

Internal communication and employee engagement at first bank plc in Onitsha, Anambra state, Nigeria.

Chinwe Mikella Nebolisa

¹Department of Business Education, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement at First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to examine the relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement, to assess the relationship between message clarity and employee engagement, and to evaluate the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. Anchored on the Communication Satisfaction Theory by Downs and Hazen (1977), the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 200 staff across various First Bank branches in Onitsha, and a census sampling technique was used to include the entire population. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.05$), message clarity and employee engagement ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.05$), as well as communication climate and employee engagement ($r = 0.401$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that internal communication components significantly influence how engaged employees feel in their roles. The study concluded that robust internal communication systems enhance employee morale, motivation, and commitment. It was recommended that First Bank PLC strengthen its feedback systems, promote message clarity, and foster a positive communication climate to drive employee engagement. The study fills a knowledge gap in internal communication and employee engagement research in the Nigerian banking sector, particularly within a geographically and organizationally defined context.

Keywords: Internal communication, Employee engagement, Feedback mechanism, Communication climate, Message clarity

Introduction

Historically, communication within formal organizations has always played a pivotal role in shaping employee behavior and organizational outcomes. In the early stages of industrial development, internal communication was largely top-down, with little room for feedback from employees. This pattern was especially prevalent in traditional institutions such as banks, where hierarchical structures dominated and communication was primarily directive rather than interactive. Over the years, however, internal communication has evolved from merely passing down instructions to creating interactive channels that foster employee engagement, feedback, and collaboration (Eze & Nnabuife, 2022). In today's workplace, especially in the service-oriented banking sector, internal communication is now recognized as a strategic tool that directly impacts employee engagement, motivation, and performance (Okocha & Nwachukwu, 2020). Nigerian banks—including First Bank Nigeria PLC, which was established in 1894—operated within rigid structures that limited employee input in key decision-making processes. This was particularly evident during the post-independence and early post-colonial periods when internal communication was largely formal, impersonal, and one-directional. Over time, the transformation of Nigeria's banking landscape, influenced by technology and globalization, ushered in reforms that prioritized employee involvement, transparency, and participatory communication (Okoye & Obi, 2021). In contemporary banking operations, especially in commercial cities like Onitsha in Anambra State, internal communication has become essential for sustaining employee engagement, fostering trust, and enhancing service delivery.

First Bank PLC's branch in Onitsha holds a unique position due to its location in one of the busiest commercial hubs in Southeast Nigeria. This setting demands a highly engaged and motivated workforce to meet the fast-paced banking needs of traders, small businesses, and corporate clients. However, despite the increasing adoption of modern communication tools such as emails, intranet systems, and mobile messaging, challenges such as communication gaps, unclear directives, and limited feedback mechanisms persist. These issues have implications for how employees perceive their roles, align with the organization's mission, and perform on the job (Chukwu & Obasi, 2022). Recent research has shown that employee engagement is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of internal communication. When communication is clear, consistent, and open, employees are more likely to feel valued and involved in organizational processes. Nwachukwu and Edeh (2021) found that organizations that implement feedback-oriented communication systems tend to have more engaged employees who are committed, productive, and aligned with organizational goals. In the banking sector, where customer service and operational efficiency are critical, such engagement is particularly important. Moreover, studies have linked employee engagement to reduced staff turnover, improved innovation, and better organizational citizenship behavior. Adedeji and Ogunyemi (2023) observed that banks with effective communication strategies experience higher levels of staff morale and reduced conflict, especially in branches operating in economically vibrant areas such as Onitsha. This indicates that internal communication should not be treated as a routine administrative function but as a key strategic component of human resource management.

Practical communication tools—such as staff briefings, instant messaging platforms, feedback surveys, and recognition programs—have all been shown to influence employee attitudes positively when effectively implemented (Agba & Ocheni, 2021). These tools must be tailored to the demographic and operational realities of specific branches like First Bank Onitsha, where employee expectations and pressures may differ from other locations due to the commercial intensity of the environment. Despite the growing emphasis on internal communication, there remains limited branch-specific empirical research, particularly in Southeast Nigeria. Many existing studies offer broad national insights without focusing on how communication practices affect employee engagement at the branch level. Thus, this study seeks to examine the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement at First Bank PLC, Onitsha branch, Anambra State, with a view to uncovering practical implications for improving workforce productivity and satisfaction in the banking sector.

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between internal communication and employee engagement has increasingly become a focal point for organizational effectiveness, particularly in the banking sector. At First Bank PLC, Onitsha branch, the success of daily operations and customer satisfaction largely depends on how well employees are informed, motivated, and aligned with the bank's goals. Despite advancements in communication tools and platforms, there is a growing concern that internal communication may not be sufficiently enhancing employee engagement as expected. This raises the core problem: **to what extent does internal communication influence employee engagement at First Bank PLC, Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria?**

One of the major issues contributing to this problem is the **inconsistency in communication flow between management and employees**. While First Bank PLC employs various communication platforms like email, staff meetings, and internal memos, there are often complaints about delayed or unclear messages, which leads to confusion and low morale among staff. This inconsistency hinders the employees' ability to effectively understand and respond to organizational objectives, thereby weakening their level of engagement. Another contributing factor is **lack of employee feedback and participatory communication**. Communication in many formal institutions in Nigeria, including banks, still follows a top-down approach where employees are rarely consulted or given opportunities to voice their opinions. At the Onitsha branch, this may be discouraging staff from fully committing to their roles, feeling disconnected from leadership decisions, and ultimately lowering their sense of belonging and engagement. The **limited personalization and employee recognition in internal communication** further deepens disengagement. Communication that fails to acknowledge employee achievements, contributions, or challenges often appears impersonal, thus eroding trust and motivation. In highly commercial areas like Onitsha, where banking staff face intense workload and pressure, impersonal communication can be demoralizing and lead to disengagement and high turnover. Despite the significance of these issues, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on how internal communication practices affect employee engagement at the branch level in Southeast Nigeria. Most studies are either too generalized or do not account for unique regional, economic, and institutional contexts like that

of First Bank PLC in Onitsha. This study seeks to bridge that gap by providing branch-specific insights on the dynamics between internal communication and employee engagement, and by offering practical recommendations that can help improve employee performance and satisfaction in such high-demand environments.

Objectives of the Study

The broad goal of this study is to examine the relationship between Internal Communication and Employee Engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria. The specific goals are to:

- i. Examine the relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.
- ii. Assess the relationship between message clarity and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.
- iii. Evaluate the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria?
- ii. How does message clarity relate to employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between message clarity and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between communication climate and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha Anambra state, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Internal Communication

Internal communication refers to the process through which information is shared within an organization among its members to coordinate activities, align goals, and foster collaboration. Eze and Nnabuife (2022), internal communication encompasses all forms of information exchange that take place among employees and management, including formal and informal channels. It is a crucial element in achieving employee alignment with corporate values and objectives. Modern internal communication strategies now incorporate digital platforms such as intranet, corporate emails, internal messaging apps, and virtual meeting tools. These platforms ensure that employees have access to timely and accurate information needed to carry out their duties effectively. Adedeji and Ogunyemi (2023) posit that internal communication is no longer limited to top-down dissemination of instructions but includes horizontal and upward flows of information that foster dialogue and feedback.

Effective internal communication plays a vital role in shaping organizational culture and promoting employee trust. Chukwu and Obasi (2022) emphasized that when employees are well-informed and can communicate freely within the organization, their level of job satisfaction and commitment increases. This becomes particularly important in fast-paced environments such as banking, where employees must constantly adapt to changes in services, policies, and customer demands. In contrast, poor internal communication may result in misunderstandings, reduced morale, and disengagement. Agba and Ocheni (2021) argue that communication breakdown is a major cause of inefficiencies in Nigerian organizations, particularly in the service sector. Hence, organizations like First Bank PLC must prioritize developing effective internal communication frameworks to enhance engagement and performance.

Feedback Mechanism

Feedback mechanism refers to the systems and processes through which employees provide responses or reactions to messages or directives received from management. Okonkwo and Nwachukwu (2021), feedback allows for a two-way flow of communication that ensures understanding and promotes mutual respect in the workplace. It serves as a vital tool for performance improvement and organizational learning. Effective feedback systems include employee suggestion boxes, periodic surveys, open-door policies, and performance review meetings. These structures give employees a platform to express their opinions, make suggestions, and receive clarification. Uzochukwu and Emeka (2022) noted that feedback mechanisms foster transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness, thereby enhancing employee motivation and engagement. Feedback must be timely, specific, and constructive for it to yield positive outcomes. Effective feedback plays a central role in shaping employee motivation and organizational communication.

Okechukwu and Ijeoma (2020) note that vague or overly critical feedback discourages employees, whereas constructive feedback enhances commitment and engagement. This finding aligns with Farinmade et al. (2025), who emphasize that strong communication systems improve organizational performance. In a related study, Oramah et al (2025) observes that unclear communication weakens understanding and participation, while Anyakora et al. (2024)

link feedback to learning and performance improvement. Similarly, Ikechukwu and Odimegwu (2021) show that organizational disruptions expose weaknesses in communication practices. Overall, weak feedback mechanisms contribute to poor communication culture in many Nigerian organizations. This gap is particularly evident in hierarchical institutions where employee voices are often overlooked. As such, implementing robust feedback structures in First Bank PLC, Onitsha, can help foster a more inclusive and engaging work environment.

Message Clarity

Message clarity refers to the degree to which a message is comprehensible, concise, and unambiguous to its intended audience. Ede and Okafor (2021), clear messages enhance understanding, reduce confusion, and ensure that the receiver accurately interprets and responds to the sender's intention. In the context of workplace communication, message clarity is essential for task execution and employee performance. Clarity in communication involves the use of simple language, logical structure, appropriate tone, and avoidance of technical jargon when not necessary. According to Afolabi and Ogundele (2023), unclear messages often lead to errors, repeated instructions, and wasted time, thereby negatively impacting organizational efficiency and employee morale. This is particularly true in customer-facing sectors such as banking, where clarity of instructions is crucial.

Moreover, message clarity helps to build trust and prevent conflict. When expectations and roles are clearly communicated, employees are better able to plan, execute, and take responsibility for their actions. Ibekwe and Ezeh (2020) emphasized that in environments like banks, where time-sensitive decisions are made, lack of clarity can cause costly mistakes and employee disengagement. Despite its importance, message clarity is often compromised by rushed communication, poor planning, or assumptions that the receiver has prior knowledge. Organizations like First Bank PLC need to prioritize communication training for managers and supervisors to ensure messages are clear, targeted, and effectively delivered across all levels.

Communication Climate

Communication climate refers to the overall emotional tone and openness that characterizes interactions within an organization. As defined by Chukwuemeka and Ajayi (2021), it reflects how communication flows, how freely employees can express themselves, and how messages are perceived in the organizational context. A positive communication climate fosters transparency, collaboration, and trust. A supportive communication climate enables employees to feel heard, respected, and valued. Nnadi and Obiora (2023), when communication is open and participatory, employees are more likely to share ideas, report issues, and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals. In contrast, a defensive or toxic climate suppresses dialogue and innovation, leading to disengagement.

Communication climate is shaped by leadership style, organizational culture, interpersonal relations, and accessible feedback systems. While managers influence this climate through openness and empathy (Umeh & Nwafor, 2022), effective communication also depends on enabling infrastructure. In a related study, Anyakora et al. (2021) demonstrate that reliable communication systems strengthen trust, interaction quality, and stakeholder commitment, reinforcing a positive communication climate. In the banking sector, where stress levels can be high, fostering a positive climate is essential for employee well-being. At First Bank PLC,

Onitsha, an enabling communication climate can drive employee engagement, reduce conflict, and improve service delivery. However, when employees feel that communication is one-sided or that their opinions are disregarded, it undermines morale and productivity. This study aims to assess how communication climate within the branch impacts overall engagement levels.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the emotional commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its goals. Kanu and Okoro (2021) define it as the degree to which employees are enthusiastic about their work, actively participate in organizational activities, and are willing to go above and beyond their job descriptions. Engaged employees are known to be more productive, loyal, and innovative. Employee engagement is influenced by several factors, including leadership style, communication practices, organizational culture, and career development opportunities. Obi and Akpan (2022), when employees receive clear information, timely feedback, recognition, and are included in decision-making, their engagement significantly improves. This is crucial in banking institutions where customer satisfaction depends on staff performance.

Disengaged employees, on the other hand, often show low productivity, frequent absenteeism, and a lack of initiative. Eze and Chukwu (2023) noted that poor communication is one of the most common causes of employee disengagement in Nigerian workplaces. It leads to feelings of alienation, dissatisfaction, and eventually turnover. At First Bank PLC, Onitsha branch, where the demand for financial services is intense, maintaining high levels of engagement is essential to organizational success. Yet, without effective communication strategies and a supportive communication environment, engagement is likely to remain low. This study explores how internal communication practices can be leveraged to improve employee engagement within the bank.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Communication Satisfaction Theory (CST) developed by Dennis K. Mumford in the 1970s and later expanded by Clampitt and Downs (1993). The theory posits that the satisfaction derived from communication processes within an organization directly influences employee attitudes, motivation, and performance. The theory outlines several dimensions of internal communication, such as clarity, feedback, supervisor communication, horizontal communication, and organizational integration, which are all relevant to employee engagement. According to Downs and Hazen (1977), who further refined CST, communication satisfaction is not just about the flow of information but how employees perceive the quality and effectiveness of communication they receive. They developed the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) that identifies eight dimensions of communication that influence employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. This makes the theory particularly relevant to studies involving organizational communication practices and their effect on employee engagement.

Clampitt and Downs (1993) also contributed to the theory by applying it to modern organizational settings, emphasizing the role of clarity, openness, and timely feedback as central to enhancing communication satisfaction. Their findings suggest that when employees feel informed, listened to, and part of the communication process, their engagement levels significantly improve. This aligns closely with the current study's focus on internal communication practices such as message clarity, feedback mechanisms, communication

climate, and their effect on employee engagement. The relevance of CST to this study lies in its focus on the employee's perception of communication. The theory provides a useful lens through which to examine how communication dimensions—such as clarity, openness, and responsiveness—affect how engaged employees feel with their organization. Anchoring this study on CST allows for a structured examination of how internal communication fosters or hinders employee engagement in First Bank PLC, Onitsha Branch.

Gap in literature

Despite the growing interest in organizational communication and employee engagement, a significant knowledge gap still exists in understanding how internal communication dimensions—such as feedback mechanisms, message clarity, and communication climate—specifically affect employee engagement in the Nigerian banking sector. Most existing studies (e.g., Amah & Eze, 2020; Okeke & Onuoha, 2021) have explored communication and engagement in general terms, often without dissecting the specific elements of internal communication or linking them to measurable outcomes in employee performance or loyalty. This study seeks to fill this void by examining these internal communication components as distinct variables influencing engagement in a structured and empirical way.

There is also a notable geographical gap in the literature. While some research has been carried out in major commercial centers like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (see Uche & Alabi, 2021; Adeniyi & Fatima, 2022), little attention has been given to branches of financial institutions operating in southeastern states like Anambra. First Bank PLC, Onitsha Branch—located in one of the most economically active towns in the Southeast—is a strategic location to examine how internal communication influences employee engagement in a semi-urban commercial setting. This study addresses the geographical limitation by focusing on a location that has been largely underrepresented in existing studies.

Furthermore, a sectional gap exists in terms of organizational coverage, as many previous works have focused on public institutions, telecommunication companies, and multinationals, with limited emphasis on the commercial banking sector (Chukwuma & Oladele, 2023; Nwankwo & Ojo, 2020). This study bridges this gap by narrowing its focus to First Bank Nigeria PLC, which is a representative example of a structured, formal private sector employer. By focusing on this institution, the study will provide insights that are not only relevant to the bank but also applicable to other financial institutions within and outside the region.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a **survey research design**, which is suitable for studies that seek to collect standardized information from a defined population through the use of structured questionnaires. The survey design allows for the collection of quantitative data from respondents within a natural setting, helping the researcher to analyze relationships between variables—in this case, internal communication and employee engagement.

Area of Study

Anambra State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, was created on August 27, 1991, following the division of the former Anambra State into Anambra and Enugu States. The state derives its name from the Anambra River, a tributary of the River Niger that flows through its western boundary. It is bounded by Delta State to the west, Enugu State to the east, Imo and Abia States to the south, and Kogi State to the north. The state capital is Awka, while other major urban centers include Onitsha, Nnewi, and Ekwulobia—all of which serve as commercial and industrial hubs. Historically, Anambra State is inhabited predominantly by the Igbo ethnic group, known for their entrepreneurial spirit, trade, and craftsmanship. The region has a long-standing tradition of commerce dating back to pre-colonial and colonial times, with Onitsha emerging as a major trading center due to its strategic location on the banks of the River Niger. Over time, this commercial activity attracted people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, transforming the area into a multicultural economic hub. The civil war (1967–1970) significantly impacted the region, but the people of Anambra have shown remarkable resilience, rebuilding and modernizing their economy in the post-war period. In the modern era, Anambra State has become a center for education, finance, industry, and commerce in southeastern Nigeria. The presence of multiple commercial banks and financial institutions in cities like Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi has contributed to the economic growth of the state. These urban centers are characterized by a diverse and dynamic workforce comprising individuals from different states, ethnic backgrounds, and cultural affiliations across Nigeria. This diversity has increased the relevance of cultural factors—such as cultural competence, humility, and intelligence—within organizational settings in the region. The selection of Anambra State as the area of study is therefore justified not only by its economic significance but also by its cultural richness and diversity, which makes it an ideal location for examining the relationship between cultural diversity and employee performance in commercial banks. As financial institutions continue to expand their workforce and customer base, understanding how cultural elements impact employee behavior and productivity within this context is both timely and essential for organizational success.

Sources of Data

Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to selected respondents, while **secondary data** were sourced from published journals, government reports, and documentation.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all **200 staff members** of First Bank PLC across all its branches in **Onitsha, Anambra State**. These include both managerial and non-managerial employees who are directly involved in or impacted by internal communication practices within the bank.

Sample Size Determination

Given the manageable size of the population (200 staff), the study employed a **complete enumeration (census survey)** approach. This means that all members of the population were included in the study to ensure comprehensive data collection and to avoid sampling bias.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted a **census sampling technique**, which is a type of non-probability sampling method where every member of the population is selected. Since the total number of staff is relatively small and accessible, the use of census sampling ensures that the findings reflect the views of the entire population under study.

Research Instrument

A **structured questionnaire** was the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic information, components of internal communication (feedback mechanism, message clarity, communication climate), and employee engagement. A 5-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) was used to measure the responses for the main constructs.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the instrument was ensured through **content validity**. Experts in organizational communication and human resource management from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University reviewed the questionnaire items to ensure they appropriately covered the study variables and were clearly worded and relevant to the research objectives.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted using 20 employees from a nearby First Bank branch outside the study area. The **Cronbach Alpha method** was used to test internal consistency, and a reliability coefficient of **0.87** was obtained. This value exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 as recommended by **Nunnally (1978)**, indicating that the questionnaire is highly reliable and consistent for measuring the variables under investigation.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were coded and analyzed using the **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0**. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean were used to summarize respondents' demographic data. For the hypotheses testing, the **Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC)** was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between internal communication variables and employee engagement. The level of significance was set at **0.05**.

Data Analysis and Presentation**4.1 Demographic Analysis**

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 116 | 58.0% |
| Female | 84 | 42.0% |

The table shows that 58% of the respondents were male while 42% were female. This indicates a slightly male-dominated workforce among the staff of First Bank PLC in Onitsha.

Table 4.2: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

| Age Group | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-25 | 49 | 24.5% |
| 26-35 | 80 | 40.0% |
| 36-45 | 52 | 26.0% |
| 46 and above | 19 | 9.5% |

Most respondents (40%) are between the ages of 26–35, which indicates a relatively young and active workforce.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification

| Education Level | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| OND/NCE | 45 | 22.5% |
| HND/B.Sc | 104 | 52.0% |
| M.Sc/PhD | 51 | 25.5% |

Majority of the respondents (52%) hold HND/B.Sc qualifications, indicating that the workforce is well-educated.

Table 4.4: Years of Service

| Years of Service | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1–5 | 77 | 38.5% |
| 6–10 | 80 | 40.0% |

Years of Service Frequency Percentage (%)

| | | |
|--------------|----|-------|
| 11–15 | 28 | 14.0% |
| 16 and above | 15 | 7.5% |

Most employees (40%) have been in service for 6 to 10 years, showing a moderate level of work experience among staff.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State.

| Variables | r-value | p-value | Decision |
|------------------------|---------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Feedback vs Engagement | 0.473 | 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) | Reject H ₀₁ |

There is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement. Hence, improving feedback can enhance employee engagement.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between message clarity and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State.

| Variables | r-value | p-value | Decision |
|-----------------------|---------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Clarity vs Engagement | 0.390 | 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) | Reject H ₀₂ |

Message clarity has a statistically significant relationship with employee engagement. The clearer the messages, the more engaged the employees tend to be.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between communication climate and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State.

| Variables | r-value | p-value | Decision |
|-----------------------|---------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Climate vs Engagement | 0.401 | 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) | Reject H ₀₃ |

A positive communication climate significantly contributes to employee engagement. A conducive and open communication environment fosters better employee involvement and commitment.

Discussion of Findings

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Decision: Rejected ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.05$). The analysis revealed a moderate and positive significant relationship between feedback mechanism and employee engagement. This implies that when employees receive timely, constructive, and two-way feedback, their engagement and commitment to organizational goals increase. This finding is consistent with the work of **Adeleke and Ogundele (2021)**, who found that effective feedback significantly enhances employee morale and engagement levels in Nigerian commercial banks. Similarly, **Nkwocha and Eze (2020)** argued that feedback systems that are transparent and action-oriented drive employee motivation and retention in financial institutions. Moreover, **Okafor et al. (2022)**, in their study of selected banks in Southeast Nigeria, affirmed that employees who receive regular performance feedback are more likely to feel valued and involved in their workplace. These findings collectively support the current study's conclusion that feedback mechanisms are vital tools for fostering employee engagement.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between message clarity and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Decision: Rejected ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.05$). The result showed a significant positive relationship between message clarity and employee engagement. This suggests that when organizational communication is clear, concise, and unambiguous, employees are better able to align with the institution's vision and objectives. This is in line with **Chukwu and Nwachukwu (2023)**, who asserted that unclear communication often leads to misunderstanding, job dissatisfaction, and disengagement. They found that in the Nigerian banking sector, communication clarity was a critical factor in reducing employee confusion and improving job involvement. Additionally, **Ogunyemi and Adebayo (2021)** discovered that message clarity enhances the psychological safety of employees, which increases their willingness to contribute meaningfully to organizational processes. The present study reinforces this, highlighting the importance of coherent communication for achieving optimal employee engagement.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between communication climate and employee engagement of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Decision: Rejected ($r = 0.401$, $p < 0.05$). Findings indicate that communication climate significantly influences employee engagement. A positive communication climate characterized by openness, trust, and support fosters stronger engagement among staff members. This aligns with the study of **Ibrahim and Usman (2020)**, who noted that a positive communication climate increases employees' emotional attachment to the organization. Their study in the Nigerian banking sector emphasized that open communication promotes transparency and trust, which are essential for engagement. Furthermore, **Eze and Nwankwo (2021)** observed that in banks where management encourages feedback, participation, and mutual respect, employees tend to be more loyal and committed. This finding supports the current study, underscoring that communication climate plays a vital role in shaping the engagement culture in banks. Lastly, **Aliyu and Okonkwo (2022)** confirmed that a healthy communication environment enhances job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions among bank employees, which further supports the current study's outcome.

Summary of Findings

The study explored the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement among 200 staff members across various branches of First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State. The research specifically focused on how feedback mechanisms, message clarity, and communication climate relate to employee engagement. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for hypothesis testing, the study revealed significant positive relationships in all three dimensions of internal communication examined.

- i. The study found a moderate and statistically significant relationship between feedback mechanisms and employee engagement, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.473 and a p -value of 0.000. This indicates that effective feedback—whether formal or informal—greatly enhances the level of employee commitment, involvement, and satisfaction in their work.
- ii. Message clarity was also found to be significantly related to employee engagement, with a correlation value of $r = 0.390$ and $p = 0.000$. This suggests that when communication is unambiguous and easily understood, employees are more likely to align themselves with organizational goals and expectations, thereby improving their level of engagement.
- iii. The analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between communication climate and employee engagement ($r = 0.401$, $p = 0.000$). This finding highlights the importance of a supportive communication environment—one characterized by openness, trust, and accessibility—in fostering higher levels of engagement among bank employees.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that internal communication plays a vital role in enhancing employee engagement within First Bank PLC in Onitsha, Anambra State. The research demonstrated that effective feedback mechanisms, clear messaging, and a positive communication climate all significantly contribute to improving how committed, motivated, and involved employees are in their organizational roles. These findings underscore that when employees feel heard, understand their roles clearly, and operate in an environment where communication is open and respectful; they are more likely to be enthusiastic about their work and committed to the success of the organization. In essence, internal communication is not just a managerial tool but a strategic driver of employee engagement.

Recommendations

In line with the specific objectives of the study and the empirical findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. First Bank PLC should implement structured feedback channels that ensure timely and two-way communication between management and employees. Regular appraisals, open-door policies, and anonymous suggestion boxes can help in promoting honest and constructive feedback, which will in turn drive engagement.

- ii. Management should ensure that all forms of communication—whether written or verbal—are straightforward, unambiguous, and tailored to the comprehension levels of employees. This can be achieved through training for managers on effective communication skills and the use of internal communication audits to assess clarity levels.
- iii. The bank should work towards creating a communication environment built on trust, inclusiveness, and respect. Encouraging participation in decision-making processes, recognizing employees' contributions, and maintaining transparent communication channels will significantly enhance employee morale and engagement.

References

- Adedeji, T., & Ogunyemi, B. (2023). Communication practices and employee engagement in selected commercial banks in Nigeria. *African Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(2), 98–110.
- Afolabi, T., & Ogundele, S. (2023). Impact of message clarity on employee performance in Nigerian institutions. *Nigerian Journal of Organizational Communication*, 5(1), 34–47.
- Agba, A. M., & Ocheni, S. (2021). Internal communication and employee commitment in the Nigerian banking sector. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(1), 45–53.
- Agba, A. M., & Ocheni, S. (2021). Internal communication and employee commitment in the Nigerian banking sector. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(1), 45–53.
- Anyakora, M., Farinmade, A., & Odimegwu, C. (2024). Research Methodology Teaching and Learning Approaches, Thesis Writing Skills, with Effective Completion of Academic Thesis among Postgraduate Students in Nigerian Universities. *Niger Delta Journal of Library and Information Science*, 5(2), 83-101.
- Anyakora, M.I., Farinmade, A., Chukwukereuba, S., Odimegwu, C.N., Efobi, J.D., Ikeotuonye, M.C., Ezeala, S.O. and Nwakoby, E.C., 2021. Telecommunication Infrastructure Condition and Consumers' Brand Loyalty in Smart Cities: The Case of Metropolitan Lagos. *International Journal of Network and Communication Research*, 6(1), pp.1-17.
- Chukwu, L., & Obasi, K. (2022). Enhancing employee performance through strategic internal communication in Nigerian banks. *International Journal of Management and Marketing*, 8(1), 59–72.
- Chukwu, L., & Obasi, K. (2022). Enhancing employee performance through strategic internal communication in Nigerian banks. *International Journal of Management and Marketing*, 8(1), 59–72.

- Chukwuemeka, J., & Ajayi, M. (2021). Communication climate and employee satisfaction in service-based organizations. *West African Journal of Management*, 9(1), 64–78.
- Ede, P. I., & Okafor, T. (2021). Clear communication and its effect on task accuracy in the Nigerian public sector. *Journal of Public Administration and Management Research*, 7(3), 120–131.
- Eze, A. M., & Nnabuiife, E. (2022). The evolution of communication patterns in Nigerian banking institutions. *Journal of African Business Review*, 14(3), 120–133.
- Eze, A. M., & Nnabuiife, E. (2022). The evolution of communication patterns in Nigerian banking institutions. *Journal of African Business Review*, 14(3), 120–133.
- Eze, M. O., & Chukwu, L. (2023). The influence of internal communication on employee disengagement. *Journal of Nigerian Organizational Studies*, 6(2), 99–113.
- Farinmade, A., Anyakora, M. I., & Odimegwu, C. N. (2025). *Impact of communication infrastructure on the economic growth of Computer Village, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria*. GVU Journal of Research and Development, 2(1), 52–62.
- Ibekwe, C., & Ezech, C. (2020). Communication effectiveness and organizational performance in the Nigerian banking sector. *Journal of Business Studies and Innovation*, 4(1), 75–86.
- Ikechukwu, U. F., & Odimegwu, C. N. (2021). Implications of COVID–19 outbreak on the construction and property development sector in the South-East Nigeria. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 27(2), 1–9.
- Kanu, S., & Okoro, I. (2021). The dynamics of employee engagement in Nigeria’s financial institutions. *African Journal of Work Psychology*, 10(1), 48–61.
- Nnadi, J., & Obiora, T. (2023). Role of communication climate in enhancing teamwork and motivation. *Journal of Communication and Human Behavior*, 5(4), 102–117.
- Nwachukwu, C., & Edeh, F. (2021). The link between organizational communication and employee productivity in banks. *Nigerian Journal of Management Sciences*, 9(2), 77–89.
- Obi, D., & Akpan, R. (2022). Exploring the role of internal communication in employee engagement. *Journal of Management and Strategy*, 8(2), 53–67.
- Okechukwu, F., & Ijeoma, R. (2020). Feedback and performance management in Nigerian organizations. *International Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 4(2), 90–104.

- Okocha, E. A., & Nwachukwu, I. J. (2020). The role of communication in building employee engagement in financial institutions. *West African Journal of Industrial Relations*, 10(1), 1–15.
- Okonkwo, A., & Nwachukwu, I. (2021). The effectiveness of employee feedback in organizational communication. *Journal of Workplace Studies*, 7(1), 31–45.
- Okoye, I. C., & Obi, F. N. (2021). Employee morale and internal communication in Nigerian banks. *Journal of Contemporary Business Research*, 5(2), 21–34.
- Oramah, C. P., Ngwu, T. A., & Odimegwu, C. N. (2025). Addressing the Impact of Complex English Use in Communicating Climate Change in Nigerian Communities Through Contextual Understanding. *Climate*, 13(3), 56.
- Umeh, P., & Nwafor, K. (2022). Leadership and communication climate: A Nigerian banking perspective. *African Journal of Business and Leadership*, 6(3), 70–83.
- Uzochukwu, E., & Emeka, H. (2022). Feedback systems and employee performance: Evidence from the Nigerian banking industry. *Nigerian Journal of Management Communication*, 3(2), 45–59.