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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM NESTLÉ NIGERIA PLC

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the effect of employee engagement on organisational performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc., with particular emphasis on cognitive and physical engagement as dimensions of employee engagement. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 547 employees of Nestlé Nigeria Plc., Ilupeju, Lagos State. Using Yamane's (1967) sampling formula, a sample size of 232 was obtained, while an additional 10% was provided for possible attrition, and 256 questionnaires were distributed. Of the 256 questionnaires distributed, 241 usable responses were analysed, representing a response rate of 94.1%. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. The results revealed that cognitive engagement had a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.524$, $t = 10.447$, $p < .001$). Physical engagement also had a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 8.546$, $p < .001$). The regression model explained 83.2% of the variation in organisational performance ($R^2 = .832$), while the overall model was statistically significant ($F(2, 238) = 595.384$, $p < .001$). Cognitive engagement made the larger contribution to organisational performance in the sample based on its standardised regression coefficient. The study concludes that both cognitive and physical engagement are significant dimensions of employee engagement in explaining organisational performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The study recommends continuous professional development, participative decision-making, job enrichment, knowledge sharing, supportive work environments, employee wellness programmes, and adequate work resources to strengthen employee engagement and performance.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Cognitive Engagement, Physical Engagement, Organisational Performance, Nestlé Nigeria Plc

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has become an important construct in human resource management and organisational behaviour because of its relationship with employee attitudes, discretionary effort, task performance, and organisational outcomes. Employee engagement encompasses the psychological and behavioural investment employees make in their work roles. Kahn (1990) conceptualised personal engagement in terms of the investment of physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in role performance. Subsequent research has similarly treated engagement as a

multidimensional construct involving employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional investment in their work (Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010). Engagement is therefore concerned not merely with employees being present at work but with the extent to which they bring their psychological and physical resources to the performance of their roles.

Empirical evidence indicates that employee engagement is associated with important employee and organisational outcomes. Rich et al. (2010), for example, found that job engagement was associated with task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. Christian et al. (2011), through a quantitative review, also established a relationship between work engagement and task and contextual performance. Albrecht et al. (2015) further emphasised the importance of employee engagement and human resource management practices in achieving organisational outcomes. These findings suggest that employees who are mentally attentive, physically involved, and psychologically invested in their roles may contribute more effectively to organisational objectives.

In the Nigerian organisational context, employee engagement is also relevant to organisational performance. Imade et al. (2025), for example, reported significant relationships between dimensions of employee engagement and organisational performance among selected service organisations in Nigeria. Adamu et al. (2025) similarly reported a positive relationship between employee engagement and organisational performance among selected government ministries in Minna, Niger State. However, evidence generated from public-sector and service-sector organisations may not necessarily be directly generalisable to multinational manufacturing and fast-moving consumer goods organisations because organisational structures, work processes, performance requirements, and employee-management relationships may differ across sectors.

Nestlé Nigeria Plc. operates within a competitive fast-moving consumer goods environment in which employee contribution is important to operational efficiency, innovation, productivity, and the achievement of organisational objectives. In such an environment, employees may be required to apply sustained cognitive attention, physical effort, initiative, and problem-solving capabilities to their work. Consequently, understanding how different dimensions of employee engagement relate to organisational performance is relevant to human resource management and organisational decision-making.

Although previous studies have established relationships between employee engagement and performance, relatively limited context-specific evidence is available concerning the relationship between cognitive and physical engagement and organisational performance within Nestlé Nigeria Plc. In addition, studies conducted in other sectors may not fully explain the dynamics of engagement in a large multinational manufacturing organisation. This creates a contextual gap that provides the basis for examining the relationship between employee engagement and organisational performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc., Ilupeju, Lagos State.

The present study focuses specifically on cognitive and physical engagement. Employee engagement is theoretically multidimensional and may also include emotional engagement. However, the present study restricts its empirical analysis to cognitive and physical engagement in

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accordance with its stated objectives and measurement framework. They are also used because they are perceived by the researchers to be the most easily recognised in the organisation.

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of employee engagement on organisational performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc., Lagos State. The specific objectives are to:

i. examine the effect of cognitive engagement on the performance of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.; and
ii. assess the effect of physical engagement on the performance of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Based on the objectives, the following null hypotheses were tested:

H_{01}: Cognitive engagement has no significant effect on the performance of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

H_{02}: Physical engagement has no significant effect on the performance of Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study examined the effect of employee engagement on the performance of Nestlé Nigeria Plc., Ilupeju Lagos State. The dependent variable for the study is performance measured by growth, while the independent variable is employee engagement proxied by cognitive and physical engagement.

Employee Engagement

Shuck and Wollard (2020) described Employee engagement as an employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioural state that is aimed directly towards the intended outcome of the organisation. It is also referred to as the concurrent active utilisation of one's cognitive, emotional, and physical energy in the performance of his or her work (Rich et al., 2010). Similarly, Barrick *et al.* (2025) defined Employee engagement as the collective effort where all the members of an organisation cognitively, physically, and emotionally put in their work. According to Shuck *et al.* (2023), Employee engagement is a constructive, vigorous, job-related mental state which is driven by perseverance, passion, and focus of mental, emotional, and behavioural vitality. It can also be described as the degree to which workers are content with their job, have sense of value by their employer, and demonstrate a positive attitude and dedication to their company in order to secure future organisational success (Human Capital Institute, 2021).

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement refers to the extent to which employees invest mental attention, concentration, intellectual effort, and psychological resources in the performance of their work roles. Unlike student-focused conceptualisations of cognitive engagement, the present study applies the concept specifically to workplace behaviour.

Rich et al. (2010) conceptualised cognitive engagement as the extent to which individuals become cognitively absorbed in their work and devote attention to role performance. Christian et al. (2011) similarly linked work engagement to task performance, indicating that employees' psychological investment in work is relevant to how effectively they perform their roles.

Cognitive engagement involves concentration, attention, mental absorption, problem solving, and deliberate application of knowledge to work activities. In organisational settings, cognitively engaged employees are expected to devote greater mental resources to understanding work requirements, solving problems, making decisions, identifying improvements, and achieving work objectives. The concept is therefore particularly relevant in contemporary organisations where employees are increasingly expected to apply knowledge, judgement, creativity, and innovation to their roles.

Physical Engagement

Physical engagement has been conceptualised in contemporary organisational behaviour literature as the degree to which employees invest their physical energy, effort, and stamina into the execution of work roles. Drawing from the engagement framework originally advanced by Kahn, recent scholars define physical engagement as the active deployment of bodily involvement, including vigour, resilience, and task-focused energy, during role performance (Saks, 2022; Shuck & Herd, 2023). It reflects the observable manifestation of engagement through sustained effort, persistence in the face of job demands, and proactive task involvement. In this sense, physical engagement is not merely presence at work but the mobilisation of somatic resources to accomplish organisational objectives efficiently. Physical engagement is tied to physical (and mental) well-being. When employees are healthier mentally and physically, they will be more physically engaged in their jobs.

Performance

Performance refers to an individual's ability, skill and effort in a given situation (Porter & Lawler, 2024). Performance can also be described as the outcome of the effort extended to the job by an employee or group or organisation. Effort is an internal force of a person which makes him or her to work willingly. When employees are satisfied with their job and their needs are met, they develop an attachment to work or make an effort to perform better. Increased effort results in better performances. Richard *et al.* (2024) defined organisational performance as an organisation's actual output or results as measured against its intended outputs (or goals and objectives). Organisational performance generally covers three explicit areas of firm outcomes, which are: financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.), product market performance (sales, market share, etc.) and shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.).

Empirical Review

Adamu et al. (2025) examined the role of employee engagement on organisational performance in three government ministries in Minna, Niger State. A descriptive research design was used,

combining qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate employee engagement in relation to organisational outcomes. Data were collected from 250 employees and managers across three government ministries in Minna metropolis, Niger State, through structured questionnaires. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study found that leadership support, communication, and recognition were the most strongly agreed upon factors contributing to employee engagement. A strong positive relationship between employee engagement and organisational performance was confirmed. The findings showed that employee engagement significantly influenced productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organisational performance. The use of only three government ministries within a single metropolis constrains external validity and generalizability to other sectors or regions. Furthermore, performance was largely perceptual and not based on objective metrics. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, incorporate objective performance indicators, and expand the sampling frame across multiple public and private institutions to enhance robustness and generalizability.

Makhanu (2024) investigated the influence of physical employee engagement on job performance in the civil service, at Kakamega regional Headquarters, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive type of research design. The target population comprised 590 employees in 14 national ministries at Kakamega regional headquarters (HQ) in Kenya, from which a sample of 228 respondents were drawn from two strata; supervisory and support staff, while 30 respondents from the top management was obtained by census. This made a total of 258 sample respondents. Data were collected by use of self-administered questionnaire. Inferential statistics were obtained through correlations analysis and regressions analyses to test for the degree of association between the pair of variables and the effect of employee engagement on job performance. A hierarchical and stepwise regression was used to investigate for the moderating influence of manager's self-efficacy on the relationship between physical employee engagement and job performance. Stepwise regression was performed to find out the incremental contribution of Manager's self-efficacy on the relationship between physical employee engagement and job performance. The findings of the study indicated a positive and significant relationship between physical employee engagement and job performance.

Zhang and Liu (2025) examined the effect of cognitive engagement on organisational performance among technology firms in Shanghai. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population comprised 520 employees across 15 registered technology firms, from which a sample of 226 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring cognitive engagement dimensions (attention focus, absorption, and intellectual involvement) and organisational performance indicators (productivity, innovation output, and profitability). Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings revealed that cognitive engagement had a significant positive effect on organisational performance, particularly enhancing innovation capability and operational efficiency. Despite the robust methodology, the cross-sectional design prevents inference about causality over time, and the study focuses solely on technology firms, limiting generalizability to other sectors. Furthermore, potential moderators such as leadership support or team dynamics were not examined. A research gap exists in conducting longitudinal, multi-sector studies that assess how

cognitive engagement interacts with organisational and environmental variables to influence performance.

Bello et al. (2025) investigated employee relations practices and organisational performance at Dufil Prima Foods (De-United Foods Industries Ltd.), Nigeria, providing particularly relevant evidence because Dufil Prima Foods operates within Nigeria's food-manufacturing sector. The study used primary data collected through a self-designed questionnaire administered to 290 employees. Descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, including multiple regression and ANOVA, were employed to analyse the data and test the hypotheses. The study examined communication and employee retention as employee-relations practices in relation to organisational performance. The findings showed that communication had a substantial effect on organisational performance and that communication also facilitated employee engagement and motivation, which were associated with improved productivity and efficiency. Employee retention was likewise reported to improve organisational performance. The researchers consequently recommended the establishment of frequent, open and participatory communication channels and the use of multiple communication and feedback mechanisms within the organisation.

Egwakhe, Binuyo, and Kuforiji (2019) investigated human-factor dimensions and workplace outcomes among selected food and beverage firms in Lagos State, Nigeria, with employee engagement included as one of the principal human-factor variables. The study employed a survey research design and targeted 4,834 employees of selected food and beverage companies in Lagos State. Using stratified random sampling and the Krejcie and Morgan approach, a sample of 392 was determined, while 400 questionnaires were administered and 94% were returned. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including correlation and multiple regression. The findings showed that employee engagement was a significant contributor to workplace climate. In the reported regression results, employee engagement had a positive and statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.144$, $t = 2.730$, $p < .05$). Collectively, the human-factor dimensions explained a substantial proportion of variation in workplace climate, with an adjusted R^2 of .474 and an overall F-statistic of 48.672 ($p < .05$). The authors concluded that employee engagement, together with employee attitude, trust and involvement, constitutes an important human factor for creating a favourable organisational climate in food and beverage firms in Lagos State.

Theoretical Framework

Engagement Theory

Kahn's (1990) engagement theory has been applied by a myriad of researchers, some of whom have used the theory to explain the extent to which employee engagement predicts the performance of employees. For instance, Rich et al. (2010) applied Kahn's theory of employee engagement and found that emotional energy in workers connects workers with their organisation, which ultimately improves task performance. Having adopted Kahn's theory, Christian et al. (2011) also found that job characteristics as antecedents of engagement significantly determine positive consequences, including workers' improved performance. The main premise of this theory is the assumption that

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employees become engaged when three psychological aspects are satisfied: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. In this study, therefore, Kahn's engagement theory was employed because it explained well the affective engagement and performance relationship.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which is considered suitable because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a defined population in order to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables as they naturally occur (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The descriptive survey approach is widely used in service and marketing studies because it enables the researcher to capture customers' perceptions, opinions, and evaluations of service experiences without manipulating the study environment (Hair et al., 2022; Malhotra, 2020).

The population of this study includes all the staff of Nestlé Nigeria Plc, specifically the Nestlé head office in Ilupeju, Lagos State. The total number of staff in the organisation is 547, distributed across various departments.

The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique in the distribution of questionnaires to the sample. The sample size was therefore determined using Yamane's (1967) formula

n= 547 /(1+547(0.05)^2)

n=547/(1+547(0.0025))

n=547/(1+1.3675)

n=547/(2.3675)

n= 231.1

≈ 232

Provision for attrition was made so as to avoid the number of instruments falling below the calculated sample size. According to Dike (2018), 10% of the sample size can be added to the number of instruments distributed to the respondents. Therefore, 23.2 questionnaires were added, giving a rounded total of 256.

Data collection represents a critical stage in the research process, as it provides the essential information required to address the research objectives and test the stated hypotheses. For this study, primary data were utilised because they offer direct, first-hand insights from employees of the organisation.

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Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure the variables of the study. The questionnaire consisted of sections covering respondents' demographic characteristics and the substantive variables of cognitive engagement, physical engagement, and organisational performance.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), to Strongly Disagree (1).

The questionnaire did not include customer-related measures because the unit of analysis was employees and the study concerned employee engagement and organisational performance.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire items were designed to reflect the conceptual dimensions examined in the study. Content validity should be established through expert review by specialists in human resource management, organisational behaviour, and research methodology before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

The reliability coefficients obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Cognitive Engagement	5	.77
Physical Engagement	5	.81
Organisational Performance	5	.87

Source: SPSS (2026)

The data were analysed using SPSS version 28. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationships among cognitive engagement, physical engagement, and organisational performance. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the individual and joint effects of cognitive and physical engagement on organisational performance.

The regression model was specified as:

$$PF = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CE + \beta_2 PE + \mu$$

Where:

PF = Organisational Performance

CE = Cognitive Engagement

PE = Physical Engagement

β_0 = Constant/intercept

β_1 and β_2 = Regression coefficients

μ = Error term

The study involved employees as respondents and therefore, they were informed of the confidentiality, and protection of respondents' identities. They were also informed that the information obtained is strictly for research purposes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the 256 questionnaires distributed, 241 usable responses were analysed, representing a response rate of 94.1%.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	CE	PE	PF
Cognitive Engagement	1		
Physical Engagement	0.701**	1	
Performance	0.846**	0.812**	1

Correlation is significant at p <.001

The results reveal strong positive relationships among the study variables. Cognitive engagement exhibits a very strong positive relationship with organisational performance (r =.846, p <.001), suggesting that employees who are mentally absorbed in their work tend to report higher performance levels. Physical engagement also demonstrates a strong positive association with performance (r =.812, p <.001), indicating that employees who invest greater physical energy and effort in their work contribute more effectively to organisational outcomes. Furthermore, the correlation between cognitive engagement and physical engagement (r =.701, p <.001) indicates

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that the two dimensions of engagement are positively related but remain sufficiently distinct for inclusion in the regression model.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
1	0.912	0.832	0.830	0.244

Source: SPSS (2026)

The model explains 83.2% of the variation in organisational performance. This indicates an excellent explanatory power.

Table 4: ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	70.854	2	35.427	595.384	.000
Residual	14.163	238	0.060		
Total	85.017	240			

Source: SPSS (2026)

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 595.384$; $p < .001$), indicating that cognitive engagement and physical engagement jointly exert a significant influence on organisational performance.

Table 5: Coefficients

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	0.581	0.124		4.685	.000
Cognitive Engagement	0.491	0.047	0.524	10.447	.000
Physical Engagement	0.376	0.044	0.428	8.546	.000

Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: SPSS (2026)

The regression results revealed that both dimensions of employee engagement significantly predict organisational performance. Cognitive engagement records a positive and statistically significant

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effect on performance (β = 0.524, t = 10.447, p <.001). This suggests that a one-unit increase in employees' cognitive engagement leads to an estimated 0.491-unit increase in organisational performance, holding other variables constant. The finding implies that employees who devote greater mental attention, concentration, and intellectual involvement to their work are more likely to contribute positively to organisational effectiveness.

Similarly, physical engagement exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on performance (β = 0.428, t = 8.546, p <.001). Specifically, a one-unit increase in physical engagement is associated with a 0.376-unit increase in organisational performance. This indicates that employees who demonstrate higher levels of physical energy, enthusiasm, and active participation in work activities tend to enhance overall organisational performance.

Comparatively, cognitive engagement made the larger contribution in this sample based on its standardised beta coefficient (β = 0.524), suggesting that employees' mental investment in their work contributes more substantially to performance than physical effort alone.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

$H0_1$: Cognitive engagement has no significant effect on organisational performance.

From Table 5, cognitive engagement records β = 0.524, t = 10.447, p =.000.

Since p < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Cognitive engagement has a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: Physical engagement has no significant effect on organisational performance.

Physical engagement records β = 0.428, t = 8.546, p =.000.

Since p < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Physical engagement has a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding revealed that cognitive engagement has a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational performance (β = 0.524, *t* = 10.447, *p* <.001), indicating that employees' mental

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focus, intellectual involvement, and psychological investment in their work substantially enhance organisational outcomes. This finding supports the theoretical proposition of Kahn's Employee Engagement Theory, which posits that employees who are cognitively absorbed in their work demonstrate greater effectiveness, creativity, and commitment to organisational goals. The result is consistent with the findings of Rich et al. (2010) who reported that cognitive engagement significantly improves task performance and organisational citizenship behaviours. Similarly, Saks (2022) found that employees who are mentally engaged are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job performance and organisational commitment. The finding also corroborates the work of Bakker and Demerouti (2017), who argued that cognitive resources enable employees to effectively utilise their skills and knowledge, thereby improving productivity and organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, studies by Albrecht et al. (2015) and Bailey et al. (2021) similarly concluded that cognitive engagement is one of the strongest determinants of employee and organisational performance because mentally engaged employees demonstrate superior problem-solving abilities, innovation, and decision-making. The stronger standardised beta coefficient obtained in this study further suggests that organisations derive greater performance benefits when employees are intellectually immersed in their work rather than merely performing assigned tasks.

The second finding established that physical engagement significantly and positively influences organisational performance ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 8.546$, $p < .001$), implying that employees who invest greater physical energy, enthusiasm, and active participation in work activities contribute meaningfully to improved organisational performance. This finding agrees with the work of Rich et al. (2010), who identified physical engagement as a critical component of employee engagement that enhances individual job performance through increased vigour, persistence, and discretionary effort. The result also aligns with the findings of Christian et al. (2011), who reported that employees who actively devote their physical resources to work exhibit higher productivity and improved organisational outcomes. Likewise, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) argued that energetic employees are more resilient, proactive, and capable of maintaining high performance even under demanding work conditions. The finding further supports the conclusions of Schaufeli et al. (2002), who associated physical vigour with improved work effectiveness, lower absenteeism, and greater organisational success. However, while this study confirms the significant contribution of physical engagement, it also demonstrates that its influence is slightly lower than that of cognitive engagement. This variation suggests that although physical effort remains an important driver of performance, sustainable organisational success depends more heavily on employees' mental involvement, concentration, and intellectual commitment than on physical exertion alone.

Conclusion

The study concludes that employee engagement is a significant predictor of organisational performance, with both cognitive and physical engagement contributing positively to improved organisational outcomes. Organisations that invest in strategies to enhance both dimensions of engagement are therefore more likely to achieve sustained improvements in productivity, efficiency, and overall organisational effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the cognitive engagement finding: Management should implement policies and practices that enhance employees' intellectual involvement, such as continuous professional development programmes, participative decision-making, job enrichment, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and opportunities for innovation. These initiatives will strengthen employees' mental commitment and further improve organisational performance.

Based on the physical engagement finding: Organisations should promote work environments that encourage employees' physical energy and active participation by providing adequate work resources, wellness and health programmes, ergonomic work conditions, motivational reward systems, and supportive supervision. Such measures will sustain employees' enthusiasm and vigour, thereby enhancing organisational performance.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, it adopted a cross-sectional survey design; consequently, the results establish statistical relationships within the observed period but do not demonstrate how engagement and performance change over time. Second, the study relied on responses obtained through a questionnaire from employees of one organisation and one location. This restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other organisations, industries, or geographical locations.

Third, cognitive engagement and physical engagement were measured through the same general survey approach as organisational performance. Consequently, common method variance may be a potential concern because the independent and dependent variables were obtained from the same respondents.

Finally, employee engagement is theoretically multidimensional, yet the study examined only cognitive and physical engagement. Emotional engagement was not included in the empirical model. Future studies should consider all major dimensions of employee engagement and, where possible, incorporate objective organisational performance indicators and longitudinal research designs.

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