Onboarding and Employee Engagement in Deposit Money Banks in Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the impact of onboarding on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The objectives of the study were to evaluate the influence of social integration and functional integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. A survey design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised 231 employees, and a sample size of 158 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. A questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection. The study hypotheses were tested using simple regression analysis. The findings indicated that social integration had a significant positive influence on employee engagement, with an adjusted R^2 value of 0.355. Similarly, functional integration demonstrated a significant positive influence, with an adjusted R^2 value of 0.350. The researchers concluded that onboarding had a significant positive impact on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended that banks should sustain the practices of social and functional integration for new employees, as these contribute to the development of meaningful workplace relationships that enhance employee engagement.

Keywords: *Onboarding, Social Integration, Functional Integration, Employee Engagement and Deposit Money Banks*

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, the achievement of organisational goals is increasingly dependent on the active participation and commitment of employees. As a result, many organisations prioritise strategies that foster employee engagement, recognising its role in promoting positive workplace behaviours, improved performance, and the successful attainment of strategic objectives (Etim & Uford, 2019; Duh & Uford, 2019). One critical avenue through which employee engagement can be cultivated particularly among new hires is the onboarding process.

Onboarding serves as a structured mechanism through which new employees are integrated into an organisation's culture, processes, and operational systems. It facilitates the socialisation of new staff, ensuring they understand and internalise the values, expectations, and norms of their new work environment. An effective onboarding process not only accelerates the adjustment of new employees but also equips them with the skills, knowledge, and behavioural competencies necessary for meaningful contribution (Tarallo, 2021; Gomes and Daniele, 2023; Pinco and Crisan, 2024). In essence, onboarding lays the foundation for successful employee integration and engagement.

Scholars have variously defined the onboarding process. Chillakuri (2020) describes it as the method by which organisations effectively integrate and familiarise new members with their job roles, processes, and organisational culture. Baade (2022) further elaborates that onboarding involves the socialisation of new recruits, which results in smoother adjustment and alignment with organisational expectations. While onboarding practices may differ in formality and scope, the objective remains consistent to ensure that new employees become productive, committed, and culturally aligned members of the organisation (Jeske & Olson, 2021).

Bauer (2010) identifies four fundamental components of onboarding: connection, culture, clarification, and compliance. More recently, Brenner (2020) proposed an expanded framework consisting of social integration, functional integration, and value-based integration. For the purpose of this study, focus is placed on social and functional integration, as these dimensions directly influence how well new employees build relationships and understand their roles within the organisation.

Social integration pertains to the development of interpersonal relationships and an employee's ability to collaborate effectively with colleagues, clients, supervisors, and teams. It also encompasses the individual's adaptation to the social fabric of the organisation. Functional integration, on the other hand, relates to the acquisition of knowledge concerning job responsibilities, organisational processes, networks, and required competencies that enable employees to perform effectively and support the organisation's goals.

In particular, Brenner (2020) highlights the importance of value compatibility between new employees and the organisation especially among younger professionals arguing that such alignment enhances commitment and engagement. This assertion is echoed by other researchers who posit that a well-structured onboarding process is crucial to fostering employee engagement (Ziden & Joo, 2020). Engaged employees tend to be more motivated, loyal, and committed, with a clearer understanding of organisational values, expectations, and goals.

Employee engagement itself has garnered considerable attention in organisational research, owing to its established links with performance, innovation, retention, and overall competitiveness (Murgoski, 2023; Adepoju et al., 2024). It reflects the extent to which employees are emotionally, physically, and cognitively invested in their work, and is considered a strategic asset for organisations seeking sustained success. In sectors such as banking where service quality, responsiveness, and trust are paramount (Uford & Joseph, 2019), employee engagement is particularly vital.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of onboarding as a strategic process for employee integration, many organisations, particularly in the Nigerian banking sector, still treat it as a one-time orientation event. This limited approach often fails to address the social, functional, and cognitive needs of new employees, leading to weak engagement, low commitment, and poor service delivery.

The evolving workplace, shaped by globalisation, generational diversity, and increasing complexity, demands a workforce that is well integrated and emotionally connected to their roles. However, structured onboarding practices that could foster such engagement remain under-utilised and under-researched, especially in Nigerian deposit money banks.

While existing studies have explored training and orientation in relation to job satisfaction and performance, few have examined the specific impact of comprehensive onboarding on employee engagement. Notably, Brenner's (2020) holistic onboarding model has not been empirically tested in this context. This gap underscores the need to investigate how onboarding influences employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State, with a view to enhancing employee performance and organisational effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of onboarding on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were to;

i. assess the influence of social integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

ii. examine the effect of functional integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were proposed to guide the study;

H_{01}: Social integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

H_{02}: Functional integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Conceptual Review

i. *Onboarding*

Onboarding involves preparing new employees for their roles by supporting them during the adjustment period and familiarising them with the organisation and its operations (Euvouria, 2021). Poor onboarding can lead to confusion, dissatisfaction, and reduced performance (Caldwell and Peters, 2018). Some organisations view onboarding as a cost rather than a long-term investment and may neglect the process (Mbiet-Edisua and Amah, 2024). According to Klein, Polin, and Leigh-Sutton (2019), onboarding includes both formal and informal efforts to help newcomers adapt. Its effectiveness is shaped by the extent of early employee engagement (Mbiet-Edisua and Amah, 2024).

Onboarding ensures that new hires understand their responsibilities (Kuusisto, 2024) and align with the organisation's culture and values (Davila and Pina-Ramirez, 2018). A well-executed onboarding process enhances employee engagement and commitment (Sak and Gruman, 2014). Brenner (2020) highlighted onboarding's role in retaining and engaging talent, contributing to long-term success. Similarly, Yadav et al. (2020) noted it helps newcomers acquire knowledge, develop skills, and adapt behaviourally. Cesario and Chambel (2019) stressed the importance of well-designed onboarding programmes in creating positive employee experiences and supporting organisational goals.

ii. *Social Integration*

Social integration during the onboarding process is fundamentally concerned with the development of interpersonal relationships among supervisors, colleagues, and customers within the workplace environment. Baade (2022) asserts that newly appointed employees must understand how to collaborate effectively with their teams, how individual members are positioned within the organisational social structure, and how to coordinate tasks accordingly.

Furthermore, Baade (2022) underscores the importance of facilitating the social integration of new employees within organisational settings. Social integration fosters opportunities for acceptance and inclusion within existing organisational networks, thereby enabling new employees to develop a strong sense of identification with the organisation (Euvouria, 2021). In light of the aforementioned perspectives on the role of social integration in the onboarding process, it may be inferred that, in circumstances where new employees are successfully integrated into the social fabric of the organisation, such integration possesses the potential to positively influence both their organisational commitment and overall job performance.

iii. *Functional Integration*

This aspect of the onboarding process concerns the provision of necessary knowledge about an organisation's tasks, processes, networks, and capabilities that are strategic to understanding and achieving the organisation's goals. As new employees join an organisation, it is important to integrate them functionally. Key aspects of functional integration include empowering new employees with knowledge of the organisation's business and activities, the competencies and skills essential for fulfilling assigned responsibilities, the processes followed in service delivery, and the key networks required to operate effectively as new members.

Furthermore, Envouria (2021) explains that functional integration clarifies the roles expected of new employees, thereby empowering them and providing the necessary direction to perform their duties. This implies that it is important to integrate new employees functionally to better prepare and position them for efficient service delivery to clients. Considering the issues discussed regarding functional integration, it is assumed that functionally integrated employees would be engaged in their organisation's operations.

iv. *Employee Engagement*

Employee engagement has garnered considerable attention in contemporary management scholarship and organisational practice, primarily due to its recognised impact on both individual and organisational performance. Despite its increasing prominence, the concept remains subject to definitional ambiguity and inconsistencies in measurement across the academic literature (Sun *et al.*, 2019).

In general terms, employee engagement refers to the degree of psychological and emotional investment individuals exhibit in their work. Engaged employees are typically characterised by elevated levels of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment, which translate into higher productivity and a positive influence on organisational culture (Sugandha, 2022). Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) argue that employee engagement serves as a fundamental determinant of organisational success, directly influencing key outcomes such as enhanced employee performance, increased customer satisfaction, stronger organisational commitment, and more active alignment with corporate objectives.

Farndale and Murrer (2015) adopt a multidimensional perspective, conceptualising employee engagement as the extent to which individuals invest themselves cognitively, physically, and emotionally in their work roles. This comprehensive form of involvement is considered essential for achieving sustained and meaningful performance outcomes.

Furthermore, Kuusisto (2024) posits that employees should be regarded as critical organisational assets, whose intellectual capital—comprising their knowledge, skills, and innovative capacity, constitutes a principal source of competitive advantage. From this standpoint, fostering employee engagement becomes a strategic imperative for organisations seeking to optimise their human capital and ensure long-term viability.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally proposed by Homans (1961) and later refined by Peffer (1982). Social Exchange Theory posits that human behaviour is inherently social and revolves around the exchange of both tangible and intangible resources between individuals. It suggests that individuals' compliance with expectations constitutes a form of exchange, wherein such compliance is dependent on the perceived reciprocation based on others' behaviour and actions.

In organisational settings, Social Exchange Theory emphasises that the exchange of ideas and opinions among individuals fosters opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience, particularly on job-related matters. Given that learning occurs within a social context, Social Exchange Theory offers a framework for understanding how new employees adapt to organisational environments. Through structured onboarding processes, including orientation, training, and integration, new employees can acquire the necessary skills and confidence to navigate their roles effectively while aligning with organisational norms and expectations.

According to Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2012), Social Exchange Theory serves as a robust explanatory model for various facets of the employee experience, such as engagement, confidence, and commitment. From this viewpoint, onboarding plays a key role in employee socialisation by transferring organisational knowledge, practices, and cultural values, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging and alignment with institutional objectives.

The theory further contends that the relationship between new employees and the organisation can evolve into one of mutual trust and commitment, provided both parties honour the norms of exchange. As Xanthopoulou et al. (2012) observe, equitable exchanges contribute to the development of healthy organisational relationships, which in turn support positive work behaviours. Under these conditions, new employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty and fulfil their responsibilities, especially when their contributions are acknowledged and rewarded by the organisation.

This analysis underscores the relevance of Social Exchange Theory in explaining the impact of onboarding on employee engagement. When onboarding is inadequately implemented, imbalances in the exchange relationship may arise, leading to role ambiguity, uncertainty, and a lack of clarity regarding organisational practices and standards. These imbalances can generate mistrust and dissatisfaction, particularly when organisational expectations are not supported by adequate resources and guidance.

In this regard, the theory offers a valuable theoretical lens for examining how employees perceive organisational support and how these perceptions influence their level of engagement.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Vilayil (2021) conducted a study to examine the potential impact of socialisation practices and onboarding on newcomers' adjustment and turnover intentions within the hospitality industry in Florida, USA. The researcher employed a survey research design and utilised a structured questionnaire to gather the opinions of 230 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings indicated that onboarding enhanced role clarity and adjustment, thereby improving employee performance. The study concluded that effective onboarding could influence newcomers' stability and their intention to remain with the organisation, as well as facilitate smoother role integration. It was recommended that onboarding be maintained as a strategic practice within Florida's hospitality sector to support the successful integration of new employees.

Mbiet-Edisua and Amah (2024) examined the nexus between onboarding practices and employee commitment in aviation agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to evaluate the relationship between communication and affective commitment, and to ascertain the relationship between communication and continuance commitment.A cross-sectional survey research design was employed for the study. The target population consisted of 168 middle- to top-level managers of aviation agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Krejcie and

Morgan's formula was utilised to determine a sample size of 128 respondents, and stratified random sampling was adopted. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level using a statistical model.The study revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between communication and affective commitment. A strong and significant relationship was also found between communication and continuance commitment. It was therefore recommended that managers of aviation agencies in Rivers State, Nigeria should foster communication by ensuring that employees were provided with initial information, resources, tools, and contacts necessary to succeed in their new roles, as this could significantly improve affective commitment. Moreover, managers should enhance the communication culture by ensuring that employees had access to timely and accurate information.

Chenji and Sode (2021) investigated the effect of onboarding on employee creativity and the moderating role of psychological empowerment. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of onboarding on employee creativity and to test whether psychological empowerment moderates the relationship between onboarding and perceived employee creativity among knowledge workers.The study adopted a survey research design. Data for the survey were collected from 550 knowledge workers across three firms in the service sector. A questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The model was analysed using ANOVA, the chi-square test, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics ; such as mean, and standard deviation were employed.The findings indicated that onboarding strongly influences employee creativity. Furthermore, onboarding was found to moderate the effect of psychological empowerment on employee creativity. It was recommended that organisations consider onboarding an important process in the early stages of employment, as it reduces the stress of starting a new job and provides employees with the basic information needed to carry out their responsibilities more proactively.

3 Methodology

A survey research design was employed for this study due to its effectiveness in facilitating the rapid and efficient collection of data from a large number of respondents. This design is particularly suitable for studies seeking to gather information across a defined population. The target population consisted of all 231 permanent staff members of six major deposit money banks operating in Akwa Ibom State: United Bank for Africa Plc, Access Bank Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, First Bank Plc, Ecobank Plc, and First City Monument Bank Plc. These banks were purposively selected because they represent key stakeholders in the Nigerian banking sector and maintain operational branches across the three senatorial districts of the state, ensuring a geographically representative sample. To determine an appropriate sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was applied, yielding a total of 158 respondents. The formula used is presented below:

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

Where:

n = Sample size
N = Population
e = Sampling error (0.05)
1 = Constant

Applying the formula:

$$\frac{231}{1+231\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{231}{1+231(0.0025)} = \frac{231}{1+0.462}$$

= 158.00 = 158

A convenience sampling method was employed in this study, targeting only permanent staff of selected banks who were readily available during the period of data collection. To ensure equitable representation across the study area, Akwa Ibom State was divided into its three senatorial districts, Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, and Eket. The distribution of questionnaires among respondents was guided by the proportional representation formula proposed by Cole (1964), as presented below:

$$H = \frac{y \times (n)}{N}$$

Where;
H = Proportionate Sample Size
y = Number of elements for each stratum
N = Total Population Size
n = Representative sample size derived for the study.

Table 3.1: Research Sampling

Name of Bank	Total Population	Proportionate Sample Size
Access Bank Plc	36	25
Ecobank Plc	33	23
First Bank Plc	48	33
First City Monument Bank	31	21
United Bank for Africa	40	27
Zenith Bank Plc	43	29
	231	158

Source: Researcher compilation,2025

The data for this study were obtained as primary data, collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' views on the research topic. The hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression. The following simple models were used in testing hypotheses, and the following simple models were used in testing hypotheses:

$EPE = a_1 + b_1SCI + e_1$ 3.1

$EPE = a_2 + b_2 FNI + e_2$ 3.2

Where: EPE represents Employee Engagement
a_1 – a_2 are the constants, b_1 - b_2 are regression coefficients of independent variables.
e_1 - e_2 error terms for equations
SCI= Social Integration
FNI =Functional Integration

4 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H_{01}: Social integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State

H_{i1}: Social integration has a significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State

Table 4.1: Regression Analyses Result on influence of Social Integration on Employee Engagement in Deposit Money Banks in Akwa Ibom State

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.628[a]	.394	.355	0.23786

B: Goodness of Fit of the Model[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.261	1	71.338	40.613	.000[b]
	Residual	29.715	112	.216		
	Total	64.976	113			

C: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.316	.102		1.832	1.208
	Social Integration	1.304	.397	.683	3.285	.000

a. Independent Variable: Social Integration
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Table 4.1 presents the results of the regression analysis examining the influence of social integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The generalised model summary showed an adjusted R^2 value of 0.355, indicating that social integration accounts for approximately 35.5% of the variation in employee engagement within these banks. The model also demonstrated a statistically significant goodness of fit ($p < 0.05$). The influence of social integration on employee engagement was statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Based on these results, the null hypothesis that social integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement was rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis, which posits that social integration has a significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State, was accepted. This finding suggests that social integration plays an important role in enhancing employee engagement within these institutions in the selected deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.The result is agreement with Euvouria (2021) who posits that social integration fosters opportunities for acceptance and inclusion within existing organisational networks, thereby enabling new employees to develop a strong sense of identification with the organization.

Hypothesis 2

Ho2: Functional integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State

Hi2: Functional integration has a significant positive effect on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.2: Regression Analysis Result on influence of Functional Integration on Employee Engagement in Deposit Money Banks in Akwa Ibom State

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.624[a]	.389	.350	0.61389

Goodness of Fit of the Model[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.523	1	52.571	31.309	.000[b]
	Residual	37.038	112	2.742		
	Total	83.561	113			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.518	1.409		.337	.704
	Functional Integration	1.463	.628	.942	2.330	.000

a. Independent Variable: Functional Integration
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Table 4.2 presents the results of a regression analysis on the influence of functional integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The generalised model summary indicated an adjusted R^2 value of 0.350, which implies that 35.0 percent of the variation in employee engagement can be explained by functional integration in these banks. The model also demonstrated a good fit at the 95 percent confidence level (p-value < 0.05). The influence of functional integration on employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State was statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level (p-value < 0.05). Based on these findings, the null hypothesis that functional integration has no significant positive effect on employee engagement—was rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis, which posits that functional integration has a significant positive effect on employee engagement, was accepted. This result suggests that functional integration plays a significant role in enhancing employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The findings is strengthened by Envouria (2021) argued that functional integration clarifies the roles expected of new employees, thereby empowering them and providing the necessary direction to perform their duties.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to investigate the impact of onboarding on employee engagement within deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State. The findings from the analysis reveal that the onboarding process exerts a significant positive effect on employee engagement in these institutions. In particular, the results from the tests of Hypotheses One and Two indicate that both social integration and functional integration significantly and positively influence employee engagement. Based on these findings, it is concluded that implementing effective social and functional integration strategies can significantly enhance employee engagement in deposit money banks across Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

i. that banks maintain the practice of socially integrating new employees, as this facilitates the development of valuable relationships that significantly enhance employee engagement within deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.
ii. that banks uphold the practice of functionally integrating new employees, thereby equipping them with essential knowledge of organisational processes and skills, which in turn fosters greater employee engagement in deposit money banks in Akwa Ibom State.

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