

## ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM AS A CORRELATE OF TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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### ABSTRACT

*This study determined organizational cynicism as a correlate of teachers' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted a correlational research design. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population for the study was 4,947 teachers in the 263 public secondary schools in the State. The sample consisted of 989 teachers from the six educational zones in the State. The sample was composed using multi-stage sampling procedure which included proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Two structured questionnaires developed by the researchers titled: "Organizational Cynicism Questionnaire" (OCQ) and Engagement Questionnaire (EQ) was used for data collection. The instrument for the study was validated by lecturers in the Faculty of Education. Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and this yielded co-efficient values of 0.79 and 0.80 respectively. The researcher with the aid of six research assistants administered a total of 989 copies of the questionnaires on the respondents. At the end of the exercise, 951 copies representing 97% were successfully completed, retrieved and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients. The results of the findings include: that there is a low negative correlation among teachers' perceived cognitive and behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State amongst others. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the management of public secondary schools should discourage teachers in various schools from engaging in cynical behaviours which tend to lower their levels of engagement; however, they should go a step further, by initiating a sustainable mechanism that will address the reasons behind the exhibition of cynical behaviours by teachers.*

**Keyword:** organizational cynicism, affective cynicism, cognitive cynicism, behavioural cynicism and engagement.

## Introduction

Education is a key to the sustainability of human-capital development in Nigeria. It is a fundamental platform for establishing the growth of individuals in any society that seeks to thrive. The recent trends of societal and economic pressures, work-life complexities, workforce diversities, increase in work-load has left many educated employees at a cynical state, most especially in Nigerian schools. Teachers as key players of every educational system seem to be greatly under rewarded for their efforts; thereby leaving most of them cynical. Organizational cynicism has become an issue faced by members of many organizations including educational institutions like secondary schools (Iqbal, Fatima, and Nawab, 2017).

Organizational cynicism in the school system, could be defined as the negative attitudes of some teachers towards their colleagues, profession and organization. A cynical teacher feels that his efforts towards the development of the school is unappreciated. Cynical teachers feel uncomfortable with the level of inconsistencies in school policies and leadership behaviours. Undoubtedly, cynical teachers believe that the schools they work for do not project equality, sincerity, honesty and transparency (Simsek, 2020). Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998) earlier observed that organizational cynicism is a negative attitude towards an organization or an attitude of aggravation with key characteristics of negativity. Organizational cynicism seems to increase employee absences, employee complaints, bad rhetoric, workplace tension, sarcastic and arrogant attitudes of the employees and harming corporate identity (Bedeian, 2007). Continuing, Dean tagged organizational cynicism as comprising three dimensions namely; affective, cognitive and behavioural. Each of these dimensions according to the author probably affects employee's overall performance and level of engagement in the organization.

Affective cynicism according to Dean involves the teachers' emotional and psychological reactions and responses to issues such as aggravation, discomfort, tension, as well as anxiety. This dimension of organizational cynicism involves strong emotional reactions such as disrespect, outrage, anger, annoyance, hatred and embarrassment towards the organization (Yüksel and Sahin, 2017). Teachers feel emotional stress as a consequence of their cynical experiences. For example they may feel anger, anxiety, depression and disgust when they think of their school. This seems to be factual in the area of this study as the researcher observed through visits and interactions with some teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State that some of them are emotionally stressed, have a feeling of being neglected thereby causing them so much anxiety,

palpable fear, uncertainty and disgust towards their workplace. The researcher is of the opinion that this could be as a result of many negative actions, such as the teacher not being promoted as and when due, very high workloads and not being consulted in the decision making process among others.

Cognitive cynicism in the school system, derives from a lack of sincerity, honesty, and justice in the organization. Where cognitive cynicism is noticeable the teachers feel that the school administrators do not hold them in high esteem nor care for any one of them. Such teachers may therefore be unlikely to put in their best efforts for the system to thrive. Teachers facing cognitive cynicism think that principles are often sacrificed for expediency and that duality, guile, and personal interest are common in their workplace (Dean et.al, 1998). It therefore seems logical to assert that cognitive cynicism is seen to be a negative factor in the performance of teachers in secondary schools in Anambra State. Another form of cynicism is behavioural cynicism.

Behavioural cynicism has to do with the teachers' negative inclinations towards the school system. Behavioural cynicism usually involves unfavourable, disparaging behaviour by teachers such as: constant criticism of the school, display of sarcastic humour when discussing the school happenings, unfavourable non-verbal behaviour, negative interpretations to every school events. Cynical behaviours exhibited by teachers also include stinging and humorous attitude towards their organization and some other forms like badmouthing the leadership and its policies. Also, behavioural cynicism seems to increase teacher absences, employee complaints, bad rhetoric, workplace tension, turnover intentions, sarcastic and arrogant attitudes of the employees thereby harming corporate identity (Bedeian, 2007). In every work environment, it is expected that the employers of labour would treat all their employees equally and fairly irrespective of their ethnic, cultural or religious affiliations. Unfortunately the reverse seems to be the case in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The government as a result of some of their actions (favouritism in postings and promotions) and inactions (poor salary structure and remunerations, poor working environment), have left the teaching profession riddled with dissatisfied and poorly engaged workers. This abnormality has caused many graduate teachers to withdraw their services from teaching while many of those who remain in the profession tend to develop an attitude of cynicism and resignation due to the perceived injustice meted on them.

For the goals and objectives of the school system to be achieved, it is important that organizational cynicism should be discouraged in the workplace. This is so because teachers, who perceive any form of unfairness in the treatment meted to them by the system may sooner than later begin to exhibit varying degrees of negative and cynical

behaviours. Such negative behaviours may influence the teachers' level of engagement and performance in the school. It should be noted that proper engagement can foster greater productivity and employee retention in secondary schools. Every organization wants to make the best utilization of its human resources in order to achieve competitive advantage. Therefore, when teachers are positively engaged in their work and there is cordial human-relationships with their colleagues; the working environment becomes more conducive, the teachers are not only happy in their job, but also translate that satisfaction into high productivity and profitability of the organization. High levels of engagement promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value.

It is important to note that organizational cynicism does not just happen, there are many factors that may cause it. Among these factors include the individual's occupation, organizational change and the role of top management (Brown and Cregan, 2008). Teachers who believe that their work matters to them, embrace and engage it. On the other hand, teachers who experience negative work circumstances (such as a negative workplace climate or negative organizational culture) develop a downward spiral of emotions. This in turn results to feelings of loneliness and total burnout.

### **Statement of the Problem**

From literature and the personal observations of the researcher as well as interactions with some teachers in secondary schools in Anambra state, it was observed that there are many challenges confronting secondary school teachers in the state. Such challenges manifest in the form of fear, anger, injustice, dissatisfaction, uncertainty and negativity. Also, poor remuneration and unfavorable policies like increase in tax rate, reduction of salary and poor job security may be responsible for this cynical behaviours of teachers.

If individuals get exasperated from their jobs, they are likely to harbour negative attitudes toward their organizations. This could also lead to a display of disparaging behaviours towards others thereby giving rise to the problem of cynicism which is detrimental to the organization. Such acts of cynicism and perceived injustice if not seriously tackled, eventually culminate into actions like lateness to work, absenteeism, taking of long breaks, fake sick leaves and eventually premature withdrawal and this may influence the entire workforce negatively.

Some teachers in secondary schools in Anambra State seem not to be happy with their jobs and therefore such teachers become mostly cynical. All these are unfavourable to the proper growth and development of the schools. Teachers become highly cynical

mostly because of increases in their workload, perceived injustice from irregular and delayed promotions, lack of attention towards their personal growth and development, unfavourable work conditions etc.

Again, some of the administrators of these secondary schools, seem to be more concerned with the productivity level of the organization and fail to take into consideration the total well-being, attitudes and emotions of the teachers in their schools. These teachers overtime, take note of this trend and may become disconcerted, thereby developing negative sentiments towards their workplace.

It is against this backdrop that this study on teachers' perception of the correlation between organizational cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State was construed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study is to examine teachers' perception of the correlation between organizational cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study seeks to establish:

1. Teachers' perception of cognitive cynicism as correlate to their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Teachers' perception of behavioural cynicism as correlate of their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. Teachers' perception of affective cynicism as correlate of their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions, guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between the teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the correlation between the teachers' perceived behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
3. What is the correlation between the teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism will not significantly correlate with their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Teachers' perceived behavioural cynicism will not significantly correlate with their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. Teachers' perceived affective cynicism will not significantly correlate with their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

## **Method**

Correlation survey research design was employed for the study. This study was carried out in the 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 4,947 teachers. The sample for the study is 989 respondents drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure involving proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. This sample is representative of 20% of the population. Two researchers developed questionnaires titled: "Organizational Cynicism Questionnaire" (OCQ) and Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) was the instrument for data collection. The response option for both questionnaires is a four point response scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD); which were weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively. The instruments were subjected to face validation using three experts who are lecturers. Two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and the other from Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. A pilot test using 20 teachers from two government owned public secondary schools in Enugu State was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The scores obtained from the 20 respondents were collated using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient for test of internal consistency. The Organizational Cynicism Questionnaire" (OCQ) yielded a coefficient score of 0.79 while the Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) yielded a coefficient score of 0.80 respectively. These scores were deemed high enough for the instrument to be taken as reliable and adequate for the study. The direct method of administration of the questionnaire was employed by the researchers. A total of 989 copies of the questionnaire was distributed and a total of 951 copies were retrieved back and used for data analysis. Data analysis was done using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The critical table of Pearson r was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the interpretation of the correlation coefficient, the rule posited by Nworgu (2015) for the interpretation of the correlation coefficients, was adopted, namely: 0.80 and above = very high relationship, 0.60 to 0.80 = high relationship, 0.40 to 0.60 = medium relationship, 0.20 to 0.40 = low relationship, 0.00 to 0.20 = very low or no

relationship. Then calculated probability value was compared with the stipulated level of significance. Where the obtained P-value is less than the stipulated level of significance (0.05), the null hypotheses was not accepted but where the obtained P-value is equal to or greater than the stipulated level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What is the correlation between teachers’ perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Pearson r on the Correlation between Teachers’ Perceived Cognitive Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Cognitive Cynicism	951	-0.012	Very Low Negative Relationship
Engagement			

Table 1 shows that there is a very low negative relationship of -0.012 between teachers’ perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question Two:** What is the correlation between teachers’ perceived behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Pearson r on the Correlation between Teachers’ Perceived Behavioural Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Behavioural Cynicism	951	0.112	Very Low Positive Relationship
Engagement			

Table 2 reveals that there is a very low positive relationship of 0.112 between teachers’ behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Research Question Three:** What is the correlation between teachers' perceived Affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

**Table 3: Pearson r on the Correlation between Teachers' Perceived Affective Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Affective Cynicism	951	-0.016	Very Low Negative Relationship
Engagement			

Table 3 reveals that there is a very low negative relationship of -0.016 between teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Table 4: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perceived Cognitive Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Cognitive Cynicism	951	-0.012	0.717	Not-Sig
Engagement				

The above table shows that there is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The calculated r (-0.012) had  $P.value > 0.05$ . The 1st null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

**Hypothesis two:** There is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Table 5: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perceived Behavioural Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Behavioural Cynicism	951	0.112	0.001	Sig
Engagement				

The above table shows that there is a significant correlation between teachers' perceived behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The calculated  $r$  (0.112) had  $P$ .value  $<0.05$ . The 2nd null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis three:** There is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

**Table 6: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perceived Affective Cynicism and Their Engagement**

Source of Variation	N	R	p-value	Remark
Affective Cynicism	951	-0.016	0.628	Not-Sig
Engagement				

The above table shows that there is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The calculated  $r$  (-0.016) had  $P$ .value  $>0.05$ . The 3<sup>rd</sup> null hypothesis was therefore not rejected

### Discussion of Findings

#### **Cognitive cynicism as correlates of teacher engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

The findings of this study as seen in Table one shows that there is a very low negative relationship of -0.012 between teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Also, the hypotheses as stated in table 4 shows that there is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived cognitive cynicism and their engagement. This means that as the variables of cognitive cynicism is on the increase in the school system, and as such, the variables of engagement is decreasing. The findings of this study supports the findings of the study conducted by Arslan (2018) which revealed that cognitive cynicism have a negative relationship with employee performance while engagement moderates the relationship. The connotation to this finding as it relates to secondary school teachers in public schools in Anambra State, suggests that many of the teachers are not happy with their jobs and the school system in general. They have this feeling that the organizations they work for are not fulfilling their promise and as such they feel betrayed. This supposed breach of contract becomes the reason for organizational cynicism which inadvertently, negatively affects the teachers' performance and engagement. Krishan and Wesley (2013) supporting the findings indicated that increase in support and recognition, belief in ability to succeed, belief in

the job and the organization are highly correlated with engagement level. So it is not surprising that teachers in state owned government schools feel the way they do. Yuksel and Sahel (2017) also conducted a study on the relationship between organizational cynicism and organizational commitment amongst secondary school teachers. The findings of their study revealed that there is a negative, medium level and significant relationship between organizational cynicism and commitment. The researcher therefore believes that school administrators especially the government, should stop saying one thing and doing another. They should change certain critical attitudes and behaviours they exhibit towards their teachers for positive outcome. Teachers' successes and personal growth and development should be looked into; in order to make them feel appreciated.

### **Behavioural cynicism as correlates of teacher engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

The findings of this study revealed in Table 2 shows that there is a very low positive relationship of 0.112 between teachers' behavioural cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The null hypotheses tested as shown in table 16 further revealed that there is a significant correlation between teachers' perceived behavioural cynicism and their engagement. This means that there is significantly low relationship (very weak) between the variables of behavioural cynicism and teacher engagement. The implication of this, is that as the indices of behavioural cynicism continues to increase, the teachers' engagement drops tremendously. Abraham (2000) earlier found that employee cynicism is negatively associated with organizational commitment and engagement in ways that could also reduce their performance. Speaking further, Rehan, Iqbal, Fatima and Nawab (2017) highlighted that a majority of the respondents who are teachers are not happy with their schools. These teachers believe that the organization betray them by leaving a trail of unfulfilled promises. Yaman (2007) earlier posited that such negative situations make the teacher to be mostly unhappy and as such negatively disposed towards the school system and colleagues at large by becoming mostly cynical. Mousa and Alas (2016) raised an alarm that there is a rising percentage of teachers leaving their jobs in public schools in search of better job opportunities. Ikon and Chukwu reacting stated in their findings that there is a significant positive relationship between engagement and turnover intention of employees in the selected private universities in Delta State. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that when employees have a voice on matters that affects them in the organization and are properly engaged in their workplace, it increases employees desire to stay in such organization.

All these findings above, is in line with the findings of the present study. Therefore with growing levels of behavioural cynicism, there is resultant decrease in engagement.

### **Affective cynicism as correlates of teacher engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.**

The findings of this study, revealed in Table 3 that there is a very low negative relationship of  $-0.016$  between teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. From table 17, it was revealed from the null hypotheses tested, that there is no significant correlation between teachers' perceived affective cynicism and their engagement because the calculated  $r$  ( $-0.016$ ) had  $P$ .value  $>0.05$ . The 3rd null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The findings of the present study is related to the findings of Arslan (2018) that revealed that all three types of organizational cynicism (i.e. Cognitive, affective and behavioural cynicism) have a negative relationship with employee performance. This shows that as teachers continue to experience worry and anxiety, feelings of anger and embarrassment, lots of emotional stress (which could lead to depression); they begin to experience palpable fear and frustration in the school. This situation overtime, continues to decrease the teachers' level of engagement. Speaking on this, James and Baker (2005) asserted that this emotive reactions of teachers such as aggravation and discomfort reduces the work inspiration and commitment they have towards the school system. Reacting further, Yaman (2007) stated that these negative feelings of affective cynicism could be as a result of being assigned tasks unrelated to their professional duties, being mostly criticized instead of being encouraged and such situations make the teacher to be unhappy. This goes to show that teachers in Anambra State perceive affective cynicism as decreasing their engagement.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings of this study, an inference that can be explicated, is that there is a insignificantly very low negative correlation between organizational cynicism and teacher engagement. This means that with greater levels of cynicism in the school system, the levels of engagement of the teachers will be reduced.

### **Recommendation**

1. The management of public secondary schools should discourage teachers in various schools from engaging in cynical behaviours which tend to lower their levels of engagement; however, they should go a step further, by initiating a

sustainable mechanism that will address the reasons behind the exhibition of cynical behaviours by teachers.

2. Principals and teachers should also be encouraged to practice organizational justice while dissuading the teachers from engaging in negative attitudes and behaviours that could lead to all forms of cynicism.

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