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Workplace Civility Culture As Correlates Of Teachers' Engagement In Public Secondary Schools In Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated workplace civility culture as correlates of teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational design. The population comprised 6,174 teachers in 311 public secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample size was 400 teachers drawn from the population using multi stage sampling procedure. The instruments that were used for data collection in this study were two self-structured scales titled: 'Workplace Civility Culture Scale' (WCCS) and 'Teachers' Engagement Scale' (TES) developed by the researcher. The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education and Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, which yielded co-efficients as follows; 0.82 for Workplace Civility Culture and 0.81 for teachers' engagement. Research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), while the hypotheses was tested using z-test for Pearson at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that mutual respect and fairness had a strong relationship with teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Also, there is a significant relationship between mutual respect, fairness and teachers' engagement. It was concluded that there is a strong and positive correlation between workplace civility culture and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended amongst others, that principals of public secondary schools in Rivers State should continue to ensure that there is mutual respect in schools. They should enforce this by ensuring that all stakeholders within the school system address each other properly and show respect to all, irrespective of position. Also, **s**chool heads must ensure that fairness is being practiced in schools at all times.

Keywords: Workplace, Civility, Civility Culture, Teacher, Teacher Engagement, Public Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Education is a viable, dynamic and vibrant machinery that is used to uplift societies for the better. Essentially, it also helps improve the wellbeing of citizens of a nation as succinctly stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), that education aims at ensuring that citizens of a nation are trained, thereby becoming useful to themselves, and to their society. The transmission of culture to those who become committed to it is what education is all about. The school system is part of the education process and as such, educational goals and objectives are mapped out to be achieved in the schools. There are staff in

schools who assist in achieving these goals, known as teachers. A teacher is the person who transfers knowledge to students in an educational institution. Teachers plan and deliver instruction, adapt teaching to meet learners' needs, and create supportive environments where students can engage actively with content (Chasani, 2022). They are responsible in facilitating the teaching and learning process, thereby ensuring the attainment of school goals. They are individuals who are trained professionally in the art of teaching and have various teaching techniques, methods and strategies to use in the classroom. In addition, teachers serve as role models and mentors, contributing to students' personal development and societal well-being (UNESCO, 2020). For school goals to be achieved, it is imperative for teachers to be fully engaged.

Teacher engagement is a multifaceted concept involving a teacher's deep cognitive, emotional, and social investment in their work. This leads to commitment, enthusiasm and effectiveness in the classroom, benefiting both their well-being and student success. It is more than just showing up; it's about feeling connected, finding fulfillment, continuously improving and actively fostering positive relationships with students and colleagues. Teacher engagement is a motivational construct reflecting the voluntary allocation of teachers' resources and energy across teaching-related activities (Klassen et al., 2022). In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in teacher engagement. This has been precipitated by a need to better understand the problem of attrition from the profession, which have been attributed, in part, to low engagement and satisfaction with work (Bao et al., 2022). In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, teacher engagement stands as a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning.

High teacher engagement is associated with good teacher-student collaboration and successful teaching support which leads to favourable social environment necessary for students' positive academic attitudes (Wang et al., 2023). Teachers who are dedicated and strive to achieve school goals show high levels of engagement in schools. They partake in essential activities and perform their assigned tasks, roles and duties, and also exhibit diligence. Research shows that teacher engagement is associated with teachers' personal and job resources such as self-efficacy, resilience, and collective efficacy, which in turn influence their occupational commitment and effectiveness in the classroom (Alonzo et al., 2025). Teacher engagement refers to the level of a teacher's emotional, cognitive and behavioral involvement in their work and in the life of the school (Wang et al., 2024). It describes how committed, enthusiastic and absorbed teachers are in teaching and in contributing to school goals. In simple terms, it is how much teachers care about, invest in, and actively participate in their job. For teachers to be fully engaged on their job in schools, there is need for the school environment to be safe, conducive and civil.

The school workplace environment is one that thrives amidst various activities pertaining to teaching and learning. Every school has a culture and it is expected that the workplace should be civil and courteous. Civility refers to the practice of showing respect, courtesy and politeness in our interactions with others. It's about recognizing the dignity of others and adhering to social norms. It goes beyond simple politeness to include authentic respect for others, a willingness to engage respectfully even in disagreement, and actions that foster dignity and belonging (Peng, 2023). In the school system, workplace civility is the constant and deliberate demonstration of courtesy, professionalism and respect, regardless of job title or position. It encompasses the basic level of respect, courtesy and politeness that employees show toward one another in professional settings. Civility creates an environment where all employees feel valued and can perform at their best. It is more than just being nice to one another. It entails learning how to connect successfully and live well with others. Civility includes common courtesy, politeness, mutual respect and fairness. It means demonstrating good manners through effective self-expression and good communication with others.

A workplace civility culture is an organizational environment built on consistent respect, kindness, and professionalism in all interactions, creating psychological safety where diverse individuals feel valued and heard (Porath, 2022). In practice, workplace civility supports positive interpersonal interactions, enhances psychological safety, and fosters collaboration, which can improve job satisfaction, mental well-being, and organizational outcomes such as productivity and commitment (Institute for Civility, 2025). It involves treating others with dignity, showing appreciation for their contributions, and refraining from

any behavior that may be perceived as rude, aggressive, or disrespectful. Workplace civility is associated with enhanced job satisfaction, reduced conflict, increased psychological safety, and improved organizational outcomes because it fosters a climate of mutual respect, collaboration, and trust (Ojeleye et al., 2025). It is the consistent demonstration of courtesy, professionalism and respect, regardless of job title, location or tenure.

Workplace civility culture means the shared way of thinking and behaving in an organization that encourages respect, politeness, fairness, and professionalism in how people relate with one another at work. Within the educational setting, it is the culture of respect that takes place in the schools. It reflects how individuals are expected to treat one another in their daily work relationships. In schools, workplace civility culture is seen in how principals, teachers, and non-teaching staff communicate, resolve conflicts, show mutual respect, and collaborate. Profoundly, it entails actively listening to one another within the same organization and offering assistance accordingly. Workplace civility culture entails and describes the act of respect, fairness and other similar attributes being present in organizations. Workplace civility contributes to positive interpersonal relationships, psychological safety, and an environment where employees feel valued and included, which in turn supports collaboration, job satisfaction, and organizational performance (Shaibu, 2025). Essentially, in schools, it involves the atmosphere of mutual respect, equity and fairness existing between and amongst all educational stakeholders. Workplace civility is very crucial in school management and its benefits include enhanced teacher collaboration, increased job satisfaction and retention, reduced conflicts, improved school climate, promotion of professional growth and innovation, stronger organizational commitment, and positive student outcomes (El Shrief & Abo Baraka, 2023).

There are components of workplace civility culture which includes mutual respect and fairness others (Bailey, 2022). Respect refers to recognizing the worth, dignity, and professional status of all employees regardless of rank or position. In schools, mutual respect is shown when administrators value teachers' opinions and teachers respect school leadership and colleagues. In educational and organizational contexts, respect plays a crucial role in ethical relations, trust, and positive interpersonal dynamics, where individuals acknowledge the dignity and contributions of others, which supports collaboration and mutual understanding (Okoye, 2024). Having mutual respect for each other in an organization is essential and vital for organizational growth.

Fairness is an intrinsic component of workplace civility, which is defined as respectful and courteous behavior. Civility and fairness are interdependent: civil interactions foster a sense of being treated justly, while a lack of fairness can directly lead to incivility, disengagement, and a toxic work environment. Fairness involves impartial decision-making, equitable distribution of resources, and consistent application of rules and policies. Leaders who exhibit fairness create an environment where everyone feel valued and supported, knowing that their efforts will be recognized and rewarded based on merit. Fair leaders in schools ensure that policies and decisions are transparent, impartial, and based on merit, which builds trust and credibility within the school community.

Workplace civility culture is essential in schools as they promote respect and fairness. When civility is enshrined and promoted in schools, it increases engagement by all participants within the schools. Workplace civility culture is vital for promoting the engagement of teachers as when teachers are respected and valued, they engage more and put in their best to achieve stipulated school goals and objectives.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the relationship between workplace civility culture and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State
2. investigate the relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State
2. There is no significant relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational design since its emphasis was interested in finding out the relationship between workplace civility culture and teachers' engagement. The population for this study consisted of the ((6,174) teachers in three hundred and eleven (311) public secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample size that was used for this study was 400 teachers derived using Taro Yamane mathematical technique. The sampling technique that was used was multi stage sampling technique, The instruments that were used for data collection in this study were two were two scales titled 'Workplace Civility Culture Scale' (WCCS) and 'Teachers' Engagement Scale' (TES). The scales were structured using four points modified Likert-type rating of Strongly Agreed (SA) = (4 points), Agreed (A) = (3 points), Disagreed (D) = 2 points), and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = (1 point). The instruments were face and content validated by five experts in University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach Alpha Statistics with a co-efficient of 0.82 and 0.81 for the independent and dependent variables respectively. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher and two research assistants and out of 400 copies of the instruments that were administered, 376 copies were correctly filled and were retrieved. The research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested respectively using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics.

RESULTS

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State?*

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on the Relationship between Mutual Respect and Teachers' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	Df	R	Decision
Mutual Respect	376	374	0.616	Strong relationship
Teachers' Engagement				

From Table 1, with 376 respondents and at 374 degrees of freedom, the r. value stood at 0.616 (61.6%) which falls between 0.51-0.75, indicating a strong relationship between the two variables being compared. Based on the foregoing, the researcher was constrained to establish that a strong relationship existed between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State?*

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on the Relationship between Fairness and Teachers' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	Df	R	Decision
Fairness	376	374	0.694	Strong relationship
Teachers' Engagement				

From Table 2, with 376 respondents and at 374 degrees of freedom, the r. value stood at 0.694 (69.4%) which falls between 0.51-0.75, indicating a strong relationship between the two variables being compared. Based on the foregoing, the researcher was constrained to establish that a strong relationship existed between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State

Table 9: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on the Significant Relationship between Mutual Respect and Teachers' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	df	r	P. Value	Sig	Decision
Mutual Respect	376	374	0.616	0.001	0.05	Significant (reject)
Teachers' Engagement						

From Table 9, with the total number of respondents as 376, using 374 degree of freedom, r. value was 0.616, at 0.001 p. value and a significant value of 0.05. At 0.001 p. value, 0.05 significant value, the r. value of 0.616 is rejected because the p.value of 0.001 is less than the significant value of 0.05. Based on the foregoing, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative that, there is a significant relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State

Table 10: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on the Significant Relationship between Fairness and Teachers' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	df	r	P. Value	Sig	Decision
Fairness	376	374	0.694	0.000	0.05	Significant (reject)
Teachers' Engagement						

From Table 10, with the total number of respondents as 376, using 374 degree of freedom, r. value was 0.694, at 0.000 p. value and a significant value of 0.05. At 0.000 p. value, 0.05 significant value, the r. value of 0.694 is rejected because the p.value of 0.000 is less than the significant value of 0.05. Based on the foregoing, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative that, there is a significant relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Mutual Respect and Teachers' Engagement

The results from the first finding revealed that there is a strong relationship between mutual respect and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This means that mutual respect correlates with teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The respondents agreed that a strong and positive connection existed between the two variables, as corroborated by Guleryuz-Erken (2020) who discovered that respect improves engagement amongst teachers in secondary schools in Turkish Province. Mutual trust entails a behaviour which reduces uncertainty and creates a sense of psychological safety, allowing individuals to collaborate effectively, share ideas, and take interpersonal risks without fear of retaliation or betrayal. Within organizations, a shared belief among members that others are reliable, honest, competent, and will act with positive intentions toward one another is referred to as mutual trust. In schools, when this exists, teachers are more committed and embraced which leads to more engagement on their part. This is in agreement with the findings of Dirani et al. (2022), who discovered that mutual trust between teachers enhances job satisfaction, commitment, and willingness to engage in extra-role behaviours such as organizational citizenship, which enhances school productivity.

Essentially, mutual trust shapes how individuals relate, communicate, collaborate, and work together toward shared educational goals. In schools, it depicts how principals, teachers, students and parents relate together in order to ensure actualization of school goals. This is in agreement with Holzer and Daumiller(2025), who found out that mutual trust in schools between teachers and students fuels teachers' confidence which improves engagement and well-being. Also, Okoye (2024) in a study, discovered that, mutual respect plays a crucial role in ethical relations, trust, and positive interpersonal dynamics, where teachers engage and support each other in the school. This sustains active engagement and ensures that teachers are dedicated and committed.

Fairness and Teachers' Engagement

Results from the second finding showed that there is a strong relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that fairness correlates with teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. In schools, fairness ensures that individuals receive what they deserve, whether it is recognition, resources, or consequences, in a way that is transparent and consistent. For teachers to be engaged in schools, it is imperative that fairness practices in schools are implemented accordingly. The respondents agreed that fairness is one factor that relates with the engagement of teachers in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This agrees with the findings of Kim et al. (2023) who found out that fairness in schools plays a pivotal role in addressing status-driven dynamics, allowing teachers to feel secure in contributing creative solutions. This also corroborates with Abubakar (2022), who carried out a study and examined the relationship between fairness and teachers' engagement in Kwara State public primary schools, Nigeria., and discovered that fairness amongst school principals enhance the engagement and commitment of teachers.

Profoundly, leaders who exhibit fairness create an environment where everyone feel valued and supported, knowing that their efforts will be recognized and rewarded based on merit. Fair leaders in schools ensure that policies and decisions are transparent, impartial, and based on merit, which builds trust and credibility within the school community. This assertion, together with the findings of this study validates the findings of Fullan (2020) who discovered that fairness in school involves impartial decision-making, equitable distribution of resources, and consistent application of rules and policies. When teachers are treated fairly, they become accepted and relevant, thereby improving their participation and

engagement in schools. This conforms to Zhou (2022) whose findings showed that fairness had the greatest impact on teacher turnover intention and participation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a strong and positive correlation between mutual respect, fairness and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Also, there is a significant relationship between mutual respect, fairness, empathy and teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended as follows:

1. Principals of public secondary schools in Rivers State should continue to ensure that there is respect in schools and they must be mutual. They should enforce this by ensuring that all stakeholders within the school system address each other properly and show respect to all, irrespective of position.
2. School heads must ensure that fairness is being practiced in schools at all times. They should encourage students and teachers not to be bias, but to give fair treatment to everyone. Also, they should ensure that teachers, most especially, uphold fairness at all times within and outside the classroom.

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