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Effect of Cognitive Dimension of Employee Engagement on Performance of Workers in the Primary Health Care Division of the Local Government Service of Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of the cognitive dimension of employee engagement on the performance of workers in the Primary Health Care (PHC) division of the Local Government Service in Osun State, Nigeria. Cognitive engagement, defined as employees' mental alertness, focus, and intellectual commitment to work, is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of public sector performance. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 266 PHC employees and 240 service users across 12 selected urban local government councils. Data were analyzed using multiple regression and ANOVA techniques. The regression analysis revealed that the perception of challenge and growth had the strongest positive influence on performance ($\beta = 0.578$, $p = 0.000$), followed by a sense of accomplishment ($\beta = 0.314$, $p = 0.000$), and the ability to concentrate on work ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.003$). The perception that one's suggestions were considered by supervisors showed a weaker but still significant effect ($\beta = 0.148$, $p = 0.039$). The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 34.359$, $p = 0.000$), explaining a substantial portion of the variance in performance ($R^2 = 0.696$). These findings underscore the importance of fostering cognitive engagement among PHC workers to improve job performance and healthcare delivery. The study recommends targeted strategies such as professional development programs, task enrichment, improved feedback systems, and distraction-free work environments to sustain high levels of cognitive engagement and enhance service outcomes.

Keywords: Cognitive Engagement, Employee Performance**,** Primary Health Care (PHC), Public Sector Productivity and Job Motivation

Introduction

Employee engagement has emerged as a vital concept in contemporary organizational research and practice, particularly in sectors where human capital serves as the primary driver of service delivery according to Atiku, Itembu-Naunyango & Oladejo (2024). Engagement is generally viewed as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Among these, the cognitive dimension is especially significant as it captures the extent to which employees are psychologically present, mentally alert, and intellectually invested in their work, Owen (2025). Cognitive engagement reflects how employees understand, interpret, and align with their roles, responsibilities, and organizational objectives, elements that are fundamental to achieving sustained performance outcomes. In the context of public health systems especially at the primary level employee engagement becomes even more critical due to the strategic role that frontline workers play in delivering essential healthcare services, Aluko (2023). In Nigeria, the Primary Health Care (PHC) system forms the bedrock of the national health delivery framework, providing first-contact and community-based care. It operates largely under the purview of local governments, and its effectiveness is contingent upon the quality and performance of health workers stationed in local health centers. Osun State, like many other states in Nigeria, faces systemic challenges within its PHC division, including resource shortages, poor infrastructure, limited training opportunities, and weak accountability mechanisms. These challenges may hinder workers' psychological connection to their jobs, especially their cognitive engagement, which may, in turn, affect performance.

Cognitive engagement, in this study, is viewed as the degree to which health workers exhibit focus, mental resilience, task understanding, and intellectual commitment in the execution of their duties, Kanapeckaitė & Bagdžiūnienė (2024). Workers who are cognitively engaged are more likely to demonstrate problem-solving skills, adhere to protocols, maintain focus in high-pressure situations, and actively contribute to quality service delivery. Conversely, a lack of cognitive engagement may manifest in reduced attentiveness, low motivation, and diminished productivity, all of which can compromise the efficiency of PHC services.

Given the essential role that PHC workers play in promoting health outcomes and achieving public health targets, there is a pressing need to empirically explore how cognitive engagement influences their performance. Previous studies have examined general employee engagement in public service contexts, Khawar, Mahmood & Som (2024) and Peretz, H. V. (2023); however, there is a paucity of research specifically addressing the cognitive dimension of engagement among PHC workers within local government structures in Nigeria. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the effect of cognitive

engagement on the performance of workers in the Primary Health Care division of the Local Government Service of Osun State. The aim is to provide evidence-based insights that will support workforce development strategies, enhance service delivery, and inform policy reforms targeted at improving health system performance at the grassroots level.

The performance of employees in the Primary Health Care (PHC) sector remains a central concern for public health administrators, especially within the local government system in Nigeria. Despite the critical role PHC workers play in the provision of accessible and community-based healthcare, their performance has often been described as inconsistent, suboptimal, and vulnerable to systemic inefficiencies. In Osun State, the PHC system continues to grapple with issues such as poor motivation, lack of professional commitment, inadequate supervision, and weak institutional support. While several studies, Fekadu *et al.* (2024) and Kengia *et al* (2023) have focused on infrastructural and financial constraints affecting healthcare delivery, less attention has been given to the psychological and cognitive dimensions of employee engagement, which are equally critical for enhancing performance.

One of the key but under-explored aspects influencing employee performance is cognitive engagement, the mental focus, alertness, and intellectual commitment employees bring to their job roles as cited Salam *et al.* (2023). Workers in the PHC system are expected to function under demanding conditions, yet the extent to which their cognitive engagement affects their job effectiveness remains largely unexamined. Low levels of cognitive engagement may result in poor decision-making, inattentiveness, reduced innovation, and a general decline in service quality, thereby undermining public trust in local health systems.

Moreover, public sector work environments, particularly at the local government level, often lack structured interventions to foster engagement, Munthe & Sobandi (2025). In such contexts, health workers may become mentally disconnected from their roles, seeing them merely as routine tasks rather than purposeful contributions to public health goals. This detachment not only affects individual performance but also compromises collective outcomes across the PHC sector.

Given these realities, it is imperative to investigate how the cognitive dimension of employee engagement contributes to or hinders the performance of PHC workers. Without such insights, policy interventions may continue to overlook a critical psychological factor that could significantly improve health service delivery. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of cognitive engagement on employee performance within the Primary Health Care division of the Local Government Service in Osun State, Nigeria.

Employee Engagement

Al Zeer, Ajouz & Salahat (2023) in their study submitted that employee engagement is a strategic organizational construct that describes the extent to which employees are emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively connected to their job roles and the broader objectives of their organizations. It is considered a predictor of key organizational outcomes, including productivity, job satisfaction, innovation, and employee retention. In the context of

public healthcare, especially within local government systems, engaged employees are more likely to show dedication, enthusiasm, and willingness to go beyond their formal job descriptions to achieve better health outcomes. Engagement fosters a sense of purpose, ownership, and accountability that is essential for delivering consistent and quality healthcare services, Sagen *et al.* (2023).

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement refers specifically to the mental investment, attentiveness, and intellectual effort an employee applies to their work tasks, Van Iddekinge *et al*. (2023). It is characterized by the degree of mental alertness, focus, and critical thinking that employees bring to their roles. Unlike emotional or behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement emphasizes the psychological presence and task absorption of an employee during work activities. In a primary healthcare setting, this could manifest as a health worker's ability to correctly interpret medical protocols, make sound clinical decisions, monitor patient progress, and remain mentally present despite external pressures. When cognitive engagement is high, workers are more adaptive, accurate, and consistent in their delivery of services, Yang & Geng (2024). Conversely, cognitive disengagement can lead to oversight, mistakes, and reduced responsiveness, especially in crisis or emergency care.

Employee Performance

Employee performance in the healthcare sector is measured by the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery, Ondiek, S. O. (2023).. It includes observable outcomes such as punctuality, patient satisfaction, task completion rates, compliance with health protocols, and ability to work under pressure. Performance also encompasses intangible attributes like teamwork, professionalism, and problem-solving abilities, Marques & Monteiro (2024). Within the PHC division, the performance of frontline health workers is directly tied to the achievement of primary health indicators such as immunization coverage, maternal and child health, and disease surveillance. The study of cognitive engagement becomes critical as it may reveal internal psychological factors that either enhance or impede job performance beyond what external motivators (e.g., salary) can explain.

Primary Health Care (PHC)

Primary Health Care is the first point of contact between individuals and the health system. It is anchored on the principles of accessibility, community participation, inter-sectoral coordination, and appropriate technology, Mukala Mayoyo (2025). In Nigeria, PHC is primarily managed at the local government level and plays a critical role in ensuring universal health coverage and equitable access to essential services such as immunization, family planning, health education, and management of common illnesses. However, due to resource limitations, inadequate workforce planning, and weak governance, PHC systems often struggle with poor staff performance and declining service quality, Deonarain (2024).

Therefore, enhancing cognitive engagement among PHC workers can be a strategic lever for improving health system responsiveness and public trust.

Local Government Service Delivery

Local government service delivery refers to the mechanisms through which grassroots administrative units provide essential public goods and services to citizens, Okorie *et al.* (2023) In Nigeria, local governments are constitutionally mandated to oversee the provision of PHC services. However, they often face significant operational constraints such as poor funding, political interference, inadequate supervision, and human resource shortages. These challenges negatively affect the morale and engagement of public servants, including healthcare workers. Understanding how cognitive engagement interacts with these structural realities can provide new insights into improving service delivery at the local government level, particularly in health.

Psychological Empowerment

Tjeku (2024) in his study said that psychological empowerment is a motivational construct that reflects employees' belief in their capacity to influence work outcomes. It comprises four key dimensions: meaning (alignment between work and personal values), competence (confidence in one's abilities), self-determination (autonomy in initiating tasks), and impact (the ability to affect organizational outcomes). Workers who are psychologically empowered are more likely to take initiative, remain resilient, and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals, Hosseini *et al.* (2024). In PHC settings, especially where resources are scarce, psychological empowerment can compensate for material deficiencies by encouraging creativity, accountability, and intrinsic motivation, factors that directly enhance cognitive engagement and performance.

Work Environment

The work environment refers to the physical, social, and psychological setting in which employees operate. It encompasses infrastructure, leadership style, interpersonal relations, resource availability, and organizational culture, Aluko (2023). In the PHC divisions of Osun State, many health facilities operate in poor environmental conditions, ranging from dilapidated buildings to irregular power supply and shortage of medical supplies. Such settings can demotivate workers and hinder their cognitive engagement. Conversely, a supportive work environment that encourages participation, recognition, and effective communication can stimulate mental engagement, foster innovation, and improve job outcomes.

Motivation

Motivation is the internal drive or external inducement that propels individuals to initiate, sustain, and direct their behavior toward achieving goals. It can be categorized into intrinsic motivation (driven by personal satisfaction, intellectual curiosity, or sense of purpose) and

extrinsic motivation (driven by salary, promotion, or recognition), Sowunmi (2024). Cognitive engagement is closely linked to intrinsic motivation; when workers find meaning in their tasks or view their role as vital to community health, they tend to be more mentally absorbed and committed, Iyeli (2025). Understanding motivation dynamics in the PHC context helps to explain why some workers perform exceptionally even under harsh conditions while others disengage despite being in similar settings.

Public Sector Accountability

Public sector accountability involves the obligation of civil servants to uphold transparency, answerability, and integrity in the discharge of their duties, Birdayanthi Yusriadi & Ikmal (2025). In the healthcare sector, accountability mechanisms include performance appraisals, community feedback, audits, and supervisory systems. Accountability not only ensures compliance with standards but also promotes cognitive vigilance among employees. When healthcare workers know they are accountable for outcomes, they are more likely to remain focused, adhere to protocols, and take corrective actions. Thus, cognitive engagement serves as both a precursor and an outcome of effective accountability frameworks in public service.

Human Resource Management (HRM) in Public Health

Human Resource Management in public health encompasses recruitment, training, deployment, evaluation, and retention of healthcare personnel, Wambu (2024). Strategic HRM aims to align individual capabilities with institutional goals. In many Nigerian PHC facilities, HRM practices remain weak or underdeveloped, leading to mismatched skill sets, poor supervision, lack of career development, and high attrition rates. This institutional neglect often leads to disengagement and burnout. However, effective HRM—when focused on employee development, continuous learning, and recognition—can cultivate cognitive engagement by enhancing workers' understanding of their roles, strengthening professional identity, and boosting confidence in their contributions.

Theoretical Framework

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, introduced by Demerouti and associates in 2001, offers a valuable approach for understanding the factors that influence employee motivation and job performance as cited by Holmes (2025). This theory categorizes work conditions into two key components: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the psychological, physical, or emotional efforts required from employees, such as heavy workload, time constraints, or emotionally intense situations. In contrast, job resources represent the tools, support systems, and opportunities provided to employees that enable them to handle job challenges effectively. These include elements like supervisory support, decision-making autonomy, and access to necessary training. In the setting of local government health services in Osun State, primary healthcare workers often face significant job demands, ranging from

inadequate staffing and long hours to limited medical supplies. When these demands are not counterbalanced by supportive resources, workers may become mentally fatigued or disengaged. However, the presence of enabling resources, such as regular feedback, recognition, or skill-building programmes can help sustain employees' mental focus and commitment to their duties. From this perspective, the JD-R theory helps explain how the availability of supportive work conditions can strengthen cognitive engagement, which in turn enhances job performance and service effectiveness.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, centers on the idea that human behavior is influenced by a dynamic relationship between internal cognitive processes, social interactions, and environmental conditions. One of the central concepts in this theory is self-efficacy, Recker (2023). The belief individuals hold about their ability to successfully carry out tasks and influence outcomes. According to this perspective, people are not passive recipients of external stimuli; rather, they actively interpret their surroundings, learn from observing others, and use personal judgment to shape their actions. When applied to the primary healthcare context, the theory helps explain why some workers remain mentally engaged and effective, even under challenging conditions. Health workers who believe in their competence are more likely to stay focused, take initiative, and show persistence in solving problems. Their cognitive involvement goes beyond task completion, it involves understanding procedures, making informed decisions, and staying committed to quality care. Social Cognitive Theory, therefore, supports the view that strengthening self-belief, encouraging professional growth, and fostering a supportive work environment can enhance both mental engagement and overall job performance.

Empirical review

Saad et al. (2022) explored how the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of employee engagement influence employee commitment in small and medium-sized enterprises in Egypt. Using a quantitative approach, their results revealed that only the emotional engagement component significantly affected employee commitment. Furthermore, their study found that strategic implementation had no meaningful moderating effect on the relationship between engagement and commitment. Unlike their focus on SME settings and employee commitment, the current study investigates how the same dimensions of engagement relate to employee performance in the public health sector in Nigeria.

In the healthcare context, Trusson et al. (2019) and Laschinger et al. (2019) conducted survey-based research in private hospitals and found cognitive engagement to be positively associated with employee performance, patient satisfaction, and reduced burnout. However, a notable limitation in these studies is that they were carried out in private hospitals in high-income countries, whereas the current study focuses on employees within the public sector's local government health services in Nigeria.

Bakker and Demerouti (2014) also performed a systematic review of 100 studies examining behavioral engagement, defined through indicators such as vigor, dedication, and absorption. Their analysis found that vigor enhances team collaboration, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior. Dedication correlates with increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while absorption supports employee well-being and creative output. The study further highlighted the role of behavioral engagement in mitigating absenteeism, burnout, and turnover. Unlike their use of a longitudinal design, this research adopts a cross-sectional survey to assess behavioral engagement and its link to performance.

In their investigations, Saks and Gruman (2019) applied regression techniques to analyze the relationship between emotional engagement and work outcomes. They found that emotional factors such as enthusiasm, pride, recognition, and emotional connection were positively associated with job performance and organizational citizenship behavior. For instance, enthusiasm predicted job satisfaction and creativity, pride aligned with citizenship behaviors, and emotional connection boosted loyalty and psychological well-being. These findings underline the broader influence of emotional engagement on burnout, absenteeism, and staff turnover. Unlike their broad industry focus, this study narrows its scope to the public service context in Nigeria.

Several studies have examined how organizational and individual factors influence engagement and performance. Kim et al. (2018) and Bashir et al. (2022) found that job involvement, organizational support, and leadership trust enhanced cognitive engagement, which in turn boosted performance. Cho et al. (2019) and Lee et al. (2020) reported that proactive work behavior, participation in decision-making, and contextual performance are tied to behavioral engagement and improved public service outcomes. Emotional well-being and affective commitment were also found by Tsai et al. (2018) to positively influence performance, while emotional exhaustion was detrimental. Khan et al. (2020) confirmed the positive influence of all three engagement dimensions on public sector performance, and Bashir et al. (2020) identified cognitive and emotional engagement as the most impactful predictors.

In another line of inquiry, Zhang et al. (2020) applied multi-group and correlation analyses to investigate how cognitive and behavioral engagement interact. Their findings indicated that this interaction significantly improves creative performance. Similarly, Bakker and Demerouti (2018) used structural equation modeling and moderation analysis to confirm that cognitive engagement mediates the link between job resources and performance, while behavioral engagement moderates the influence of job demands on performance.

Across the literature, a range of methodologies has been employed—including surveys, interviews, mixed-methods research, and longitudinal designs. Sample sizes range from small organizational case studies to extensive national surveys. Many scholars have used advanced statistical techniques such as SEM, HLM, and path analysis to evaluate complex variable relationships. Despite methodological differences, most studies consistently support a positive

correlation between employee engagement and performance, particularly in public service settings.

Akingbola and Van den Berg (2019) observed that behavioral and emotional engagement are significantly related to performance outcomes in Canadian public sector organizations. A meta-analysis by Noesgaard and Hansen (2021), involving 45 public sector studies, confirmed that all three dimensions of engagement—cognitive, behavioral, and emotional—are strong predictors of various performance metrics. Borst and Lako (2022) tracked engagement over five years in Dutch public institutions and found that consistently high engagement levels led to better performance and professional advancement. In the UK, Mostafa et al. (2023) noted fluctuating engagement among local government employees, driven by organizational restructuring and leadership changes. Borst et al. (2020) also established that employee engagement positively influenced both formal job performance and extra-role behaviors.

In the United States, Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2021) concluded that employee engagement has a substantial impact on overall agency performance. Jensen and Bro (2023) found that higher engagement at the team level translated into improved citizen satisfaction with municipal services in Denmark. Zeng and Xu (2020) observed that job satisfaction served as a partial link between engagement and performance in Chinese hospitals. Mostafa et al. (2023) further reported that organizational commitment acted as a bridge between engagement (particularly cognitive and emotional) and both individual and team-level performance in the UK public sector. Liu et al. (2022) discovered that person-organization alignment strengthened the positive relationship between behavioral engagement and job outcomes in the Chinese public sector, while Bos-Nehles and Van der Voet (2019) highlighted that a positive work environment amplified the benefits of emotional engagement on performance within Dutch municipalities.

Methodology

This research was carried out within the Local Government Service structure of Osun State, Nigeria, a state largely driven by civil service functions. The study particularly targeted the Primary Health Care (PHC) departments of selected urban-based local government councils due to their strategic role in delivering frontline health services that can be evaluated directly by the communities they serve. The research adopted a **descriptive cross-sectional survey design**, enabling the collection of data from participants at a single point in time. The population for the study included all employees working in the PHC departments across the 30 local government areas of Osun State. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Initially, the councils were stratified into Osun West, Osun East, and Osun Central senatorial districts. From each district, four urban councils—chosen for their accessibility and population concentration—were selected, making a total of 12. From each of these councils, a sample equivalent to 20% of the PHC staff was drawn, giving a total of **266 employees**. Additionally, **240 service users** were selected through convenience sampling based on their visits to health facilities over a one-week period, bringing the total sample to **506 participants**.

Primary data was sourced through two sets of structured questionnaires. The first was administered to PHC employees and was divided into five sections (A–E), collecting data on demographics, various dimensions of employee engagement (cognitive, behavioral, and emotional), barriers to engagement, and recommended strategies to improve engagement. Likert-scale and frequency-based questions were used to capture employee perceptions.

The second instrument was designed for health service users and consisted of three sections (A–C), capturing demographic data as well as feedback on service delivery, accessibility, trust, and overall satisfaction with healthcare services received. These responses were also measured using a five-point Likert scale.

In this study, the **independent variable** is employee engagement, which was explored through three dimensions: mental focus (cognitive), emotional connection, and physical involvement (behavioral). The **dependent variable**, worker performance, was evaluated through indicators such as the quality of service delivery and citizens' trust and satisfaction.

To confirm the reliability and clarity of the instruments, a **pilot test** was conducted before full-scale data collection. This helped to refine the tools and ensure they were appropriate for the study's objectives and the characteristics of the target population.

Data Analysis Method

The study utilized both **inferential statistical techniques** to explore the relationship between employee engagement and performance in the Primary Health Care division of the Local Government Service in Osun State. To test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables, the study applied **multiple regression analysis** and **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**, providing insights into the strength and significance of associations among the variables under investigation.

Results and Discussion

Examination the effect of cognitive dimension of employee engagement on performance of workers in the primary health care division of the local government service of Osun state, Nigeria

The regression analysis provides insight into how different cognitive aspects of employee engagement influence worker performance in the primary healthcare division of the local government service in Osun State. The unstandardized coefficients represent the direct impact of each predictor on performance, while the standardized coefficients indicate their relative importance. The results highlight that the strongest positive predictor of performance is the perception that challenges lead to growth and development. With a standardized coefficient of 0.578 ($p = 0.000$), this suggests that employees who feel encouraged to develop their skills and tackle difficult tasks tend to perform better. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a work environment that promotes continuous learning and professional development.

Similarly, the ability to concentrate entirely on work also positively influences performance, as indicated by its standardized coefficient of 0.213 (p = 0.003). Employees who can focus deeply on their tasks without distractions are more productive, reinforcing the need for structured workflows and minimal interruptions in the workplace. A sense of accomplishment in one's job also contributes positively to performance, with a standardized coefficient of 0.314 (p = 0.000). This suggests that employees who feel recognized for their efforts and achievements are likely to be more engaged and productive. However, ensuring that accomplishments are met with further challenges may prevent complacency and sustain motivation.

The perception that ideas and suggestions are considered by one's boss has a relatively weaker effect on performance, with a standardized coefficient of 0.148 (p = 0.039). While this indicates a positive relationship, it suggests that merely having ideas acknowledged does not necessarily translate into higher performance unless those ideas are implemented effectively.

Collinearity statistics confirm that multicollinearity is not a major concern, as all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values remain within acceptable limits, ensuring that each predictor contributes uniquely to the model.

Examination the effect of cognitive dimension of employee engagement on performance of workers in the primary health care division of the local government service of Osun state, Nigeria.

	Unstand. Coeff.		**Stand. Coeff**			**Collinearity Stat.**	
(Constant)	3.284	.340		9.655	.000		
I feel a sense of accomplishment in my job	.307	.054	.314	-5.695	.000	.865	1.156
Regardless of difficulty, I am challenged to grow and develop in my role	.565	.053	.578	10.755	.000	.909	1.101
My ideas and suggestions are considered by my boss	.143	.069	.148	-2.077	.039	.517	1.933
My mentality is entirely concentrated on the work	.199	.066	.213	3.009	.003	.524	1.910

Source: Author's Computation, 2025.

ANOVA for Examination the effect of cognitive dimension of employee engagement on performance of workers in the primary health care division of the local government service of Osun state, Nigeria.

The ANOVA results provide an overall assessment of the regression model examining the effect of the cognitive dimension of employee engagement on worker performance in the primary healthcare division of the local government service in Osun State. The F-statistic (34.359, p = 0.000) indicates that the model is statistically significant, meaning that the independent variables (cognitive engagement factors) collectively have a significant impact on worker performance.

The sum of squares for regression (37.448) represents the proportion of variance in worker performance that is explained by the predictors included in the model. This suggests that a substantial portion of the total variability in performance can be attributed to cognitive engagement factors, such as employees' sense of accomplishment, perception of growth opportunities, ability to focus, and whether their ideas are considered by leadership. The residual sum of squares (16.386) reflects the unexplained variance, which means there are other external factors influencing performance that are not captured in this model. However, since the explained variance (37.448) is much larger than the residual variance (16.386), it suggests that the cognitive dimension of engagement is a strong determinant of performance. The total sum of squares (53.835) represents the overall variability in worker performance, confirming that the model explains a significant portion of the differences observed among employees.

ANOVA for Examination the effect of cognitive dimension of employee engagement on performance of workers in the primary health care division of the local government service of Osun state, Nigeria.

MODEL 1	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	37.448	4	4.862	34.359	.000[b]
Residual	16.386	243	.142		
Total	53.835	247			

Source: Author's Computation, 2025.

Discussion of Findings

This research investigates how the cognitive aspect of employee engagement influences worker performance within the primary healthcare sector of the local government service in Osun State. The findings offer important perspectives on how employees' mental engagement such as their concentration, sense of achievement, and attitudes toward workplace challenges contribute to their job performance. It was found that internal cognitive engagement plays a more significant role in determining employee performance than external influences. A major discovery from the study is that employees who view workplace challenges as growth opportunities tend to exhibit higher performance levels. When tasks require them to move beyond routine duties, employees are more likely to build new competencies, enhance their problem-solving skills, and develop greater resilience. This supports the principle of job enrichment, where engaging and demanding tasks drive motivation and commitment. To

capitalize on this, healthcare leaders should foster a work environment that promotes learning and development, including assigning new responsibilities, offering structured training programs, and supporting clear career advancement paths. Without such developmental initiatives, employees risk disengagement, which can negatively affect productivity and service delivery in healthcare.

Another significant insight is the positive correlation between focus at work and employee performance. Staff members who are able to concentrate without frequent disruptions are generally more productive, accurate, and timely in task completion. Given the precision required in healthcare roles, maintaining focus is crucial. Therefore, it becomes essential to establish structured workflows and workspaces that reduce distractions. Factors such as constant interruptions, excessive paperwork, and unclear job expectations can hinder focus and diminish output. Implementing strategies like task prioritization, workload optimization, and scheduled periods for uninterrupted work can help improve employees' ability to concentrate and thus enhance performance. Additionally, the study finds that a strong sense of accomplishment contributes positively to job performance. Employees who feel proud of their work and receive recognition are typically more driven and dedicated. Although the study also reveals that the feeling of being heard by supervisors particularly when employees' suggestions are considered has a positive effect on performance, this impact is less significant than other cognitive elements. This suggests that acknowledgement alone is insufficient; organizations must actively implement useful employee recommendations. This highlights the importance of establishing effective feedback systems that not only collect but act on employee input. Healthcare managers should encourage open communication, innovation led by employees, and regular forums for dialogue to ensure that staff contributions are genuinely valued and implemented.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of the cognitive dimension of employee engagement on the performance of workers in the Primary Health Care division of the Local Government Service in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings confirm that cognitive engagement—characterized by mental focus, a sense of accomplishment, intellectual challenge, and belief in the value of one's ideas—plays a significant role in shaping employee performance outcomes in the public health sector.

Specifically, the analysis revealed that employees who perceive their work as challenging and growth-inducing are significantly more productive and committed. Similarly, the ability to concentrate fully on work-related tasks and the experience of personal accomplishment were also positively associated with enhanced performance. Although the perception that supervisors consider employees' suggestions had a weaker influence, it still contributed positively, indicating the importance of inclusive management practices.

These results underscore the critical role of psychological engagement in enhancing the quality of healthcare delivery at the grassroots level. It is no longer sufficient to address only the

infrastructural or financial challenges of the PHC system; attention must also be paid to the cognitive well-being and engagement levels of frontline health workers. By fostering environments that challenge, recognize, and intellectually stimulate employees, health institutions can significantly improve performance, staff morale, and service delivery effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance cognitive engagement and ultimately improve performance among PHC workers in Osun State:

- Local government authorities should invest in continuous learning and skill-building initiatives. Providing opportunities for training, mentoring, and job enrichment will enhance workers' cognitive stimulation and promote long-term career growth.
- Job roles should be restructured to include elements of challenge, autonomy, and variety. Assigning responsibilities that require critical thinking and creativity can stimulate engagement and foster a sense of purpose among health workers.
- Administrators should ensure a conducive work environment that allows for deep focus. This includes reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, streamlining workflow processes, and clearly defining job roles to eliminate role ambiguity.
- Recognizing and celebrating employee accomplishments fosters a sense of fulfillment and motivates continued high performance. Both formal rewards and informal acknowledgments can contribute to positive cognitive engagement.
- Supervisors should not only listen to but actively implement feasible employee suggestions. Creating participatory platforms where workers feel their input is valued and acted upon can increase engagement and trust in leadership.
- Cognitive engagement indicators should be integrated into routine performance reviews. This allows for a more holistic understanding of employee well-being and helps identify areas where additional support or intervention is needed.
- Local government service commissions should institutionalize policies that prioritize employee engagement, particularly cognitive aspects, as part of public sector reform and health system strengthening strategies.

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