

# Employee Relations Practices and Organisational Effectiveness in Nigerian Private Universities: An Assessment of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti

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## ABSTRACT

Employee relations remain a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness, particularly within higher education institutions where human capital drives academic excellence. This study assesses employee relations practices at Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), focusing on communication strategies, employee participation, and job satisfaction. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, with data collected from 158 staff members through questionnaires and interviews. Findings reveal that while the university demonstrates strong performance in policy communication, staff development, and feedback mechanisms, gaps exist in direct employee participation and grassroots communication channels. Employee satisfaction was found to be moderate, with concerns regarding management support. The study concludes that enhancing inclusive decision-making and strengthening departmental communication would further improve organisational outcomes.

**Keywords:** Employee relations, communication, job satisfaction, higher education, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Employee relations play a pivotal role in shaping organisational dynamics, fostering employee satisfaction and ultimately influencing organisational performance. Employee relations encompass the interactions and relationship between management and employees within an organisation. They encompass a wide range of activities, including communication, conflict resolution, performance management and employee engagement initiatives. Numerous studies have shown that maintaining positive employee relations is crucial for achieving organisational success. This means that organisations with strong employee relations practices experience higher levels of employee satisfaction, engagement and retention leading to improved performance and competitiveness. It is on this premise that the employee relation practice, being the approach focused primarily on efficiency and productivity, which is often at the expense of employee satisfaction and well-being. Armstrong (2017) agrees with this when he asserts that the true ways of attaining efficiency and productivity in Nigeria institutions (and other organisations) are by influencing social relationships, morale and management style, rather than just physical working conditions. Maintaining healthy employee relations in an organisation is a prerequisite for any organisation in order to achieve growth and success (Guest, 2020). Within the context of higher education institutions (HEIs), effective employee relations practices are essential for creating a conducive work environment that supports the institution's mission of academic excellence, research advancement, and student success.

Afe Babalola University (ABUAD), Ado-Ekiti, known to be a private university, has been notable for its peaceful employee relations and high productivity lacking any major crises or conflicts like protests against delayed salaries, unlike other government/public universities. This is remarkable, considering the university's status as a private institution, solely responsible for salary payments, unlike government institutions where salaries are paid by the government. This raises questions about the university's strategies for satisfying and

motivating its staff, leading to increased productivity. However, despite its successes, the university's employees may still face challenges that could impact their job satisfaction and overall well-being. As employee relations practices are not without challenges, organisations often grapple with issues such as communication breakdowns, conflicts and resistance to change. Additionally, factors such as organisational restructuring, economic pressures and cultural differences can further complicate employee relations efforts Oyewunmi, A. E., et al. (2018). These challenges underscore the need for proactive and strategic approaches to managing employee relations effectively. Even with these challenges that occur in an organisation, ABUAD is still known for its peaceful working environment and high productivity.

Against this backdrop, the assessment of employee relations practices at Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti assumes paramount importance. Understanding the prevailing employee relations landscape within the university is essential for identifying areas of strength, areas for improvement and strategic opportunities for enhancing organisational effectiveness and employee well-being. Through carrying out a methodical assessment of ABUAD's employee relations practices, this study seeks to uncover latent factors contributing to the university's ongoing efforts to foster a positive work environment, promote employee engagement and advance its mission of academic excellence and societal impact, despite being a private university.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective employee relations are crucial for fostering a positive work environment and ensuring organisational success. However, many Nigerian universities, both public and private, face challenges in maintaining harmonious relationships with their employees. These challenges can manifest in various forms, including low morale, high turnover, and decreased productivity.

While some private universities, such as Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), have demonstrated success in fostering positive employee relations, others continue to struggle. This study aims to examine the specific employee relations strategies implemented by ABUAD to understand the factors contributing to its positive work environment. By analyzing ABUAD's case, this research seeks to identify best practices and lessons that can be applied to improve employee relations in other Nigerian universities. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the development of effective employee relations strategies that can enhance employee satisfaction, boost productivity, and improve overall organisational performance in higher education institutions

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain employee relations strategies of management of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.
2. Investigate the communication channels used by the management Of Afe Babalola University to promote employee relations.
3. Ascertain the levels of Afe Babalola University employees' satisfactions with the leadership communication strategies of management of the institution.
4. Ascertain the level of Afe Babalola University employees' participation in decision making process in the institution.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Employee Relations**

Donohoe (2020) defines employee relations as the study of the relationship that exists between employees and the employers. Basically, effective employee relations places high premium on the human element in the organisation, which results in higher employee engagement, motivation and improved productivity. Considering the strategic role of employee relations in organisations Yongcai (2018) posit that employee relations is a

specialized discipline in human resource development and management. Jing (2020) further buttress that employee relations is the organisation's concerted effort in adopting several mechanisms to regulate relationship amongst employees towards the achievement of the organisation goals. According to Ahmad (2020), employee relations involve various aspects, including communication, conflict resolution, performance management, and employee engagement.

Effective communication plays a central role in building and maintaining positive employee relations. Open channels of communication facilitate transparency, trust, and collaboration within the organisation (Barrett et al, O'Hara, 2019). Pareek et al, Rai (2017) maintained that effective employee relations management in an organisation enhances confidence, trust and loyalty amongst employees. The inability of an employer to build trust and respect in their employees will eventually affect the relationship negatively. According to Nikoloski et al. (2018) employer-employee relations is concerned with the provision of information to employees with regards to the objectives of the organisation so that they have a clear understanding of the direction of management.

Effective employee relations are built on several foundational elements. At the core lies communication, which facilitates open, honest and timely exchanges of information between management and employees. This includes sharing organisational updates, addressing concerns, and providing constructive feedback. By doing so, employers foster an environment of transparency and trust. Conflict Resolution, implementing structured procedures to ensure all parties are heard and lastly, Employee Well-being, Investing in mental health, physical health initiatives, and flexible work arrangements.

### **Communication Channels in HEIs**

In universities, communication occurs at multiple levels and through various channels. According to Olaseinde and Olusola, (2025), communication can be broadly categorised into formal and informal communication. Formal communication includes official channels such as emails, official memoranda, reports, meetings and policy documents. Formal communication is essential for disseminating important information, such as institutional goals, policies and procedures so as to foster a sense of organisational coherence and enhance employee understanding of institutional objectives. Informal communication on the other hand refers to the more casual and spontaneous exchanges that occur among employees. This can include hallway conversations, social media interactions, and informal group discussions. While often overlooked, informal communication plays a crucial role in shaping workplace culture and building interpersonal relationships.

Research by Morrison (2019) emphasises the importance of informal interactions in promoting social cohesion and reducing workplace stress, contributing to positive employee relations. Effective communication in universities is vital for several reasons. First, it ensures that all employees are aware of institutional goals and objectives, fostering a sense of shared purpose. Second, it facilitates collaboration and teamwork, which are essential for the academic and administrative functions of the university. Third, effective communication helps to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, which can arise from a lack of clarity or miscommunication.

Robbins and Judge (2019) argue that "communication is the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behavior". In the context of employee relations, this definition underscores the role of communication in aligning the goals of the institution with the expectations and needs of its employees.

### **Leadership Styles and Satisfaction**

Madlock (2020) stated that leadership depicted through communication has both task and relational components which used effectively, produce higher levels of satisfaction in employees. To support this view, Spitzberg and Cupach (2021) described competent communication as interpersonal influence, whereby an individual can fulfill communicative functions through the maintenance of conversational and interpersonal norms. Madlock (2020) further explains that employees are most satisfied when they perceive their leaders to possess a combination of relational (transformational) and task-oriented (transactional) behaviours. The main attributes of

transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership in relation to job satisfaction according to Madlock (2020) are discussed below:

- Transactional leadership is a task-oriented approach that focuses on rewards and punishments to motivate employees. Transactional leaders clarify roles, set goals, and provide feedback to ensure tasks are completed.
- Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating followers, has been linked to increased job satisfaction.
- Laissez-faire leadership is a passive style characterised by avoidance, indecisiveness, and indifference (McCull-Kennedy et al., Anderson, 2019). These leaders often take a "hands-off" approach, avoiding decision-making and providing little feedback to employees (Xirasagar, 2020). This lack of guidance and support can lead to a lack of direction and motivation within the organisation.

### **Employee Participation in Decision-Making**

Employee participation can be defined as the involvement of employees in decision making, which is concerned with shared decision making in the work situation (Mitchell, 2017:86) Locke and Schweiger (2020:92), define employee participation as a joint decision making between managers and subordinates. It can take several forms:

- **Direct Participation:** Involving employees directly in strategic planning and work situations.
- **Representative Participation:** Where employees are represented by specific individuals, such as Heads of Departments. Involving employees ensures they feel valued, which typically leads to increased morale and organisational commitment.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Human Relations Theory emerged in the early 20th century as a response to the mechanistic and productivity-focused approach of Scientific Management. Developed by Elton Mayo and his colleagues through the famous Hawthorne Studies, this theory emphasized the importance of social factors, employee well-being, and the psychological aspects of work in influencing productivity and job satisfaction. Unlike earlier theories that focused primarily on financial incentives and efficiency, Human Relations Theory recognizes that employees are motivated by a variety of factors, including the need for recognition, social interaction, and a sense of belonging.

Elton Mayo's research demonstrated that employees are not merely economic beings driven by monetary rewards but are also social beings whose attitudes and relationships in the workplace significantly impact their performance. The Hawthorne Studies, conducted between 2017 and 2022 at the Western Electric Company, revealed that employees' productivity increased when they perceived that management cared about their well-being and when they were able to form strong social bonds with their colleagues (Mayo, 2022). This led to the realization that psychological and social factors play a crucial role in the workplace, a concept that has since become a cornerstone of Human Relations Theory.

Understanding employee needs is crucial for effective employee relations practices within an organisation. Human Relations Theory posits that when employees feel valued and understood, their job satisfaction increases, leading to improved performance. This aligns with the goal of fostering a positive work environment where staff members feel supported.

Effective communication is another cornerstone of Human Relations Theory. It suggests that open lines of communication between management and staff can lead to better understanding and cooperation. In assessing employee relations practices within an organisation, it is essential to evaluate how well communication flows throughout the institution. Are there regular feedback mechanisms? Do employees feel comfortable voicing their concerns? These questions are vital for creating an inclusive workplace culture.

The theory also highlights the significance of teamwork and collaboration among employees. For an organisation, promoting collaborative practices can enhance employee relations by fostering a sense of belonging and community among staff members. Researching how team dynamics are managed within departments can provide insights into how these practices influence overall employee satisfaction.

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping employee relations according to Human Relations Theory. Leaders who adopt participative or democratic styles tend to create more favourable working conditions than those who employ authoritarian approaches. An assessment of leadership styles within an organisation could reveal how these influence employee morale and engagement.

Conflict resolution strategies are also addressed by Human Relations Theory. Understanding how conflicts are managed within an organisation can provide insights into the effectiveness of current employee relations practices. Are conflicts resolved through dialogue? Is there a structured approach to mediation? These aspects are essential for maintaining healthy employee relations.

Furthermore, Human Relations Theory supports the idea that investment in employee development leads to higher job satisfaction and loyalty. Evaluating training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and career advancement pathways will help assess whether they align with the principles outlined in Human Relations Theory.

Finally, recognising that employees have lives outside work is fundamental to this theory. Assessing policies regarding work-life balance such as flexible working hours or support for personal commitments can provide valuable insights into how well the organisation adheres to these principles.

Linking Human Relations Theory with the assessment of employee relations practices in an organisation involves examining various dimensions such as communication, leadership styles, team dynamics, conflict resolution strategies, employee development initiatives, and work-life balance policies. By applying this theoretical framework, researchers can gain deeper insights into how effectively an organisation manages its workforce's relational dynamics and overall job satisfaction.

## **Empirical Review**

Previous studies have explored various aspects of employee relations, including communication, leadership, and conflict resolution, providing insights into the challenges and best practices associated with managing higher education institutions. Owolabi and Adetunji (2019) conducted a study examining the relationship between employee relations practices and job satisfaction in Nigerian universities, finding that universities that implement transparent communication channels and involve employees in decision-making processes tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction among staff. This finding aligns with the broader literature on organisational behavior, which suggests that when employees feel engaged and valued, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job performance and organisational commitment.

Further research by Akinyemi (2019) explored the relationship between employee welfare initiatives and job satisfaction in Nigerian universities, revealing that universities that invest in employee participation including providing opportunities for professional development and recognizing individual achievements tend to experience higher levels of staff satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Additionally, Oyewunmi et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of effective employee relations in Nigerian universities, underscoring the need for proactive and strategic approaches to managing these relations effectively. Storey (2019) further identified communication, employee participation, and conflict resolution as key strategies to foster positive employee relations, defining the field as the management of employment relationships involving the development and implementation of policies and practices to promote productive workplace relationships.

In addition to these, Tan (2014) investigated the impact of employee relations on organisational performance, noting that organisations with strong employee relations practices experience higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention. This is supported by Fashoyin (1992), who argued that the essence of employee relations in the Nigerian context is to create an environment where management and workers can interact in a

way that minimizes conflict and maximizes organisational efficiency. These scholarly contributions collectively suggest that while physical working conditions are important, the social and psychological aspects of the employment relationship are paramount in achieving institutional goals.

### Research Gaps

Obvious gap in the studies conducted by Owolabi and Adetunji (2019), Akinyemi (2019), and Oyewunmi et al. (2018) is the generalized emphasis on Nigerian universities as a whole, with little focus on the unique operational dynamics of a top-tier private institution like Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD). While studies have addressed job satisfaction and welfare initiatives in the public sector, there remains a knowledge gap regarding the specific strategies that sustain the relative peace and high productivity observed in ABUAD, where industrial actions are non-existent.

Furthermore, although Storey (2019) and Tan (2014) have cited communication as a general strategy, there is a dearth of empirical evidence focusing on the effectiveness of specific channels such as the potential disconnect between centralized management directives and the implementation at the departmental level. There is also a gap in understanding the level of direct employee participation versus representative participation in private higher education institutions. Hence, there exists a knowledge gap concerning the assessment of employee relations practices at Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, which this study seeks to bridge.

### METHODOLOGY

Research design adopted for the study is mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of this research was 330 which is the total population of the staff according to the survey and the University Head of Media Department, (2024). The stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure representation from different categories of employees within the University. To ensure the determination of accurate sample size, the statistical formula derived by Taro Yamane (1964) was employed. Following the substitution of the population  $N = 330$  and a margin of error  $e = 0.05$  into the formula  $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$  a sample size of 181 respondents was derived for the study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

In this study, questionnaire and interview was used to collect data to assess the employee relations practices of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti. The instrument was vetted and approved by Communication and Media expert to give the instrument face validity, confirming the content measures what it intends to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of measurement over time; in this context, the questionnaire was used to measure employee perceptions of employee relations practices at Afe Babalola University Ado Ekiti. The researcher personally interviewed the head of media and also administered questionnaires to the employees with the aid of a research assistant, following due permission from head of departments. The data collected were analyzed with the use of percentages and interview content analysis. A four-point Likert scale was used—Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2), and Disagree (1) and the Agreement Index AI was calculated using the formula  $AI = \frac{4n_1 + 3n_2 + 2n_3 + 1n_4}{n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + n_4}$

$$AI = \frac{4n_1 + 3n_2 + 2n_3 + 1n_4}{n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + n_4}$$

respondents to allow for easy interpretation of the attitudes and opinions of the respondents.

### Data Presentation

Data collated for this study was presented and analysed using descriptive analysis consisting of frequency counts, percentages, and the Agreement Index (AI). Out of the two hundred 200 copies of questionnaire administered to the employees of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD) with the aid of a research assistant, only one hundred and fifty-eight 158 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved by the researcher.

**Research Question 1:** What employee relations strategies does the management of Afe Babalola University employ?

Table I: Employee relations strategies of ABUAD

RESPONSES								
S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Weighted mean score (WMS)	Ranking	Remark
1	The university management effectively communicates institutional policies and decisions.	54	88	16	0	3.24	1	Accepted
2	The university management provides adequate training and development opportunities.	58	76	24	0	3.22	2	Accepted
3	Management supports employee participation in decision-making.	10	78	44	26	2.46	5	Rejected
4	The university fosters a culture of open communication	20	74	62	2	2.71	4	Accepted
5	Employees' feedback is regularly solicited and acted upon.	53	87	18	0	3.22	2	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result of analysis presented in Table I reveals the employee relations strategies employed by the management of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti. The Weighted Mean Score (WMS) values in the table ranges from 2.46 to 3.22. With the exception of item 3 with WMS of 2.46, all other mean scores were observed to be greater than 2.50 which indicated that the respondents agreed with majority of the employee relations strategies adopted by ABUAD. In other words, this implies that the university management effectively communicated the institutional policies and decisions (WMS=3.24), provided adequate training and development opportunities (WMS=3.22), regularly solicited for and acted upon employee feedback (WMS=3.22) and fostered a culture of open communication (WMS=2.71). However, the employees believed that the university management did not give sufficient room for direct participation in decision making. It could therefore be inferred that the Management practiced representative participation in decision making (Item 3-WMS=2.46). The weighted mean scores in the table for item 1,2,4 and 5 are greater than 2.50 which confirmed the fact that the employee relations strategies employed by the management were effective and enhanced a positive working environment for employees. However, item 3 was rejected in the sense that it is seen by the employees as inadequate strategy.

**Research Question 2:** What communication channels does the management of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti use to promote employee relations?

Table II: Communication channels used by the management of ABUAD

RESPONSES								
S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Weighted mean score	Ranking	Remark
1	Staff meetings are effective for communication	21	69	65	3	2.68	2	Accepted
2	Email updates are timely and informative	49	39	70	0	2.87	1	Accepted
3	Notice boards are used effectively for communication	21	15	61	61	1.97	5	Rejected

4	Social media platforms are used for official communication	13	71	74	0	2.61	3	Accepted
5	Departmental meetings are regular and productive	15	61	21	61	2.19	4	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table II indicates the communication channels the management of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti use to promote employee relations. Out of the items, three items were rated accepted equivalent to good agreement by the respondents with the statement and the remaining two items were rated rejected which is also equivalent to disagree. The respondents agreed with the statements that staff meetings are effective for communication (WMS=2.68), that email updates are timely and informative (WMS=2.87), that social media platforms are used for official communication was (WMS=2.61), but disagreed with the statements that notice boards are used effectively for communication (WMS=1.97) and that departmental meetings are regular and productive (WMS=2.19). The disagreements reinforced the assertion in Research Question 1 where the respondents concluded that Management was ineffective in engaging members of staff in direct participation in decision making. This might be attributed to failure on the part of Heads of Departments in communicating decisions of Management on time to members of staff via the closest media such as regular departmental meetings and the departmental notice boards. It could therefore be concluded that most of the communication channels were effective except for the use of the notice boards effectively for communication and regular and meaningful departmental meetings.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent are employees of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti satisfied with the leadership communication strategies of the institutions management?

Table II: Employee satisfaction level of ABUAD

RESPONSES								
S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Weighted mean score	Ranking	Remark
1	I am satisfied with my job	59	25	10	64	2.50	3	Accepted
2	Compensation and benefits are fair	5	135	8	10	2.85	2	Accepted
3	Work-life balance is maintained	8	142	8	0	3.00	1	Accepted
4	Career development opportunities are available	59	23	8	68	2.50	3	Accepted
5	Management support is adequate	13	74	8	63	2.23	4	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result in Table II indicates the extent to which employees of AfeBabalola University, Ado-Ekiti are satisfied with the leadership communication strategies of the institutions management. Out of the five items, four items were rated accepted equivalent to agree meaning that most respondents agreed with the statement and one item was rated rejected which is equivalent to disagree meaning that some of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The respondents were marginally satisfied with their jobs (WMS=2.50), agreed fairly that compensation and benefits were fair (WMS=2.85), concurred that work-life balance was maintained (WMS=3.00), and marginally agreed that career development opportunities (WMS=2.50). The marginal agreements reflected in the respondents' disagreement with the statement that management support was adequate (WMS=2.23).

**Research Question 4:** What is the level of participation of AfeBabalola University employees in decision-making process of the institution?

Table III: Level of employee participation in the decision-making process of the institution

RESPONSES								
S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Weighted Mean Score	Ranking	Remark
1	I am involved in decision-making processes in my department	15	76	61	6	2.63	1	Accepted
2	Management of the university encourages employee's participation in decision-making	5	65	73	15	2.38	3	Rejected
3	Staff opinions are valued in decision-making	10	73	67	8	2.53	2	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The findings in Table III indicate the level of employee participation in the decision-making processes of the institution. Out of the three items, one item was rated rejected equivalent to disagree meaning that some of the respondents disagreed with the statement and two others were rated accepted which is equivalent to agree meaning that respondents agreed with the statement. The respondents agreed fairly that they were involved in decision-making processes at the departmental level (WMS=2.63) and that staff opinions were valued in decision making (WMS=2.53). The agreements however seem not strong. The respondents again disagreed with the statement that management of the university encourages employee's participation in decision-making (WMS=2.38). As earlier pointed out, this might have to do with expectations of direct participation once a while rather than the usual representative representation.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's assessment of ABUAD's management strategies revealed a high level of efficacy in policy communication (WMS=3.24) and the provision of professional development opportunities (WMS=3.22). These indices suggest a robust internal branding mechanism where management regularly solicits and acts upon employee feedback (WMS=3.22). This data reinforces the findings of Oyewunmi et al. (2018), who underscored that effective relations in Nigerian universities are predicated on such proactive engagements. However, a critical divergence was noted regarding direct participation in decision-making (WMS=2.46), which was rejected by respondents. This statistically aligns with Storey's (2019) definition of "Representative Participation," where a relay system exists but individual agency is limited. Qualitative insights from Dr. Ibikunle Ajayi (Head of Media) further validated this by citing the "Annual Congress" as a primary feedback loop, yet the quantitative "rejection" of direct involvement suggests a gap between management's perception of "openness" and the employees' felt experience of "inclusion."

Analysis of the communication architecture at ABUAD indicates a significant reliance on digital and centralized platforms, with email updates (WMS=2.87) and staff meetings (WMS=2.68) emerging as the most productive channels. This digital fluency aligns with Robbins and Judge's (2019) postulation on the necessity of formal hierarchical structures in large organisations. However, the study identified a "Communication Blackout" at the grassroots level, as evidenced by the rejection of notice boards (WMS=1.97) and departmental meetings (WMS=2.19). This localized failure reflects a breakdown in the "Medium" element of Mullins' (2020) communication model, where the message is sent from the top but becomes stagnant at the departmental sub-unit. The disagreement suggests that while the university has mastered macro-communication, it struggles with micro-level engagement, requiring a shift toward more spontaneous and social informal channels to build institutional trust.

The extent of employee satisfaction was found to be "marginal" across key indicators such as job satisfaction (WMS=2.50) and career development (WMS=2.50), despite management's provision of competitive welfare packages. While respondents acknowledged fair compensation (WMS=2.85) and 24-hour

electricity/accommodation, the rejection of "Adequate Management Support" (WMS=2.23) points to a psychological contract gap. This mirrors Yukl's (2017) assertion that leadership behavior is the primary determinant of organisational interest. Even though Dr. IbikunleAjayi, (2024) detailed extensive international training sponsorships, the marginal satisfaction levels suggest that the communication of these benefits rather than the benefits themselves is the issue. This supports Shannon's (2016) emphasis that leadership is not just about provision, but about the consistent, empathetic transmission of support to the workforce. Finally, the study observed that participation at ABUAD is strictly segmented, with a fair level of departmental involvement (WMS=2.63) but a significant rejection of broad institutional participation (WMS=2.38). Verbal interviews confirmed a "HOD-centric" model where only department heads interface with top management. This is the hallmark of Representative Participation, as categorized by Cotton et al. (2020). While this ensures administrative order, the lack of "Direct Participation" negatively impacts the organisational commitment of lower-cadre staff. The results align with the Vroom and Yetton (2018) model, suggesting that while the "HOD-relay" satisfies formal requirements, it fails to capture the creative potential of the wider staff body, indicating that ABUAD may need to evolve its participation theory toward more inclusive, direct engagement strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between employee relations strategies and a positive working environment. However, it could therefore be inferred that the Management practiced representative participation in decision making. The study had shown that the identified communication channels were adjudged to be effective except for the use of the notice boards effectively for communication and regular and meaningful departmental meetings. The study also revealed that the management needs to do more with respect to leadership communication strategies in promoting staff welfare and career support. For employee participation in decision-making processes in the institution, there is the need to address the participatory level where other staff are represented by head of departments in managerial meetings. There is a call for direct participation where the employees would be given access to firsthand information.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Going by the results of this research, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The institutions management is to establish regular feedback mechanisms, such as quarterly meetings, to address employee concerns.
2. There should be fair policies and practices exhibited by the management of organisation to create opportunities and provide equal treatment to employees without any bias which promotes positive attitude towards organisation and work among employees.
3. Provide training programs for managers on effective communication and leadership.
4. Conduct an employee satisfaction survey to identify areas for improvement.
5. Increase employee direct participation in decision-making processes.
6. Employees' input should be recognized and valued by the employer.
7. Effective communication of work-related information should be established effectively to ensure that employees are aware of the work-related responsibilities and expectations

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