



## DRIVERS AND INHIBITORS OF EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*This study drivers and inhibitors of lecturers' engagement. Deepening disengagement has been reported in literatures amongst the 21st century employees, leading to the call for studies on possible drivers of employees' engagement. The study used a qualitative research design and collected data using semi-structured and in-depth-face-face interview. A total of 10 lecturers drawn from different departments participated in the study and data collected were analysed based on common themes and differences. Findings reveal that passion, communication, remuneration are drivers of the lecturers' engagement, while poor facilities, poor funding, bad leadership are inhibitors. The lecturers demonstrated a high intention to quit, hence the study concludes that the engagement levels of the lecturers are low and brain drain exists among them. The management of the university must tackle inhibitors by creating an atmosphere of justice that is institutionalized by management and seated in the culture and climate of the organisation. Again the study recommends lecturers collaboration as a way of managing part of the problems and creating a win-win situation for both the lecturers and stakeholders in the industry.*

**Keywords:** *Drivers, Employees' Engagement, Inhibitors, Public University, North Central Nigeria*

### **1. Introduction**

Organizations today are interested in improving employee engagement levels for better performance (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2017) and it is a critical requirement regardless of business type (Motyka, 2018). Despite efforts to improve engagement, organisations have struggled to engage employees at different levels (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2020). Research has shown that employee engagement differs from other related constructs based on its holistic approach to investing self in the job (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). The foundational work of Khan (1990) described disengagement as the withdrawal or uncoupling of self from work roles. This state of existence, the researcher stated will result in the loss of focus and energy on the employee's



job role. Rich, LePine and Crawford (2010) observes that, employee engagement makes individuals to invest their hands, head and heart in their job. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) described engagement as having to do with energy, involvement and efficacy. There are as many definitions of the employee engagement construct as there are writers and contributors to the subject matter (Saks & Gruman 2014), resulting in confusion about the meaning of engagement (Welch, 2011).

Employees engagement involves pleasure in the job and attachment to an organisation; the marriage between an employee and an organization, characterized by mutual benefits. The review of related literature reveals that most of the studies that consider employee engagement focused on the antecedents and consequences of engagement (Welch 2011; Truss 2013). Literature that attempted to consider the inhibitors of employee engagement is sparse. Christian, *et al.* (2011) mention in literature the possibility of reverse or reciprocal causality in the relationship between engagement and some factors. But inhibitors of employee engagement were not considered by the researchers. The inhibitors are factors that can pull down the degree of engagement of an employee, while the drivers are factors that can push up the level of engagement. This study is carried out in a public institution to ascertain the possible drivers and inhibitors of employee engagement in such a setting.

Disengagement has continued to increase among employees in the 21st century (Saks & Gruman, 2014), hence the need for studies on possible drivers of employee engagement (Wollard 2011). Although, employees come to work ready to be engaged (Macey & Schneider, 2008), Kumar and Swetha (2011) states that the highest number of researches undertaken found most employees disengaged. This study was focused on a Public University established by the government to fill the indispensable need for more universities in Nigeria and meet the demand for education of the citizenry. Shortly after the take off of the school, the lecturers had begun to have sit-down-protests and plan internal strikes. In what the Vanguard newspaper referred to as frenzy mood in the university, the lecturers in their hundreds gathered in front of the vice chancellor's office, chanting union slogans and carrying different placards. The protest lasted for 8 good hours unabated and students were seen littering around the school premises while some handful had constituted themselves into tutorial class led by the student. The lecturers among other things complained that the management of the school has paid deaf ears to and refused to reply several letters in respect of their demands. In the light of the forgoing problem, the urgent need for a study that uncovers the various drivers and inhibitors of the lecturers' engagement is critical. It is expected that when the lecturers are fully engaged in their jobs, disruptions in academic activities will also reduce, which in turn improves the quality of academic deliverables in the university. Policy makers and the administrators of the University will benefit from this study by identifying programs to implement pursuant to improvements in engagement levels of lecturers.

The main purpose of this study is to uncover the drivers and inhibitors of employees' engagement of academics. In line with this purpose, the following research questions were asked:

- i. what are the possible drivers of the lecturers' engagement?
- ii. What factors inhibit the lecturers' engagement in their job?



## **2. Literature Review and Theory**

### **2.1 Employee Engagement**

The employee engagement construct is built on the foundation of earlier concepts like job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship education (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). According to Markos and Sridevi (2010), employee engagement is a stronger predictor of organizational success compared to the three earlier constructs. They stated that research on engagement is still at its infancy, attempting to come up with more clear-cut and acceptable definition. However, they described engaged employees as emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job, exhibiting great enthusiasm for the success of their employer. According to Al Almri, Das and Ben-Ayed (2019), employee engagement is the extent of employees' commitment, energy and devotion to work-related tasks.

### **2.2 Employee Engagement in Public Institutions**

According to Scottish Executive (2007), there is no discernable difference between the dynamics of engagement within the public sector as opposed to the private sector. Instead, differences in engagement levels result from organisational characteristics; in whichever sector the organisation operates. However, findings suggest that the public sector performs weaker in areas relating to strategic vision and change management, both of which are important to employee engagement. In general, managers and professionals have greater levels of engagement than their colleagues in supporting roles. Hameduddin and Lee (2021) establish that organisational image contributed to the level of engagement among employees in public organisations. According to Saks and Gruman (2014) a single employee can be engaged in one domain and disengaged from the other domain of his/her work life. The researchers further stated that, a job may consist of numerous tasks, so that an employee may be engaged at different levels from one task to another. The researchers used academics as example, stating that many academics are more engaged in research tasks than in the classroom, while others get engaged in administrative roles than research.

### **2.3 Models and Theories of Employee Engagement**

According to Saks and Gruman (2014), the models and theories of employee engagement are numerous and stem from the ethnographic study of Kahn (1990) as well as the study of job burnout and employee wellbeing by Maslach and Leiter (1997). Saks (2006) identifies that Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a stronger theoretical basis for employee engagement studies. The Social Exchange Theory is founded on the assumption that relationships that are built on given rules of exchange develop gradually into trust, loyalty and mutual commitments (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). This forms the basis for describing employee engagement in terms of mutuality of commitment between the organisation and the employee (Markos & Sridevi 2010). In a summary of four major approaches to the study of employee engagement literature by Shuck (2011), the researcher contended that the identified approaches form the scaffolding for current academic frameworks of employee engagement. The approaches identified by the study include Kahn (1990), Maslach et al (2001), Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002) and Saks (2006). To provide typologies of engagement theories, the researcher labeled the four approaches – need-satisfying approach, burnout-antithesis approach, satisfaction-engagement approach and multidimensional approach respectively.



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted for the study, which Creswell (2014) described as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The main source of data was semi-structured and in-depth face-to-face interview directed at capturing the drivers and inhibitors of the lecturers’ engagement. Interview was conducted using audio recorder and transcription done by the researchers afterwards.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample

The study was focused on a public University in North Central Nigeria, which at the time of this study has two faculties (Faculty of science; faculty of art and social sciences). Using a convenience sampling approach, the study drew one lecturer from each department in both faculties, except for computer science department, where the selected lecturer did not turn up for participation. Marshall (1996) states that the required number of participants in a qualitative study will be determined once new themes stop to emerge from the data gathering. Hence, the last participant who failed to keep his appointment was left out. The list of participants and their departments is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: List of Participants**

Participants	Department
Participant A	Biology
Participant B	Chemistry
Participant C	Economics
Participant D	English and Library Studies
Participant E	Geography
Participant F	Geology
Participant G	History and International Studies
Participant H	Mathematics
Participant I	Physics
Participant J	Political Science
<b>Total</b>	

#### 3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed thematically, which involves aggregating the data in line with common themes and difference in responses. Themes identified under the drivers of employee engagement were 14, while that of the inhibitors were 10. The findings of the study were validated using triangulation and rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1 Engagement Drivers

- i. **Leadership and Communication:** The participants think that communication enhances the mutuality of commitment between them and the institution.

*“...communication. When there is communication between school management and employee” (Participant E).*

*“...if there is strong communication between you and the management, that will also enhance productivity” (Participant F).*



*"It is to bridge the communication gap between the employees and the management of this institution" (Participant G).*

*"The most important thing between my office and the management is communication. When there is breach in communication, there will be problem" (Participant I).*

Another theme identified with the responses to mutuality of commitment is leadership.

*"If I have a leader, I want to see the direction of my leader, where is he/she leading me to? That is the only thing that can bring mutuality" (Participant A).*

*"Management should integrate my needs with theirs. Once that is done, problem is solved" (Participant J).*

*"If the management will treat their staff with respect, it will contribute to that" (Participant H).*

- ii. **Knowledge Dissemination and Moral Training:** Relevant data show that the lecturers have interest in students' learning and morality.

*"I have to say the idea or ability rather to mentor students, to see them, grow them and make them gain a lot as if they are your children is one of the driving forces or motivation for doing the job. (Participant C).*

*"Having to pass the knowledge I have to others is something I am passionate about" (Participant I).*

*"That's what makes me happy and that's the driving force I have in order to input the knowledge I have..." (Participant H).*

Some of the lecturers are driven by the influence and the knowledge about the positive impact they have on the moral values of the students.

*"...it gives room for moral training because an academia, apart from the book work, the next thing is the moral aspect..." (Participant A).*

*"If I cannot do anything more in people's lives than in the classroom, I don't think I will consider such" (Participant H).*

- iii. **Positive Feedback from Students:** Another driving force for what the lecturers do tends to be the positive feedback on learning that they get from the students as evidence that they have results for their efforts.

*"Whenever you are disseminating knowledge and you find out that people are actually gaining from what you are doing, that will bring the self esteem to you..." (Participant F).*

*"I derive passion from teaching, most especially if I see people learning things from me" (Participant H).*

*"I derive a lot of satisfaction from seeing people respond to what I do... the satisfaction you get comes from the response you get from them" (Participant C).*

*"The joy in building human capacity is another drive" (Participant J).*

*"...seeing my students get what I'm teaching them" (Participant B).*

- iv. **Career Interest:** On the issue of driving forces, the participants advance career goal and interest as important:



*"My driving force is just to be at the peak of my job at a very early age"*  
**(Participant B).**

*"What drives me is the passion for the job of course, but career advancement is important"* **(Participant J).**

*"I was relating with people in academics, so I developed interest in academics"*  
**(Participant D).**

*"...Because of my academic training and interest, I like relating with my students"*  
**(Participant A).**

Academic mentorship appears to play a role in achieving academic interest, focus and energy, as seen in the experience of one of the participants.

*"My focus was shaped by those people around me, those people I see. I was relating with people in the academics"* **(Participant D).**

The interest in the job also appears to be predicated on work-life-balance as well as the opportunity for autonomy and flexibility in work hours.

*"In academics, you have time for yourself. It is not time consuming, it's not very tedious"* **(Participant E).**

- v. **Pay and Remuneration:** When asked to identify those things that can enhance mutuality of commitment between the lecturers and their institution, participants emphasised on prompt payment of entitlements. The lecturers also require the pay for their scholarship.

*"It's for the institution to give you all what you are due. If all your entitlements are paid for..."* **(Participant F).**

*"...for you to become visible internationally. It costs money..."* **(Participant D).**

*"...the more you are given all your entitlements while you are working, it will increase your morale..."* **(Participant F).**

- vi. **Good Facilities and Conducive Working Environment:** The working environment and facilities are important factors in the process of performing their job roles, so that if these things can only be provided, it will get them more engaged.

*"..., the atmosphere must be conducive for learning. If a lecturer is frustrated, you will see that in the students"* **(Participant H).**

*"...when the facilities are available, you'll always want to teach..."* **(Participant F).**

*"We are always ready to do what we have to do, but the environment in which we work..."* **(Participant C).**

*"If you need to use the system, the light is constant, you need internet facilities... always updating yourself. These are the things that drive morale."* **(Participant E).**

*"If the working environment is conducive, you have an office well equipped with basic furniture and basic tools, you'll be able to work efficiently"* **(Participant G).**

- vii. **Passion:** When asked about the most important factor (internal or external) for driving participants' job passion, some notable responses were:



*“Those external factors don’t stop me as a person. Once my knowledge is passed and I’m satisfied... I’m satisfied no matter the environment” (Participant A).*

*“The internal, that’s what is still keeping me...” (Participant B).*

*“...the most important one is the internal.... If you are motivated internally, you will not even know when you start teaching” (Participant H).*

*“...if you are passionate about your job and your job is your passion, the pay plays less importance... it’s that internal joy that keeps you moving” (Participant I).*

*“It is the intrinsic factors...” (Participant J).*

*“...it is actually the internal factors that affect the drive to teach” (Participant C).*

*“Basically, it is the external factors that are killing the passion in us! At least a good number of us, 80% of those who are here had passion for the job” (Participant D).*

*“...mostly, it’s external factors, because when the environment is friendly... even if the passion is silent, with these, it can boost one’s passion” (Participant E).*

*“No matter how you derive joy and all those things or requirements are not met, definitely there will be a problem” (Participant F).*

In identifying the drivers and inhibitors of their job passion, other participants mention the passion for the job as their major driver.

*“It’s the job that when one is fully motivated, it’s interesting, it’s fun, you teach with passion and when the passion is there, the energy will be high” (Participant E).*

*“Academics has been my own passion and I have studied to engage in this line. That has been my hobby, my passion...” (Participant G).*

*“My driving force is the passion I have for this job.... This is to me fulfillment” (Participant I).*

## 4.2 Engagement Inhibitors

- a. **Academic Politics and Rivalry:** Some of the participants identified academic politics, while others identified academic rivalry.

*“There are some academics that now want to politicize the community. That does not go down well with me” (Participant A).*

In his description of academics as another political front, another participant stated: *In academics, there are no permanent friends. In fact, we are all rivals. We are politicians. (Participant D).*

- b. **Poor Funding:** Everyone had something to say about funding as a major problem.

*“The major problem of the university is the funding” (Participant B).*

The issue of funding trickles down on the lecturers research grants and sponsorship

*“Unlike our forefathers and predecessors in academics who enjoyed sponsorship, it’s very difficult now for you to travel out for conferences, for workshops...” (Participant D).*

*“In academics, you cannot be effective without going for seminar.... That has not been given adequate attention here in this institution, because of financial constraints or lapses on the part of the management” (Participant G).*



Another participant (**Participant F**), who thinks that research is the mainstay of academics drew attention to the need for money and lamented that “*nothing much is coming from government.*”

The lecturers recognize that community service is an aspect of their job, but poor funding has negatively affected the academics’ ability to contribute to the economy and community.

“*...you can contribute more to the economy and even the environment/community and that will motivate you*” (**Participant F**).

“*You know our duties are basically three: teaching, research and community service.... If they are not there, motivation will be lacking*” (**Participant J**).

- c. **Poor Facilities and Lack of Equipment:** Most of the participants submitted that, poor facilities can demoralize them and have a negative consequence for performing their job.

“*I’ve been in this job for over 17 years and at this age I am and at this level, I’m still sharing office. That’s madness!*” (**Participant B**).

The participants appeared to have serious frustration coming from poor facilities and lack of equipments for scientific analysis.

“*Look at the environment we work, it is not conducive for learning, and then look at the materials available to you...* ” (**Participant C**).

“*You need to be adequately equipped in terms of facilities like having internet, having access to books. When all these things are not there, definitely it will kill morale and the energy to do the job will definitely not be there*” (**Participant E**).

“*...but in the absence of those facilities and equipments, like in our own case here, you’ll find out that you’re teaching something, but the students don’t have the opportunity of getting a practical knowledge*” (**Participant F**).

“*If the environment is not conducive for learning, you will not be motivated*” (**Participant H**).

“*The materials for gathering information are not readily available. It tends to frustrate one’s effort*” (**Participant I**).

“*I need a conducive environment to be able to do my research work. As you can see, this environment is not conducive*” (**Participant J**).

Another participant will simply say: “*The inhibiting factor is the facilities*” (**Participant G**).

- d. **Poor Remuneration and Delay in Payment:** Some of the participants commented on the delay in payment, others said the pay is inadequate.

“*It’s only recently that we started having delay in payment of salaries, perhaps, that’s the only factor that could inhibit*” (**Participant A**).

“*We are being paid our salaries, but it’s not enough. Even as I speak with you, salary does not even come as at when due*” (**Participant J**).

Other responses declare categorically that pay and remuneration are sources of discouragement.





*“...it’s very demoralizing when you have to work for the whole month and the peanut you’re paid doesn’t come as regular as it should” (Participant C).*

*“The major inhibitor is the financial aspect. When the salary does not come on time, it kills the morale. Sometimes the allowances are not paid at all and when it is paid, it is not paid in full or on time” (Participant E).*

*“Now I have to pay for accommodation, pay my son’s school fees and all of these things, because I cannot do them on my salary, I have to find alternative job. Sometimes that becomes a distraction on your job” (Participant C).*

As part of the procedure for eliciting responses about possible inhibitors of the lecturers’ engagement in their job, participants were asked to identify reasons why they may accept another job other than academics. Most of the reasons given by the lecturers were related to pay.

*“I will consider it because, we are all working to better our lives. As far as I’m concerned, there’s no money in the university. Salary is poor” (Participant B).*

*“Yes I will consider it despite my passion for academics, because in any job you do where the pay cannot help you to be comfortable, you’ll want to change for a better one” (Participant G).*

*“Aside the passion, you begin to look at things like having to meet your basic needs.... My quest to meet basic needs might make me consider another job, but I will not lose focus on contribution to knowledge” (Participant I).*

*“As it is now, the condition is not favourable. There is brain drain, honestly I must confess to you. People are leaving for greener pastures” (Participant J).*

Some of the lecturers have their families staying away from them and this can also have a negative implication for their engagement. Evidence in literature reveals that work interference with family has a negative consequence for employee engagement (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino 2009).

*“For me, what is most important now is to be close to my family. My family is not here. So yes I get another job, I will take it” (Participant C).*

Another participant who did not expressly demonstrate the readiness to take another job, but sees separation from family as a challenge stated:

*“I’m here, not with my family.... once I become a senior lecturer, I will consider another job that will give me hope in terms of income” (Participant D).*

The following responses reveal that some of the lecturers will be reluctant in accepting another job outside academics.

*“If I were to be given a job outside academics, I will be very reluctant.... unless if it gives room for moral training” (Participant A).*

*“It will be very hard for me to consider another job. If I cannot do anything more in people’s lives than in the classroom...” (Participant H).*

*“Once you get a job outside academics, one will look at the financial implications” (Participant F).*



A case of rejection of another job was recorded with the only female participant in this study.

*“Well, if I’m given another job outside academics, I may not accept because, in academics, you have time for yourself” (Participant E).*

- e. **Bad Leadership and Poor Communication:** Communication cannot be taken likely, especially for the lecturers who are well informed and knowledgeable.

*“I think the relationship between the management and staffs here is in an all time low and that’s because of the fact that there is basically no good communication” (Participant C).*

*“...but in a situation where there is that gap, people will be kept in the dark and they won’t understand what is actually happening” (Participant G).*

The dealings of the university management also came under the inhibitor to participants’ energy and focus. Injustice and unethical practices by management can frustrate a lecturer.

*“Management of the university is another problem. If we have bad management, it will frustrate all efforts” (Participant B).*

*“Actually, if the management does not treat me with dignity, I will not be happy” (Participant H).*

Sometimes, the delay in payment of salaries is a management problem and not from government.

*“There are times management receive allocation and we don’t collect salary until the second or third week of the month. In a federal university, I think that is absolutely unacceptable” (Participant C).*

- f. **Poor Feedback on Learning:** The lecturers found as much frustration in the environment as in the students’ failure to understand and benefit from the teaching.

*“The most important one is the fact that sometimes you go the class, you spend all the time and energy and effort you can as a teacher to teach students and then you want feedback and the feedback is not forthcoming. That is the greatest inhibitor to what I do.... When the people are blank and the response is not forthcoming, then you’ll be frustrated (Participant C).*

The crop of students we have too is also a challenge (Participant B).

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

The study focused on 2 (two) main issues: drivers of employee engagement and inhibitors of employee engagement. The data gathered show that 10 factors drive the energy and focus of the lecturers towards their job (engagement), while 9 factors are inhibitors to the energy and focus the academics invest in their job. Kahn (1990) found that employee engagement captures the amount of energy and focus individuals bring to their job. The figure below is a snapshot of the employee engagement drivers and inhibitors in the studied university.

Figure 1: Drivers and Inhibitors of the Employee Engagement of Lecturers

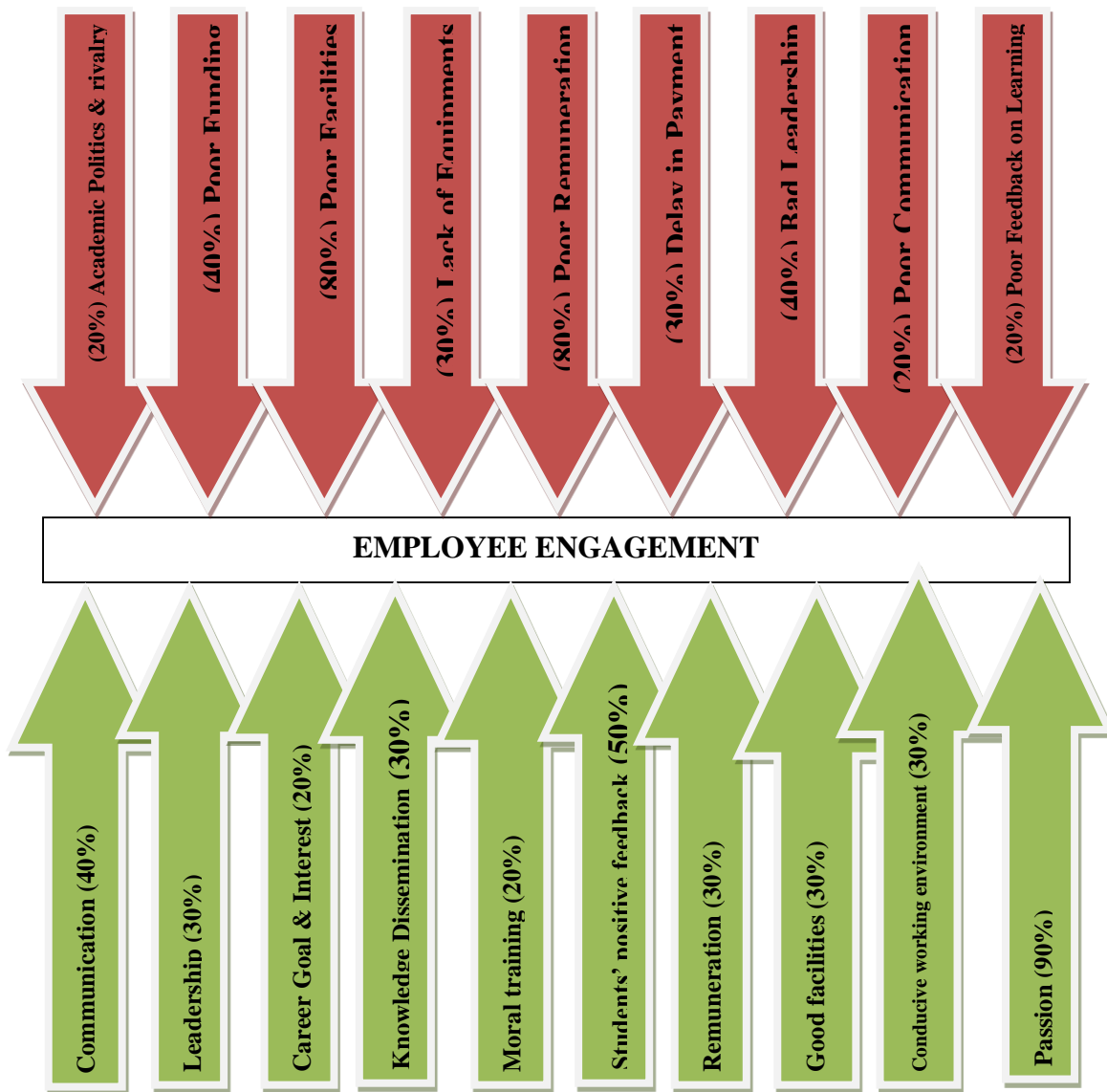


Figure 1 reveals the inhibitors constituting factors that can pull down the degree of engagement of an employee, while the drivers are factors that can push up the level of engagement. The percentages captured about each of the factors were calculated based on the number of participants that provided the given responses. A total of 10 respondents participated in the study and the highest percentage of 90% recorded against passion indicates that, 9 out of the 10 participants provided passion as a driver of their energy and focus on the job. The occurrence of the high-weight factors in the responses of the participants is no doubt a pointer to the magnitude of influence. The data also reveal the dual effect of a single factor on the degree or level of engagement of the lecturers. When a single factor is effective, it can have a particular degree of effect on employee engagement, with a varying effect when it becomes ineffective. For example, when feedback from students was positive, engagement was enhanced by 50%, but when the same



feedback was negative, engagement was only 20% impeded. This implies that the studied lecturers react more to a positive feedback than a negative feedback. A full grasp of the variations in the effect of the various factors on the engagement of the lecturers is provided hereunder:

**Table 3: Employee Engagement and Single Factor (s) Dual Effect**

FACTOR (S)	Level/Degree of Effect on Employee Engagement	
	Effective/good/positive	Ineffective/bad/poor
Communication	40%	20%
Facilities	30%	40%
Feedback from Students	50%	20%
Leadership	30%	80%
Remuneration	30%	80%

The implications of these variations in effect of a single factor are noteworthy. It shows that the effort to drive employee engagement of the academics can be successful to differing degrees. This can have important usefulness for making decisions in the face of resources constraints. Some factors cannot be left in the ineffective zone and some factors must be kept in the effective zone. For example, factors like leadership and remuneration cannot be left in the negative zone for a minute, because of the weight of inhibiting or impeding consequences they have on employee engagement. So also, factors like positive feedback from the students and communication should be reinforced with more priority. Additionally, when remuneration is good, the dual effect shows that 80% of the total inhibitors will be removed and 30% of the drivers are enhanced. When this impact is compared with that of communication, the data shows that, although remuneration as a driver ranks lower than communication, when the dual effect of both factors are considered, remuneration has a higher overall (dual) effect that communication. Accordingly, any policy decision about improving employee engagement should not be considered with only the drivers in view, but the inhibitors as well.

With the high intention to quit demonstrated by the lecturers, it is certain and evident that the engagement levels of most of these academics are low. This is because, an engaged employee is less likely to demonstrate the intention to quit (Saks 2006). The data presented in the preceding section shows that 100% of the participants may accept another job offer outside academics for reasons that vary from one participant to another. A little more critical separation of the responses gives further insight about the lecturers' varying levels of engagement. First, the only female participant in the study (constituting 10% of total responses) stated that she may not accept another job outside academics, only because academics is not time consuming and tedious. Hence, you can be in academics and still have time to do other things. Second, 30% of the participants did not show any possibility of quickly accepting another job outside academics. In other words, they showed some level of reluctance, but gave different reasons why they may finally accept such an offer. Finally, the remaining 60% of the participants will be readily available for another job outside academics, without any hesitation.

## 5. Conclusion

Long-term practice or experience builds up academic energy and focus that are conditions necessary for driving employee engagement of the lecturers. Accordingly, the longer the time and experience of the lecturers in academics, the stronger their level of engagement. However,



attention must be given to their appetite for academic leadership as one of the major driving forces for the engagement of senior academics. The fact that the lecturers differ in terms of what drives and inhibits their engagement shows that employee engagement interventions programmes by government or the management of the institution must target the peculiarities of the academics. Engagement improvement strategies should be predicated on an enquiry into individual lecturers' needs in order to ensure a tailor-made or fit-for-purpose intervention. As the findings of this study reveals, the senior lecturers with long standing training and experience will most likely be driven by the opportunity to have academic leadership, proper communication from management and fairness in the system. Issues relating to welfare, pay, scholarship and sponsorship are most appropriate for younger or junior academics, whose growth and/or career development are more critical for driving engagement.

The engagement levels of the lecturers are low and the quest for better pay leads to brain drain in the academic system regardless of the passion of the lecturers for academics. However, evidence from the study reveals that pay/remuneration is not entirely a bad news, as it will always trickle, but never run dry. One helpful means of engaging the lecturers might be to make job provisions for the spouses of the lectures in the same school or in ventures undertaken by the school within the same location. Such a provision can enhance the engagement of the young academics, whose concern for their families drive their intention to quit. This makes the need for interventions critical and urgent. Where immediate intervention programmes are impracticable, proper communication on the part of the university leadership or management can be somewhat helpful in ameliorating the inhibiting factors. Communication was demonstrated to be a critical engagement driver for the academics as reflected in the data presentation and analysis section.

In line with the findings and conclusion of the study, the need for the school leadership to provide innovative solutions for employee engagement is recommended. The issue of poor funding and related other issues can be managed considerably through academics – industry collaboration. The need for proactive, visionary and innovative leadership for the university is critical as the building of good university environment is not solely the responsibility of the Government. An effective leadership should be able to engage donors and the school alumni association to increase support for the university. Additionally, issues relating to academic politics and rivalry should be tackled by creating an atmosphere of justice that is institutionalized by management and seated in the culture and climate of the organisation. Again, the school leadership should earn the trust of the lecturers through open communication and honest dealings with them. Promotion should be effected when due, entitlements and/or allowances of the lecturers should be paid promptly, especially when it is in the power of the management to do so. Finally, experimental studies should be conducted to examine the causal relationship between the identified factors and employee engagement.

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