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The Impact of Corporate Governance on Employee Engagement in Ghana's Public Universities: An Analysis

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Abstract
This study investigates the relationship between corporate governance and employee engagement in Ghana's public universities, focusing on how governance practices influence trust, commitment, and motivation among employees. Corporate governance is operationalized through transparency, accountability, and participation, while employee engagement is measured by vigor, pride, and immersion in work. A quantitative research approach was employed, with data collected from 370 academic and administrative staff across 15 public universities. Results from multiple regression analysis indicate that transparency ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.05$) and participation ($\beta = 0.105$, $p < 0.05$) positively and significantly influence employee engagement, while accountability ($\beta = 0.033$, $p > 0.05$) is positively correlated but not statistically significant. Transparency and participation account for 4.8% of the variance in employee engagement (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.048$). Recommendations include strengthening transparency, promoting participatory decision-making, and enhancing accountability mechanisms to foster an engaged and motivated workforce.
Keywords – Accountability, Corporate Governance, Employee Engagement, Participation, Transparency, Trust
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INTRODUCTION

Corporate governance and employee engagement are two pivotal elements influencing the efficiency and sustainability of organizations, particularly in public institutions (de Oliveira, Ghobakhloo, & Figueira, (2023). In Ghana's public universities, effective governance frameworks are integral to fostering transparency, accountability, and participation among employees. However, existing studies present varying perspectives on the relationship between these constructs, necessitating further exploration within the context of higher education. According to Shodiq, and Mintawati, (2023), governance frameworks in universities often navigate the complexities of balancing diverse stakeholder interests, including governing councils, management, faculty, and students. This dynamic interplay underscores the need to investigate how governance structures impact employee engagement. Dethier, Delcourt, and Willems, (2023), emphasize that transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation are essential for improving organizational performance. Governance conflicts, arising from competing stakeholder interests, can create challenges that require strategic decision-making to resolve. Furthermore, Malhotra and Pachauri (2023), indicated that robust governance systems enhance business sustainability by promoting high levels of stakeholder engagement, especially among employees. Similarly, She and Michelon (2023) demonstrate that accountability measures tailored to stakeholder interests foster engagement, particularly in organizations prioritizing ethical norms and inclusivity.In public service contexts, governance has been shown to improve productivity and engagement. Susanto, Syailendra, and Suryawan, (2023), found that governance builds trust, which serves as a foundation for enhanced employee engagement. Ndjama, and Van Der Westhuizen, (2023) argue that democratic leadership styles amplify the positive effects of governance on engagement, highlighting the importance of participatory decision-making in fostering organizational commitment. Employee engagement is broadly defined as the degree to which employees are emotionally and cognitively connected to their organization and its objectives. Saks (2022) describes engagement as the simultaneous application of mental, physical, and emotional resources to achieve work goals. Hence engaged employees align their efforts with organizational values and objectives, contributing to enhanced innovation, productivity, and loyalty (Riyanto , Endri, & Herlisha,2021; Kpohanu, 2023). Employee engagement is further characterized by three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Similarly, De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez (2021) emphasize that vigor, dedication, and absorption are critical indicators of engagement, reflecting employees' energy and focus at work. Despite its significance, employee engagement within Ghana's higher education sector remains underexplored. Existing literature highlights key drivers of engagement, including opportunities for professional development, effective communication, and motivational frameworks (King, Taylor, Talpur, Jackson, Manley, Ashby,..& Robertson, 2021;Susanto, Syailendra, & Suryawan 2023). Engaged employees benefit organizations by reducing turnover, building trust, and strengthening organizational competitiveness (Rameshkumar, 2020). This study conceptualizes employee engagement as the psychological and emotional investment of employees in their work and organization, focusing on the role of governance in shaping this investment. This research aims to bridge the gap in understanding the relationship between corporate governance and employee engagement in Ghana's public universities. By examining governance components such as transparency, accountability, and participation, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for fostering a highly engaged workforce capable of advancing institutional goals.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between corporate governance and that of employee engagement in Ghana's public universities.
Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. Evaluate the relationship between corporate governance and employee engagement in Ghana's public universities

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between corporate governance and employee engagement in Ghana's public universities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance guides managers in decision making (Alabdullah Ahmed, & Kanaan-Jebna, 2022; Almashhadan, 2021). Corporate governance is the framework of policies, procedures, and guidelines that govern how an organization is run (Alabdullah, Ahmed, & Kanaan-Jebna, 2022). It includes all of the systems that businesses use to communicate and do business with its stakeholders, with the goal of ensuring ethical behaviour, accountability, fairness, and transparency in decision-making (Lund & Pollman, 2021). Furthermore, the functions and responsibilities of the board of directors, management, shareholders, and other stakeholders are often included in corporate governance frameworks, along with procedures for supervision, risk management, and legal and regulatory compliance. Enhancing the company's long-term value for its shareholders is the ultimate purpose of corporate governance, which also takes wider social expectations and the interests of other stakeholders into account (Karpoff, 2021).Furthermore, the term corporate governance is defined in the context of this study as the system of rules, practises, processes by which a firm is directed and controlled as indicated by Jan, Lai, and Tahir, (2021). All the guidelines and procedures that govern decision-making and shows the way to go in order to accomplish business corporate goals and, subsequently, determine how to do so, as well as how to gauge the outcomes attained is what is referred to as corporate governance (Wahyuni-TD, Haron, & Fernando, 2021). Some advantages of corporate governance as found in extant literature include enhanced accountability and enhanced performance. Enhanced accountability is the transparency, accountability, and integrity in decision-making processes are all facilitated by good corporate governance. Management is more likely to act in the shareholders' and stakeholders' best interests when there are clear reporting structures and oversight procedures in place (Alabdullah, Ahmed, & Kanaan-Jebna, 2022; Almashhadan, 2021). In addition, enhanced performance, the long-term sustainability and enhanced financial performance have been associated with effective corporate governance procedures. Strong governance frameworks help businesses manage risks, take advantage of opportunities, and adjust to shifting market conditions (Dewi, Saraswati, Rahman, & Atmini, 2024) In addition, corporate governance enhances the reputation of a company, boosts investor confidence, and reduces the likelihood of fraud as indicated in a study by Andayani, and Wuryantoro, (2023). In summary, the definition of the conceptual elements of corporate governance is as follows: an appropriate system of governance for businesses that encompasses the relationships between management, owners, employees, and other relevant parties; it is founded on legal, moral, reasonable, efficient, and socially beneficial means of pursuing profit-oriented operations; it is governed by legal provisions as well as self-regulatory mechanisms within the market and business sector according to a study by Majewska, (2023).

Transparency

One fundamental tenet of corporate governance is transparency. It comprises informing stakeholders on the company's performance, finances, risks, and decision-making procedures in a clear, accurate, and timely manner (Chen, & Ganapati, 2023). Transparent procedures build confidence and trust while empowering investors and shareholders to make educated decisions. Consistent and thorough disclosure fosters transparency and boosts the organization's credibility as propagated in a study by Handayani, Sholihin, Pratolo, and Rahmawati, (2022); Kim, 2023). There are some steps to creating a transparent culture within the company as reported by Harrer, (2023), they include be truthful; prompt individuals to confront authority with the truth; honour those who disagree; get comfortable having awkward talks; use a variety of information sources; own up to errors; and increase organizational commitment to openness.

Accountability

According to Jerab, and Mabrouk, (2023), within the framework of corporate governance, accountability is the duty of individuals or groups to accept accountability for their choices and actions. This means having to answer to stakeholders for these decisions and actions as well as for the process of recording them. Important factors in establishing accountability include the board's decision-making culture, official and informal structures and conventions, and interactions both inside and outside the boardroom. Kimani, D., Ullah, Kodwani, and Akhtar, (2021) as well as Shekhar, Jose, and Anbumozhi, (2022), adopted accountability as measures of corporate governance and suggests that accountability has significant effect on the performance of organizations. Dethier, Delcourt, and Willems, (2023), as well as Klausen and Winsvold (2021) submit that corporate governance is a system of being accountable to the stakeholders of an organization. In the public sector, efficient and effective governance is essential for ensuring quality service delivery and resource accountability. There is a moral obligation to corporate employees as well as a fiduciary accountability to shareholders, thus it is important to figure out how to carry out both duties as efficiently as possible (Loewenstein, & Geyer, 2021).

Participation

Participation has been identified as a basic principle of corporate governance (Saygili, Arslan, & Birkan, 2022). It is the involvement in the process of decision making, financial plans, the inclusion of different stakeholders in a company's decision-making processes and oversight is referred to as participation in corporate governance. It includes the various ways that stakeholders influence the organization's practices, policies, and strategic orientation as indicated by Uvarova, Atstaja, Volkova, Grasis, and Ozolina-Ozola, (2023).Corporate governance involves participation of key stakeholders in the business decision making process. The final goal of the company's excellent governance is to improve its value as cited by Affes, and Jarboui, (2023) and to make sure that individuals who make direct or indirect contributions to its creation can benefit from this increase in value. Badir and Qaud (2024) posit that the right of all stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization, to actively participate in the process of making decisions by taking part in the planning, creation, and assessment of organizational policies, laws, strategies, procedures, and service offerings is known as the principle of participation. It describes how institutional channels are opened up to allow people in society to openly voice their ideas (Chu, Lam, & Williams, 2023).The corporate governance structure outlines the procedures and rules for making decisions on corporate matters as well as the rights and responsibilities that are assigned to the various members of the corporation, including the board, managers, shareholders, and other interested parties as indicated by Freeman, (2023).The right to participate in the control process strengthens stakeholders' involvement in the business. Participation in corporate governance involves the extent to which stakeholders, such as shareholders, employees, and board members, are engaged in decision-making processes.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is described as the sentimental attachment and bond that workers have with their company and its objectives, it is the concurrent use of a person's mental, physical, and emotional resources to active, comprehensive work performance (Saks, 2022;Ngozi, & Edwinah, 2022), in order to succeed. Employees that are engaged in the company and want to work for the organization's general improvement are those who perform their roles in the company very well Susanto, (2022). Employees that are engaged are excited about their work, committed to the company's goals, and in line with defined employee engagement as employee's dedication and desire, it is their readiness to step up and make extra efforts to support businesses its values. They typically provide superior business results because they are more inventive, devoted, and productive. Employee engagement pertains to the level of dedication and commitment exhibited by workers towards their job and organization. An employee who is engaged is in harmony and has a strong emotional bond with the organization's vision and mission, which define and direct the employee's participation in the goals of the company. An engaged worker will approach their task with a progressive mindset, enhancing the organization's reputation and worth. Companies foster work cultures that reward and foster strong employee engagement, and motivated employees welcome all forms of assistance from their companies (Urme, 2023; Saks, 2022). Research on employee engagement examined its extent in various contexts therefore, the drivers of engagement have not yet developed into a single description (Canavesi, & Minelli, 2022; Rameshkumar, 2020). A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigor, dedication, and absorption fits well the concept of employee engagement (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021). Engagement is a more pervasive and lasting affective–cognitive state that is not focused on any one item, event, person, or behaviour, as opposed to a transient and specific state. The degree to which workers experience positive activation is referred to as employee engagement. More precisely, it calls for a certain amount of vigor, commitment, and focus at work. Employee engagement is further characterized by trust and commitment Abuzaid, Ghadi, Madadha, & Alateeq, (2024). Further, Jerónimo, Henriques, and Carvalho, (2022), opined that employee engagement is characterised by a high degree of pleasure and stimulation. They put forth the measure of employee engagement as vigor, commitment, and absorption. Nagpal, (2022) also submitted that employee engagement is a multidimensional concept that is measured based on the context or use. Furthermore, Saks (2022) measured employee engagement via cognitive dimension, emotional dimension and behavioural dimension. A number of elements play a part in employee engagement, including opportunities for professional development, communication, motivation, and job satisfaction Huaman, Morales-García, Castillo-Blanco, Saintila, Huancahuire-Vega Morales-García,... & Palacios-Fonseca, (2023).The need to move from satisfied to committed employees drives the focus on employee engagement (Sypniewska, Baran, & Kłos, 2023). The advantages of employee engagement are that it strengthens the firm's ability to compete while also improving their reputation because it lowers the staff churn rate in businesses. The implication of these advantages are that motivated staff members either directly or indirectly present a favourable picture of their firm because of their dedication, which creates the perception of a trustworthy business (Shatila, Agyei, & Aloulou, 2024). In addition, other benefits of employee engagement is that it improves the relationship between employees and their superiors leading to higher trust, and motivation. Employers or agencies need to take into account employee engagement as a foundation for strengthening areas of weakness and improving areas of strength in order to boost employee productivity levels as well as the development of employees that leads to improved performance (Susanto, Syailendra, & Suryawan, 2023).

Trust

In many aspects of human life, trust is essential, but it's especially important in organizations. An organization cannot function or expand without trust since it impacts employee performance at work (Santoso Sulistyaningtyas, & Pratama, 2023). Hence, trust is defined as the belief that an agent will assist a person in achieving their objectives in an unpredictable and vulnerable circumstance as cited by Kox, Kerstholt, Hueting, and de Vries, (2021). Trust connotes ability, integrity, and vigor. Trust as a measure of employee engagement is conceptualized as the degree to which an employee is thought to wish to act in the best interests of the organization, independent of any financial gain; synonyms include openness, loyalty, caring, or supportiveness. Saks (2022) refers to trust as vigor demonstrated at the job by employees. Trust is defended as the great vitality and mental toughness when working. Hence, trust should be placed on who is trustworthy so as to strengthen employee engagement. In the context of employee engagement, trust is defined as the extent to which employees feel secure in the organizational environment, believing that their efforts will be reasonably evaluated, and that they are safe from illogical treatment.

Commitment

Al Mamari, and Groves, (2023) defined commitment as an energetic, committed, and absorbed state of mind that is positive and gratifying in relation to one's task. Similarly, organizational commitment is the belief that the organization's policies and declarations are true, as well as the desire on the part of the employee to be connected to that organization as propagated by Anand, Dalmasso, Vessal, Parameswar, Rajasekar, and Dhal, (2023). An individual who is extremely engaged will exhibit extraordinary dedication and participation towards their organization and its principles (Goel & Rashmi, 2023). Commitment can be categorized into affective, continuance and normative commitment according to Al Balushi, Thumiki, Nawaz, Jurcic, and Gajenderan, (2022). Affective commitment is the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Since employees source of engagement are their organizations, engaged employees feel obligated to have a socio-emotional attachment to it (Goel & Rashmi, 2023). In addition, commitment encourage employees to achieve their goal and provide the fundamental demands of motivation for competence, social connection, and autonomy (Albrecht, Green & Marty, 2021)

Motivation

According to Ogunode, & Ibrahim, (2023), it is the motivation that propels someone to take action and accomplish a goal. The motivation for one's engagement with a task or work is this inspiration. Motivation types could either be extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. One way to conceptualise motivation is as a condition that affects a person's ability to make decisions and incorporates attitudes, needs, and perceptions as indicated by Linggiallo, Riadi, Hariyadi, and Adhimursandi,(2021). Motivation types are of two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Motivation is also at varying degrees and levels as seen in the Abraham Maslow's theory which shows that as basic needs are met, higher levels of need are initiated (Gan, Liu, & Nang, 2023). Motivation is the ability to perform at a certain level and in a certain direction. It includes a high level of passion and perseverance to accomplish a task at work with a variety of options for the choice of certain solutions. When someone acts because they find something fascinating or enjoyable to do, they are motivated by their intrinsic desires (Goel & Rashmi, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) serves as the anchoring theoretical construct that guides the understanding of the relationships among the study's principal variables: talent management, corporate governance, organizational ethics, and employee engagement. The choice of social exchange theory which serves as the foundation theory is motivated by its vigorous explanatory power in depicting how relationships within the work environment transform over time into bonds characterized by trust, loyalty, and a mutual sense of responsibility, reliant upon adherence to the principles of reciprocity (Su, Ko, Linn, Ko, Lwin, & Oo, 2024). The precision of social exchange theory in this research setting arises from its elaborate understanding of reciprocity and mutual commitment. When organizations engage in effective talent management practices, they basically make an investment in their human capital that creates a psychological contract between the employer and the employee. The employee, recognizing the investment made, feels an innate responsibility to reciprocate. This sense of responsibility often exhibits itself in the form of improved productivity, higher turnover, and an enhanced state of engagement within the organizational setting as cited by Low, and Spong, (2022). Rendering this to the domain of corporate governance, social exchange theory offers a theoretical basis for grasping how ethical leadership and transparent governance mechanisms breed a culture of trust and mutual respect. Leaders serve as the moral compass of the organization, and when they display ethical behavior and engage in transparent governance, they set a standard that employees feel compelled to meet as propagated by Obuba, (2023) during a study. Hence, governance structures that accentuate ethical conduct and transparency provide an environment where employees feel a moral and psychological responsibility to reciprocate with ethical behaviour, increased engagement, and a commitment to organizational goals. Furthermore, social exchange theory is intensely educative when applied to the construct of perceived organizational ethics. According to the theory, leaders are the primary vectors of ethical guidelines within the workplace. Their actions and decisions set the ethical climate, affecting how employees perceive the organization's moral framework (Remington, 2023). In an environment where leaders are ethical, employees are more disposed to engage in ethical behaviour themselves, not purely as a form of compliance but as an act of reciprocation for the ethical conduct they observe and experience Obuba, (2023).The dependent variable of interest, employee engagement, can be impeccably incorporated into this theoretical framework. From the perspective of social exchange theory, employee engagement is not a solitary construct but rather a form of reciprocation. When employees feel that their organization values and supports them, the sense of commitment to reciprocate is stimulated. This sense of responsibility, in turn, leads to boosted levels of engagement, as employees feel a moral and psychological desire to contribute positively to the organization that has invested in their well-being Aubouin-Bonnaventure, Chevalier, Lahiani, & Fouquereau, (2024). Overall, social exchange theory offers a vital theoretical framework for this study. It does not only expound how mutual responsibilities between an organization and its employees could accelerate varying degrees of engagement but also provides a robust theoretical foundation for exploring the mediating effects of perceived organizational ethics on the relationship between talent management and corporate governance. By establishing social exchange theory as the anchor theory, this research stands on a well-regarded theoretical foundation, enabling a nuanced understanding of complex organizational phenomena.

Empirical Review

Corporate Governance and Employee Engagement

Studies on corporate governance and employee engagement differs in findings and begs for further understanding especially within the context of public universities in Ghana. Emeka-Okoli, Nwankwo, Otonnah, and Nwankwo, (2024) in their findings on corporate governance revealed that transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement are required for better organizational performance. Further, conflicts between stakeholders with conflicting interests can occur, forcing businesses to handle difficult and frequently delicate situations. Higher levels of corporate governance yield better business sustainability through high level of engagement of all stakeholders, specifically the employees, to improve their performance (Malhotra & Pachauri, 2023). She and Michelon (2023) found that the degree to which a sustainable enterprise's legal purpose incorporates stakeholder interests is positively correlated with stakeholder participation. In addition, Engagement from stakeholders is positively correlated with how much the sustainable enterprise incorporates ethical norms. Lastly, the degree to which a sustainable firm has implemented purpose-specific accountability procedures is positively correlated with stakeholder engagement (MacLean, & Titah, 2022). Other studies by Ngampravatdee, Gharehbaghi, Hosseinian-Far, Tee, and McManus, 2023; Zahari, & Kaliannan, (2023), revealed that governance significantly improves productivity and employee engagement in the public service, they also found that governance improves trust, which is captured in this study as a measure of employee engagement. Koeswayo, Handoyo, and Abdul Hasyir, (2024) study showed that corporate governance significantly and positively predicts employee engagement. They also found that democratic leadership style increases the effect of corporate governance on employee engagement.

Based on the conceptual and empirical literature, the following is hypothesized:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Corporate Governance and Employee Engagement.

Given the previous reviews, the following conceptual framework for the study was developed, as illustrated in Figure 1, showing the independent variable (Corporate Governance) and the dependent variable (employee engagement)

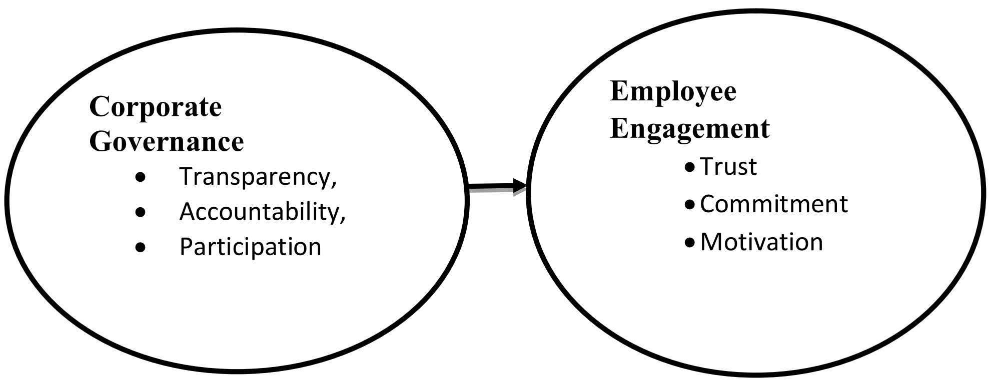

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The positivist viewpoint forms the basis of this study's epistemological framework. Smith (2021) defines epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and how it is obtained. This study took a positivist approach, focusing on objective observations and empirical facts as the main sources of trustworthy and legitimate findings as indicated by Kellam, and Jennings, (2021). This decision is in perfect harmony with the dissertation's main objective, which is to examine the complex connections among employee engagement and corporate governance in the framework of Ghanaian public institutions. A key component of positivist philosophy, data collection and analysis, is the foundation of this study's methodology, which aims to illuminate these important aspects of organizational dynamics cited in a study by Dawadi, Shrestha, and Giri, (2021).

Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed a mixed-method approach as indicated by Taherdoost, (2022), to explore the relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics in Ghana's public universities. This approach was selected to provide a comprehensive analysis, combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected to establish measurable relationships between the variables (Musheke, & Phiri, 2021), while qualitative insights provided deeper context and understanding as cited by Porath, (2023), of the dynamics between corporate governance and employee engagement. According to Tatiparti, Mahajan, Reddi, Aancy, & Kumar, (2023), the quantitative aspect utilized a survey research design, which is effective for collecting essential information such as beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of respondents. The study variables were measured using structured questionnaires distributed to academic and administrative staff across Ghana's public universities. Respondents were required to meet a minimum educational qualification of an undergraduate degree to ensure the relevance and reliability of responses. Hence Paliwal, and Singh, (2021) propounded that, data collection involved a structured questionnaire designed to measure the core constructs of the study. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information, corporate governance, and employee engagement. On the other hand, Naz, Gulab, and Aslam, (2022), indicated in a study that the qualitative component of the study involved semi-structured interviews with faculty members, administrative staff, and management representatives. These interviews were designed to complement the survey findings by providing in-depth perspectives on the ethical implications of corporate governance practices. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, identifying patterns and insights that enriched the quantitative results (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, & Ranfagni, 2023).

Sample Frame

The total estimated population for the study was 22,578, comprising all academic and administrative staff in public universities, as reported by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) in 2020. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 15 universities across various geographical zones, ensuring fair representation. From these institutions, 370 staff members were randomly selected as respondents, representing diverse roles and perspectives within the universities.

Instrument Used

The instrumentation for this study was a structured questionnaire adapted designed to collect data relevant to the research objectives. Part 1 of the instrumentation focused on the demographic characteristics of the participants/respondents, including variables such as gender, age, level of education, period of employment (in years), the nature of the organization, and marital status of the respondents. According to Fife-Schaw, (2020), the demographic profile of respondents is crucial for understanding the background of the participants and providing a context for their responses. The following paragraphs describe the composition of the questionnaire according to the objectives of the study. Part two delved into key indicators of the study area, including subsections on corporate governance, and employee engagement. Each of these sections were adapted from various authors as referenced therein and contains a series of statements related to the topic that respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement or otherwise on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Following the research recommendations of Zolotov, Reznik, Bender, & Isralowitz, (2020) in the study, the likert-type scale approach is a common method for measuring attitudes and perceptions.

Corporate Governance: The CG section of the questionnaire consisted of items related to Transparency, Accountability, and Participation. This section of the questionnaire was adapted from the works of other researchers (Jadara, & Al-Wadi, 2021); Maswadeh Jadara, & Al-Wadi, 2021).
The aim of this key indicator was to assess the direct and indirect effects that corporate governance has on employee engagement. This was crucial to addressing the research objective one of the study.
Employee Engagement: The EE section of the questionnaire consisted of items related for employee engagement which focused on Trust, Motivation and Commitment were adapted from (Vorina, Simonič, & Vlasova, 2017); Verčič, 2021).

RESULTS

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between talent management practices and perceived organizational ethics within Ghana's public universities. By examining the demographic composition of respondents, perceptions of talent management practices, and the ethical climate, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how these variables interact to shape organizational culture. Quantitative analysis, supported by figures and tables, highlights key trends and relationships, while the discussion integrates theoretical perspectives to contextualize the results. The demographic data revealed that the majority of respondents (82.16%) were male, while 17.84% were female, reflecting a male-dominant workforce in Ghana's public universities. This gender imbalance suggests the need for policies promoting diversity and inclusivity. Age distribution showed that most respondents were within the 30–50 age range, highlighting the prevalence of mid-career professionals in these institutions. Educational qualifications indicated that all participants met the minimum criterion of holding an undergraduate degree, with a significant proportion holding advanced degrees, underscoring the high academic qualifications characteristic of the university workforce. Respondents' perceptions of employee engagement practices were measured across several variables, capturing aspects such as trust, commitment and motivation. Table 1 summarizes the results, highlighting the levels of agreement and disagreement for each variable.

Table 1: Employee Engagement Variables (N = 370)

Variable	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Mean ± SD
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	24.86	13.78	61.35	3.7 ± 1.43
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	11.35	6.22	82.44	4.0 ± 1.20
I work until the job is done	7.57	5.14	87.29	4.3 ± 1.10
I work with less supervision	14.06	4.59	81.35	4.0 ± 1.15
I am proud of the work I do	6.22	12.43	81.35	4.3 ± 1.10
When I am working, I forget everything else	26.48	7.30	66.21	3.6 ± 1.41
I feel happy when I am working intensely	11.62	14.05	74.32	3.8 ± 1.22
I am immersed in my work	8.92	13.78	77.29	3.9 ± 1.12
I really put my heart into my job	6.22	19.46	74.33	4.1 ± 1.10
I am enthusiastic about my job	14.60	9.19	76.22	4.1 ± 1.29
My job inspires me	5.68	22.97	71.35	4.2 ± 1.14
I get carried away when I'm working	26.21	10.54	63.24	3.5 ± 1.37
I get financial reward for working	26.22	8.92	64.87	3.5 ± 1.46
I derive inner satisfaction from my job	5.68	20.54	73.78	4.0 ± 1.06
Overall Average	-	-	-	**3.9 ± 1.23**

The relationship between corporate governance components (transparency, accountability, and participation) and employee engagement was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The regression results revealed that transparency ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.05$) and participation ($\beta = 0.105$, $p < 0.05$) have significant and positive effects on employee engagement. Accountability, although positively correlated ($\beta = 0.033$), was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that while transparency and participation are critical drivers of engagement, accountability mechanisms in their current form do not substantially influence engagement levels. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.048 indicates that 4.8% of the variance in employee engagement can be explained by the governance components examined, with the remaining variance attributed to other factors not captured in the model. The regression model is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Summary

Model	B	Sig.	T	Adjusted R²	F (3,366)	p-value
Transparency	0.145	0.002	3.094	0.048	7.140	0.000
Accountability	0.033	0.395	0.851			
Participation	0.105	0.010	2.581			
Constant	2.974	0.000	13.883			

The analysis shows that transparency ($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.05$) and participation ($\beta = 0.105$, $p < 0.05$) have significant and positive effects on employee engagement. In contrast, accountability ($\beta = 0.033$, $p > 0.05$) is positively correlated but not statistically significant. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.048 indicates that 4.8% of the variance in employee engagement can be explained by the independent variables (transparency, accountability, and participation). The remaining variance is attributed to factors not included in the model. The predictive and prescriptive models derived from the regression analysis are expressed as follows:

1. Predictive Model: $EE = 2.974 + 0.145TP + 0.033ACT + 0.105PP + U_i$
2. Prescriptive Model: $EE = 0.145TP + 0.105PP + U_i$

Where:

EE: Employee Engagement

TP: Transparency

ACT: Accountability

PP: Participation

U_i: Error Term

DISCUSSIONS

These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the importance of transparency and participation in fostering trust and commitment among employees. Dethier, Delcourt, & Willems, (2023) emphasize that transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation are essential for improving organizational performance. Participation enhances employee ownership and motivation, making individuals feel valued and included in institutional processes. An engaged worker will approach their task with a progressive mindset, enhancing the organization's reputation and worth. Companies foster work cultures that reward and foster strong employee engagement, and motivated employees welcome all forms of assistance from their companies (Urme, 2023). However, the limited contribution of accountability raises questions about its implementation and suggests the need for reforms (Naik, Hameed, Shetty, Swain, Shah, Paul, & Somani, 2022), to make these mechanisms more effective and relevant to employee expectations These results underscore the critical role of robust governance frameworks in fostering a motivated and engaged workforce. The findings also highlight the necessity for universities to prioritize transparency and participatory practices while addressing weaknesses in accountability structures to enhance overall engagement and organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This study showed a strong positive correlation between employee engagement at Ghana's public universities and corporate governance. Employee engagement was higher at universities with strong and inclusive corporate governance, which was defined by accountability, openness, and fairness. Additionally, staff engagement in Ghana's public universities is greatly impacted by corporate governance. On the other hand, poor governance procedures lead to lower morale, increased turnover, and employee disengagement. Universities should also use staff surveys to evaluate these mechanisms' efficacy on a regular basis and use the results to improve their accountability procedures. By doing this, organizations can close the gap between employee expectations and governance practices, which will ultimately lead to a more motivated and engaged staff.

Implications of the findings

The results of this study have important ramifications for the government, Ghanaian public university administrators, and scholars.

Implication to Government:

In order to increase employee involvement levels in the form of trust, dedication, and motivation in Ghana's public universities, the government should use corporate governance systems that emphasize transparency, accountability, and participation. Additionally, in order to increase the levels of employee inclusion seen in the industry, the government should encourage participation from all stakeholders, particularly employees.

Implication to Heads of the Public Universities in Ghana

To encourage greater levels of employee involvement, Ghanaian public university administrators should deliberately uphold a high standard of corporate governance. Workers' willingness and desire for responsibility, openness, and involvement are being tapped into. Public university administrators ought to be willing to include staff members in strategic planning and decision-making.

Implication for Academics

Further research on the impact of talent management on perceived corporate ethics can build on the findings of this study. For this reason, this study contributes to the corpus of knowledge on the relationship between these significant variables that researchers can use to enhance their analysis.

Contributions to Knowledge

Conceptual Contribution

The study's emphasis on the complexity of corporate governance and employee engagement makes a substantial conceptual contribution. The conceptual framework this study offered closed the information gap regarding the role that corporate governance and employee engagement play as mediators. A novel conceptual framework that connects corporate governance with human resource management is presented in this paper.

Theoretical Contribution

The relationship between employee engagement and corporate governance in Ghanaian public universities was examined in this study. There is a stronger correlation between successful employee engagement and corporate governance than has been previously shown. The results enhance staff involvement and corporate governance in Ghana's public universities. Secondly, the results help to clarify the connection between corporate governance and employee engagement.

Empirical Contribution

This study contributes to the body of empirical research on the relationship between corporate governance and employee engagement in Ghana's public universities and its mediating influence. This study demonstrated that corporate governance and employee engagement are positively correlated. It offers practical insight into the opportunities and difficulties related to these practices by presenting a case study of Ghanaian public universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations based on the findings of the study:

i. To increase employee involvement, Ghanaian public institutions should implement corporate governance procedures that are customized to meet their unique requirements.

ii. Because corporate governance and employee engagement are positively and significantly correlated, the government should embrace openness, accountability, and involvement as these practices will boost employee engagement through incentive, trust, and commitment.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The results of this study might not be as widely applicable as they could be in other places because it was limited to public universities in Ghana. However, as that was the aim of the study, this limitation had no effect on the objectives, which were fully met. The fact that this study only collected data at one point in time hampered its ability to ascertain causality across time. But since this was well within the scope of the study, that was the goal that was established. The lack of longitudinal data makes it challenging to identify patterns, causality, and the sustainability of the benefits associated with corporate governance and employee engagement. Through longitudinal studies, researchers should be able to track changes over time to gain a better understanding of how these strategies improve long-term levels of corporate governance and employee engagement. However, this goal was achieved because one of the study's objectives was to collect data at a certain moment.

Suggestions for further studies

Future studies could incorporate other nations and research environments in addition to the public institutions in Ghana that were used for this one. Future studies could also incorporate more indicators pertaining to corporate governance and employee engagement in order to broaden the scope of their conclusions. Furthermore, because the current study only employed a cross-sectional survey, panel studies ought to be taken into account in subsequent research to examine how these practices affect organizational performance over the long term.

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