

## Impact of Employee Engagement On Service Quality in Nigerian Public Agencies

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigates the connection between employee engagement and service quality in the Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON), which is a key player in Nigeria's financial sector. This study examines three key dimensions of employee engagement – absorption, vigor, and dedication – and their effects on service quality, specifically focusing on the responsiveness dimension of the SERVQUAL model. This study is important because there is a lack of representation of AMCON and similar institutions in the existing literature, particularly within the context of Nigeria's unique financial landscape. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach that included quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with AMCON employees. The analysis employed the SERVQUAL model to evaluate service quality and multiple regression analysis to explore the influence of each engagement dimension. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the impact of employee engagement on service quality within the asset management sector. Additionally, this study aims to provide practical insights for AMCON, potentially improving service delivery strategies and effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate. The broader implications of this study extend to similar asset management entities in emerging economies, providing a comparative perspective, and understanding of these dynamics in diverse economic and regulatory environments.*

**KEYWORDS:** employee engagement, service quality, asset management company, Nigeria, Servqual model, absorption, vigor, dedication, responsiveness.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON) plays a crucial role in stabilizing Nigeria's financial sector, a fact that is widely acknowledged. However, there has been a limited examination of the internal factors that contribute to AMCON's effectiveness of AMCON. One such factor is the connection between employee engagement and service quality, which has

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significant implications for the asset-management industry. In this context, employee engagement directly impacts the quality of the services provided, which in turn affects client satisfaction and trust, ultimately influencing the success of asset recovery and management. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating how AMCON's employee engagement, specifically in terms of absorption, vigor, and dedication, affects service quality. The analysis is not only crucial for enhancing AMCON's operations, but also contributes to the global understanding of employee engagement in asset management, providing insights that could be relevant to similar institutions worldwide. Despite the recognized importance of service quality in the asset management industry and AMCON's pivotal role in Nigeria's financial sector, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the specific dynamics of the relationship between employee engagement and service quality within the unique context of AMCON. While the importance of engaged employees in delivering high-quality services is widely recognized across industries, the specific factors that contribute to this relationship in the specialized context of an asset management company have not been extensively explored.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between employee engagement and service quality in the AMCON context. Service quality is a vital aspect of the asset management industry and is characterized by trust, precision, and customer satisfaction. Asset management firms are entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding and enhancing their clients' wealth, and the quality of their services directly affects customer trust, loyalty, and success. Maintaining elevated service quality standards is of utmost importance in volatile and intricate financial markets. Clients not only expect financial acumen but also assert that their interests are a top priority. Consequently, understanding and enhancing service quality are essential for AMCON to preserve its reputation, attract new clients, and ensure its long-term viability. This study explores the relationship between employee engagement and service quality within AMCON, focusing on absorption, vigor, and dedication as independent variables and responsiveness as the dependent variable. This study aims to provide practical insights to improve AMCON's service delivery and effectively fulfill its mandate in the Nigerian financial landscape. The broad objective of this study is to assess the Impact of Employee Engagement on Service Quality of Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON), a government agency. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the impact of absorption on service quality in AMCON?
- ii. investigate the impact of vigour on service quality in AMCON?
- iii. explore the impact of dedication on service quality in AMCON?

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H01: Absorption has no significant influence on service quality in Nigeria's asset management companies.

H02: Vigor has no significant impact on service quality within AMCON operations.

H03: Dedication is not significantly correlated with service quality in AMCON.

## **LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Employee engagement**

In 1990, Kahn was the first to introduce the concept of "work engagement" (Saks, 2006; May et al., 2004). According to Kahn (1990), work engagement is defined as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in the task behaviors that promote engagement to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performance" (p. 700). Since then, work engagement has garnered significant attention from both business organizations and academics. Building on Kahn's ideas, Saks (2006) identified two types of personal engagement: job engagement and organizational engagement. Similarly, Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) stated that "employee engagement is a broader concept and may also include the relationship with the employee's professional or occupational role and with his or her organization" (p. 40). However, this study prefers to use the term "work engagement," which some refer to as "job engagement" (Saks, 2006) or "work engagement" (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2011), while Saks (2017) used these terms interchangeably. According to Meriläinen et al. (2019), engagement is a multifaceted construct that can be defined by several key factors such as vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is characterized by employees' high levels of energy and mental resilience, as well as their willingness to overcome obstacles and invest in their work. Dedication, on the other hand, is exemplified by high levels of professionalism, enthusiasm, and sense of meaningfulness in one's work. This is accompanied by a strong sense of involvement and feelings of significance, pride, and challenges. Finally, absorption refers to a state of intense focus and concentration on work, where an individual becomes so absorbed in their work that they lose track of time and find it difficult to detach, as described by Schaufeli et al. (2002).

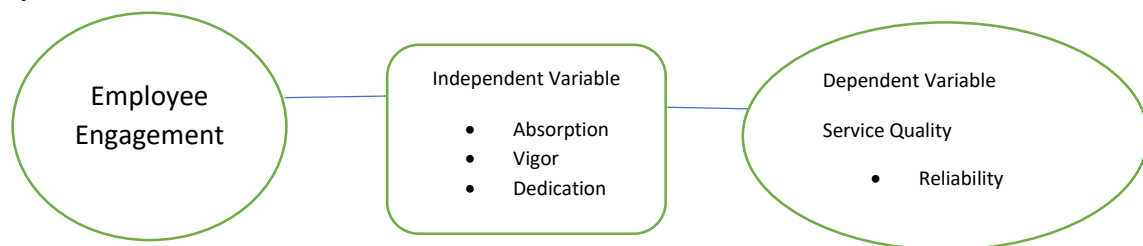
### **Measuring Employee Engagement**

According to Bharath and Sreedevi (2020), the Employee Quality Service Perception Engagement Satisfaction Scale (EQSPES) is a comprehensive 40-item questionnaire designed to assess the relationship between employee engagement, employee quality service perception, and employee satisfaction using a five-point Likert scale. The development of the scale was informed by the physical, cognitive, and emotional components of employee engagement as outlined by William Khan (1990), the SERVE QUAL components of tangible, assurance, reliable, responsiveness, and empathy as proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985,1988,1994), and the satisfaction components of sense of belongingness and contribution as identified by Harter et al. (2002). The researcher carefully crafted the variables for each component based on the existing literature. The scale comprises 12 items for engagement, 22 items for QSP from the employee's perspective, and six items for satisfaction. The scale's reliability and validity have been extensively tested and are reported in the appendices, including its internal consistency reliability, composite reliability, content validity, and construct validity. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), work engagement is a positive and fulfilling mental state comprising three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental toughness while working; dedication is characterized by a sense of purpose and being fully immersed in one's work; and absorption is defined as being fully absorbed and content with one's activities, with time passing quickly, and a sense of separation being

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK impossible. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the most commonly used self-report questionnaire to assess work engagement, measures job involvement using three scales. Examples of items from the scale include "At work, I am brimming with enthusiasm," "I find the work that I perform full of meaning and purpose," and "When I am working, I forget everything else around me." When employees are engaged, they are more likely to be proactive, take ownership of their work, and collaborate effectively with colleagues. This ultimately leads to higher levels of productivity, creativity, and overall organizational success. By nurturing employee engagement, organizations can tap into the full potential of their workforce and create a culture of innovation that sets them apart from their competitors.

### Service Quality

The influence of service quality on employee satisfaction has been established (Lee et al., 2012), and linked to customer satisfaction (Babakus et al., 2004). Hartline and Ferrell (1996) have shown that front-line customer-contact employees who are satisfied tend to provide better quality services. Moreover, satisfied employees are generally more committed to providing quality service (Hallowell et al. 1996; Yee et al., 2008). The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), has been utilized in several studies to evaluate service quality (Lee et al., 2012). Additionally, healthcare organizations have employed a variety of measurement tools, including employee feedback, to assess service quality (Ennis & Harrington, 2001). Yoon, Choi, and Park (2007) proposed that employees, as internal customers, should be able to evaluate service quality in order to improve patient outcomes such as shorter hospital stays, lower infection rates, and fewer medical errors. Thus, service quality can be evaluated by the employees who provide services to patients. In this study, service quality was measured by employees' perceptions (not customers') of the quality of service provided by the hospital, as both employees and the hospital can take steps to enhance service quality.



Conceptual Framework by Author

### Theoretical Review

The most recent studies on employee engagement (Shelke & Shaikh, 2023) highlight the concept of "work engagement," which has gained prominence in recent years, as indicated by Macey and Schneider (2008a, b). However, philosophers can employ various terms to describe this concept. Kahn (1990, 1992) introduced the terms "personal engagement" and "psychological presence" to signify the extent to which individuals devote their physical, mental, and psychological selves to their work. Kahn's personal engagement refers to the degree to which an individual's real self is invested in their work. As described by Schaufeli et al. (2002), work engagement is a positive and fulfilling mental state characterized by vigor,

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dedication, and immersion. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the most commonly used self-report questionnaire to assess work engagement, utilizes three scales to measure job involvement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor involves high energy levels and mental toughness while working and is characterized by being fully immersed in one's work and experiencing a sense of purpose. Absorption is defined as being fully absorbed and content with one's activities, with time passing quickly, and a sense of separation being impossible. Some examples of items from the scale include "At work, I am brimming with enthusiasm," "I find the work that I perform full of meaning and purpose," and "When I am working, I forget everything else around me."

The job demands-resources model, as outlined by Demerouti et al. (2001) and subsequently refined by Zahoor and Khan (2022), classifies job characteristics into two primary categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands encompass aspects of a job that necessitate effort and can result in fatigue and stress, including work overload and interpersonal conflict. Conversely, job resources represent the physical and psychological elements of a job that facilitate goal accomplishment, mitigate the negative impact of job demands on well-being, and may even foster personal growth such as job autonomy and social support. Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that social interactions between individuals or groups are based on the exchange of resources, whereby one party feels obligated to repay another's good deeds (Gergen, 1969). The exchange process commences when one person initiates a positive gesture towards another and the recipient responds by reciprocating. Thus, interactions that create obligations are at the core of SET (Emerson, 1976). Over several decades, SET has been used to explain a wide range of organizational behaviors such as commitment (Bishop et al., 2000), organizational support (Ladd and Henry, 2000), leadership (Liden et al., 1997), social power (Molm et al., 1999), justice (Tepper and Taylor, 2003), and organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1990).

In this study, when service employees (actors) take the initiative to resolve service failures and restore customer satisfaction, the customer (target) feels obligated to reward recovery effort. The customer reciprocates by showing loyalty to the organization (actor) and may even engage with it at a higher level than mere loyalty, completing the mutually beneficial cycle of resource exchange. According to SET principles, the benefits for both parties exceed their costs and the interaction ends with shared satisfaction.

## **Empirical Review**

Employee engagement is a vital aspect of motivation aimed at motivating employees to work enthusiastically and achieve organizational objectives. Over time, it has undergone three waves, physical vigor, emotional dedication, and cognitive absorption, which represent positive and fulfilling work-related states of mind. Additionally, it has been linked to other disciplines. Engagement is a combination of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components that encompasses ideas such as energy, rational attachment, deep connection, positive attitude, and psychological presence. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has transformed engagement from physical exploitation to desirable active espousal of the entire "person" in modern organizations. By fostering mind-openness and innovation, organizational engagement



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Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK mobilizes human capital and fosters meaningful contribution to the organization. (Zahoor & Khan, 2022)

Ugaddan & Park (2017) The concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM) has been well-established in the fields of organizational behavior and psychology. It refers to the idea of a public service ethic and public duty, which is reflective of work motivation intrinsic to the public sector. According to Perry and Wise (1990), PSM can be understood as an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations. This concept is crucial in public administration as it explains an individual's predisposition to act on society and is susceptible to leadership influences.

Drawing on social exchange theory, it can be argued that leadership quality can affect PSM. Predisposition to PSM is developed by various environmental factors before an individual joins an organization. Employee engagement is a complex topic that researchers study in various ways to understand its various aspects. Psychologists and sociologists have studied work engagement as a process that is related to an individual's self-presentation. Studies often use qualitative observational research, such as anonymous surveys, which are lower-cost options for data collection and lead to more honest disclosure. Gallup Organization has studied employee engagement both qualitatively and quantitatively since the 1970s, focusing on the components that managers can influence. In 1996, the United States Government used the Merit Principles Survey to assess compliance with the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act, involving over 18,000 employees across 23 federal agencies. This survey assessed job-related attitudes, behaviors, agency characteristics, and National Performance Review.

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According to some critics, the public sector is often characterized by organizational and management practices that are seen as rigid, regressive, and cumbersome (Selden, Ingraham, & Jacobson, p. 598). Wright (2001) notes that the missions of public sector organizations can provide employees with the opportunity to achieve altruistic goals, but the bureaucratic structure of these organizations often hinders this outcome. Employees may struggle to see the impact of their contributions or effect changes within the organization (Baldwin, 1984; Wright, 2001). Conflicting goals within public organizations can create a work environment that undermines employee self-efficacy and diminishes their aspirations to improve the organization (MacAlpine & Marsh, 2008). For example, in state-run social work organizations, social workers may be prevented from achieving their primary objective of ensuring the

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healthiest care for a child due to laws and regulations. When an organization's structure or policies prevent employees from fulfilling the broader mission of the organization, it can lead to employee dissatisfaction and misalignment between what employees want to achieve in their jobs and what they actually experience (Wright, 2001). Additionally, disparities in compensation between public and private sector jobs can negatively affect employee engagement in the public sector (Wright, 2001).

In a study conducted by Al-Omar et al. (2019), the relationship between perceived organizational support, resilience, and employee engagement was explored utilizing the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. Perceived organizational support is recognized as both a job resource and a personal resource, with resilience acting as a mediator. According to the conservation of resources (COR) theory, the accumulation of job resources leads to positive outcomes. When pharmacists perceive organizational support positively, they are more inclined to view their personal resources favorably. Additionally, enhancing resilience has been shown to increase employee engagement. According to Al-Omar et al. (2019), the rationale behind the widespread measurement of employee engagement by organizations worldwide is its positive impact on productivity and profitability, in addition to its substantial influence on employee retention and loyalty (Mani, 2011).

### **Literature Gap**

Current academic research on the relationship between employee engagement and service quality within the Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON) reveals a noticeable gap in the literature. This gap is particularly evident in the absence of targeted research specifically focused on AMCON, which is a crucial entity in Nigeria's financial sector. The unique operational dynamics and cultural context of AMCON as well as the broader Nigerian financial landscape are likely to have a distinct impact on employee engagement, which has not been adequately captured in global studies. Furthermore, although the SERVQUAL model has been widely applied across various service industries, its specific adaptation and correlation with the nuanced dimensions of employee engagement within asset management companies, particularly within the context of AMCON, have not been thoroughly explored. This gap in the literature is crucial for comprehensively understanding the influence of distinct engagement dimensions such as absorption, vigor, and dedication on service quality, as defined by the SERVQUAL model, particularly in terms of responsiveness. The current literature frequently treats employee engagement as a monolithic construct, neglecting an in-depth examination of its constituent elements and their independent influence on service quality. A notable deficiency in the existing body of research is the lack of comparative studies investigating the impact of employee engagement on service quality across various economic and cultural contexts, particularly in emerging economies, such as Nigeria. Additionally, there is an urgent need for contemporary studies that incorporate evolving trends arising from recent global financial challenges and technological advancements, as the majority of existing research predates these significant developments. This research endeavors to offer a more comprehensive and context-rich understanding of the connection between employee engagement and service quality at AMCON. To this end, this study addresses certain deficiencies in the existing literature. The ultimate objective is to contribute to the scholarly

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discourse on employee engagement in asset management while also providing practical  
insights for AMCON and potentially other institutions in emerging markets.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed survey research design. The population consisted of all employees across 10 departments in the AMCON. Total Number: The population size is 516 employees, distributed across 10 departments. Sample Size: Based on statistical calculations considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, and adjusting for the finite population size, the ideal sample size was determined to be 225. However, for practical considerations, we reduced this to 97 respondents. Stratified Sampling was used. This method was chosen to ensure that each department was represented proportionally in the sample. This is especially important given the varied sizes of the departments. The sample of 97 respondents was distributed across the departments proportionally, based on their size in relation to the total population. The allocation was as follows:

**Table 1: Sample size distribution**

S/N	Departments	Population	Sample Size
1	Citizens and Business	106	20
2	Human Resources	111	21
3	Finance and Accounts	85	16
4	General Services	60	11
5	Planning Research and Statistics	54	10
6	Joint Services	31	6
7	Special Duties	22	4
8	Internal Audit	14	3
9	Procurement	15	3
10	Reform	18	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>97</b>

**Source: Author's computation, 2023**

The study utilized the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and SERVQUAL reliability dimension to assess engagement and service quality among 97 respondents. Responses to a tailored UWES and SERVQUAL questionnaire.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), correlation, and regression analyses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Descriptive Statistics

Employee Engagement: Mean = 3.19, SD = 0.48.

Service Quality: Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.73.



### **Correlation Analysis**

Overall employee engagement and service quality showed a positive correlation ( $r = 0.2133$ ,  $p = 0.0340$ ).

### **Regression Analysis**

Impact of Engagement on Service Quality: Statistically significant at  $R^2 = 0.046$ .

**H01 (absorption):** The null hypothesis is that absorption has no significant influence on Service Quality. If the p-value for  $X1\beta1$  (coefficient of absorption) is greater than the significance level (commonly 0.05), then H01 is not rejected.

**H02 (Vigor):** Similarly, for H02, if the p-value for  $X2\beta2$  (coefficient of Vigor) is greater than the significance level, this suggests that Vigor has no significant impact on Service Quality.

**H03 (Dedication):** For H03, if the p-value for  $X3\beta3$  (the coefficient of Dedication) is above the significance threshold, the hypothesis that dedication is not significantly correlated with Service Quality is supported.

### **Component-Specific Analysis**

Absorption: The correlation with service quality was weak and nonsignificant ( $r = 0.0802$ ,  $p = 0.4298$ ).

Vigor: The correlation with service quality was weak and significant ( $r = 0.2450$ ,  $p = 0.0145$ ).

Dedication: The correlation with service quality was weak and nonsignificant ( $r = 0.0674$ ,  $p = 0.5072$ ). The study found a moderately strong positive correlation between overall employee engagement and service quality. This finding highlights the importance of employee engagement in enhancing service quality. However, the correlation between absorption and service quality was weak. Vigour showed a weak but significant positive correlation with service quality, suggesting that employees with higher energy and mental resilience contribute to better service quality. Dedication does not show a significant correlation with service quality. These findings suggest that AMCON should focus on specific aspects of employee engagement, such as vigor, to enhance service quality. A holistic approach to employee engagement, including absorption and dedication, can yield better results.

**Positive Correlation:** The study found a statistically significant but weak positive correlation between overall employee engagement and service quality. This finding suggests that higher levels of engagement among employees are associated with better perceived service quality, although the strength of this relationship is moderate. **Implications:** This finding underscores the importance of employee engagement as a factor for enhancing service quality. This suggests that initiatives aimed at improving overall employee engagement could positively contribute to the quality of services provided by AMCON.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The relationship between absorption and service quality was weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that the extent to which employees are absorbed in their work does not significantly impact their perceived quality of service. In contrast, vigor demonstrated a weak yet statistically significant positive association with service quality. This finding implies that employees who exhibit higher levels of energy and mental resilience are likely to contribute to enhanced service quality. In line with absorption, dedication does not reveal a significant correlation with service quality. This indicates that the sense of significance, enthusiasm, and pride that employees feel in their work does not directly translate into improved service quality. In light of the findings of the employee engagement and service quality study conducted within the Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON), the following targeted recommendations are proposed:

The AMCON should conduct stress management seminars, frequent physical activity, and wellness initiatives to increase job satisfaction and employee engagement. A holistic employee engagement strategy should be developed that focuses on dedication, absorption, and personal development. It is important to have a positive work atmosphere, in which staff members can voice their issues through frequent feedback channels. Employees should have access to opportunities for ongoing training and development to stay current in industry's best practices. Regular assessments of engagement and service quality are crucial to track the impact of engagement initiatives. Leadership and management training should be provided to support and encourage employees. Recognizing and rewarding high-engagement employees can boost their morale. Encouraging a culture of autonomy and creativity can boost job engagement and satisfaction. Effective communication and transparency are essential to building trust and dedication. Addressing specific challenges in service delivery can provide effective solutions. The Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON) should focus on strategic employee engagement, particularly vigor, to improve service quality. A balanced approach, including wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, and professional development opportunities, is recommended. Additionally, AMCON should develop policies and a supportive work environment to foster high engagement levels.

The study of employee engagement and service quality in the Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON) provides valuable insights. Future research could explore other dimensions of service quality, conduct longitudinal studies, and use qualitative approaches for deeper understanding. For further research building on the findings of your study on the relationship between employee engagement (measured through the UWES dimensions) and service quality (measured by the SERVQUAL reliability dimension) in Nigeria's asset management companies, several avenues can be explored: To better understand the relationship between employee engagement and service quality, researchers can expand the scope of engagement and service quality measures by incorporating additional dimensions, such as emotional involvement and cross-cultural analysis. Longitudinal studies can track changes over time and observe the evolution of relationships in response to organizational changes or interventions. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs can be used to implement and evaluate

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interventions aimed at increasing employee engagement, whereas control groups can strengthen causal inferences.

By examining different industries, researchers can explore industry-specific factors that influence the engagement-service quality relationship. Benchmarking studies can compare practices and outcomes across organizations that are known for high levels of engagement and service quality. Technological and innovation perspectives can also be explored by examining how technological advancements such as AI and remote working tools influence engagement and service quality. Policy analysis can be used to optimize organizational policies and strategies to enhance engagement and service quality. Strategic HRM can be investigated to foster a culture that supports engagement and high-quality service. To address the limitations of previous research, researchers could develop more reliable measurement tools and use larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. This approach can provide valuable insights for practitioners and scholars to understand the complex relationship between employee engagement and service quality.

This study bridges critical gaps in the existing body of literature by offering a focused examination of employee engagement and its impact on service quality within the Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON). By specifically targeting AMCON, this research provides insights into the unique dynamics of employee engagement in Nigeria's financial sector, a context that has been largely overlooked in previous studies. Exploring the SERVQUAL model in relation to the distinct dimensions of employee engagement—absorption, vigor, and dedication—will add depth to our understanding of how these factors collectively influence service quality in the asset management context. Furthermore, this study contributes to the global discourse on employee engagement by offering a comparative perspective that highlights the peculiarities and similarities in asset management practices across different economic and cultural landscapes, particularly in emerging economies. The anticipated findings from this study are expected to not only enrich the academic field with updated and contextually relevant knowledge, but also provide practical recommendations for AMCON and similar entities, thereby enhancing their operational effectiveness and service quality. Ultimately, this study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of asset management, employee engagement, and service quality, particularly in the context of emerging economies.

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