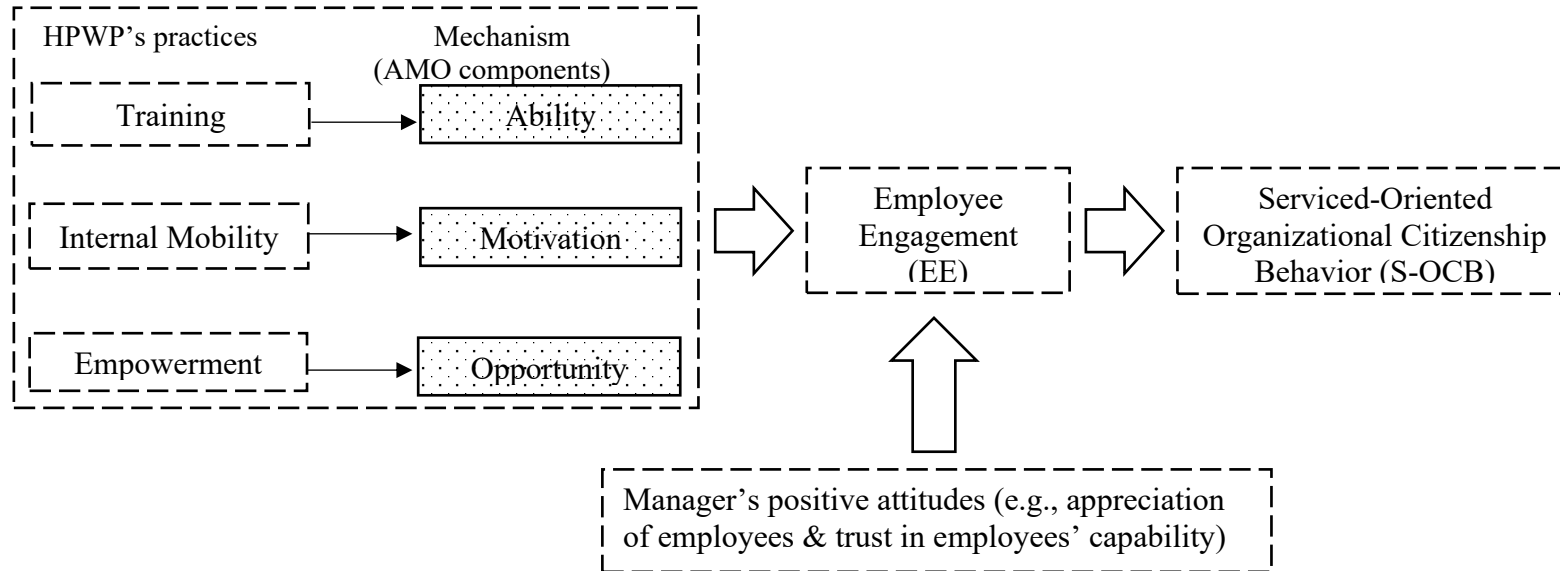
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Figure I.

Research findings



Note. The themes in dotted boxes (i.e., *ability*, *motivation*, *opportunity*) are proposed by the AMO model (Figure courtesy of Applebaum *et al.*, 2000), whereas other themes are the findings from current research (Figure by authors).

TABLE I:*Different labels of high-performance work practices*

Authors	Year	Terminology	Context
Sun, Aryee and Law	2007	High-Performance Human Resource Practice	Service sector
Weinberg, Avgar, Sugrue, and Cooney-Miner.	2013	High Performance Work Environment	Healthcare industry
Stephen, Daniels, and Ogbonnaya	2020	High Involvement Work Systems	Service industry
Kim, Karatepe, Lee, Lee, Hur, and Xijing,	2017	High-performance work practices	Service industry

Note. The table is compiled by authors.

TABLE II:*Common HPWPs identified in HRM literature*

Authors (Years)	HPWPs identified	Sector/Source
Sun <i>et al.</i> (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Selective staffing• Extensive training• Internal mobility• Job security• Clear job description• Results-oriented appraisal• Incentive reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service industry
Yen <i>et al.</i> (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-departmental training and education• Performance-oriented evaluation• Long-term client relationships• Attractive salaries• Teamwork• Morality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service and Manufacturing industry

Note. The table is compiled by authors.

TABLE III:*Profiles of the interviewees (N = 34)*

Ref	Hotel Ratings	Job titles	Educational level	Tenure [†]
<i>Managers:</i>				
01	Local	Manager (M1)	HND/BSc	18.0
02	Local	Manager (M2)	HND/BSc	2.0
03	Local	Manager (M3)	HND/BSc	6.0
04	National	Manager (M4)	BSc	33.0
05	5-Star	Manager (M5)	BSc/MSc	21.0
<i>Employees:</i>				
06	Local	Reception (R1)	HND/BSc	10.0
07	Local	Food & Beverage (F1)	NCE/HND	12.0
08	Local	Sales & Marketing (S1)	Degree	0.8
09	Local	Waitress (W1)	HND/BSc	11.0
10	Local	Executive House Keeping (E1)	HND/BSc	30.0
11	Local	Security (S2)	SS2 (Secondary)	0.8
12	Local	Gardening (G1)	SS2 (Secondary)	4.0
13	Local	Accounts (A1)	HND/BSc	6.0
14	Local	Maintenance (M1)	HND/BSc	6.0
15	National	Front office (F2)	BSc	1.0
16	National	House Keeping (H1)	NCE/HND	6.0
17	National	Accounts (A2)	MSc	2.0
18	National	Accounts (A3)	BSc	5.0

19	National	Personnel/Porters (P1)	HND	5.0
20	National	IT and maintenance (I1)	MSc	0.8
21	National	Kitchen (K1)	BSc	12.0
22	National	Kitchen (K2)	BSc	10.0
23	National	Food and Beverage (F3)	BSc	6.0
24	National	Security (S3)	O levels	15.0
25	5-Star	Front office (F4)	BSc	0.2
26	5-Star	Front office (F5)	BSc	1.0
27	5-Star	House Keeping (H2)	NCE/HND	1.0
28	5-Star	Accounts (A4)	BSc	8.0
29	5-Star	Accounts (A5)	BSc	10.0
30	5-Star	Personnel/Porters (P2)	O levels	2.0
31	5-Star	Sales and purchasing (S4)	BSc	8.0
32	5-Star	Kitchen (K3)	BSc	10.0
33	5-Star	Food and Beverage (F6)	BSc	6.0
34	5-Star	Security (S5)	O levels	20.0

Note. †. Overall tenure in the hospitality industry (The table is compiled by authors).

TABLE IV:*Samples of analytic procedure*

Preliminary codes	Interview transcripts	Emerging themes (subject to further revision)
Opportunity and constraints of HPWPs	<p>Trainings to develop abilities of staff were introduced like communication skills, accommodation skills, technical skills such as tiling, electrification, plumbing, catering....</p>	Opportunity & Trainings
	<p>A monthly package of N10, 000 (about US\$ 25) given to the most outstanding employee, continuous free feeding of staff and words of encouragement from managers /supervisors are some of the motivational strategies adopted.</p>	Motivation & Engagement
	<p>I create staff interaction with prominent men and women in the society.</p>	Opportunity
	<p>I invite the hotel owners and the State Government to speak to our employees and sponsor studies for the higher institutions of learning.</p>	Opportunity, Training & Motivation
	<p>Other hotels don't have such opportunities... to be brutally honest this works on some employees but not all.</p>	

	Engagement focuses on the ability to properly manage employees.	Ability & Empowerment
Mechanism of HPWPs-EE-SOCB	In fact, making sure that these employees don't experience belated pay is very essential for their engagement.	Motivation & Engagement
Experiences of HPWPs	If you introduce career advancement and progression properly, be rest assured I will feel very happy and valued... Trust me I will put in a lot of effort in this work.	Motivation, Opportunity & Internal Mobility
	If I am satisfied with the management/organisation/job..... I will think of what I can do to contribute, but if I am unsatisfied, I would not share knowledge.	Engagement & Motivation
	I don't think I will contribute at all if I do not think I am well valued.	
	Performance has to do with my own personal effort...	Motivation & Engagement

Note. The table is compiled by authors.

Appendix I:

Development of the interview questions

Research Questions	Who to be interviewed	Questions for interviewees	Memo
How do employees and managers perceive the importance of HPWPs to employee engagement?	Frontline employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard of HWP in the work place, if yes/no what does it mean to you? • Do you think organisations should provide materials/ HPWP such as: trainings, internal mobility, empowerment etc., necessary for engagement? If yes/no why? • What do you think will propel you to as a (job cadre) to perform better? 	The questions examine and critically discuss employee's perception of importance of HPWPs to employee engagement.
Does employee job engagement stimulate SOCB?	Frontline employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard of employment engagement in the work place, if yes/no what does it mean to you? • How important do you think cross departmental training, empowerment and internal mobility is to being proactive? If it is very useful could you give me examples to justify this? 	The second question justifies the objective that investigates how employee job engagement stimulate SOCB in Nigerian hotels.
What opportunities and constraints (if any) would implementing HPWPs have in Nigerian hotels?	Frontline employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How useful do you think internal mobility is to employee job engagement? • How often do you make decisions without the consent of the manager? – could you tell me a time when this 	These cluster of questions seeks to determine the opportunity and constraints (if any) of implementing HPWP in

		<p>happened.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you handle or resolve customer complaint? • Do you participate in the training made available to you in deferent departments? If yes? How many have you been involved in and why those specific trainings? • What in your opinion will prompt or prevent you from performing beyond expectation? 	Nigerian hotels.
How do employees and managers perceive the importance of HPWPs to employee engagement	HR Managers/ Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard of the term HPWP such as internal mobility, empowerment, trainings? If yes/no what does it mean to you? • How much influence do you think these HPWP such as internal mobility, empowerment, trainings have on your employee's engagement? – Could you please give me an example 	The questions examine and critically discuss employee's perception of importance of HPWPs to employee engagement.
Does employee job engagement stimulate SOCB?	HR Managers/ Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think employees knowing what is expected of them will make them more proactive? If yes/no why? 	The second question justifies the objective that investigates how employee job engagement stimulate SOCB in Nigerian hotels.
What opportunities and constraints (if any) would	HR Managers/ Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure that all employees in these positions are made aware of internal mobility opportunities? 	These cluster of questions seeks to determine the opportunity and

<p>implementing HPWPs have in Nigerian hotels?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have regular training for employees across different departments? What sort of trainings have you made available? • Do you feel your employees have the opportunity to routinely make changes in the way they perform their jobs? If yes/no can you tell me about this? • How will you compare the hotel performance over the past year with that of others that offer the same services? What about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Average total cost per room - Revenue per available room - Customer satisfaction - Growth in sales • Have you considered any application for transfer to another department? Is there a criterion to this approval? • Apart from the on the job training did the organisation provide formal training either on or off the premise? If yes, how many people participated and how effective would you say It was? And If no why? 	<p>constraints (if any) of implementing HPWP in Nigerian hotels.</p>
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Note. The table is compiled by authors.