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Strengthening the role of relationship management in sustainable employee engagement at selected maritime firms in Nigeria

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Abstract

Relationship management in a maritime firm is essential for maintaining strong partnerships ensuring smooth operations and driving business success within the industry. Extant literature suggests that Nigerian maritime firms must still thoroughly investigate relationship management possibilities and sustainable employee engagement. As a result, this study explores how relationship management affects employee engagement at selected Nigerian maritime companies. 410 respondents were polled from the employees of the selected marine enterprises in Nigeria using a stratified and purposeful sampling technique. Smart PLS 3.0 was used to analyze the returned and valid 380 copies of the questionnaire which provided a response rate of 92.6%. The study's findings demonstrated that relationship management impacted employees' cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement. The findings also revealed that behavioural engagement encompassing dedication, enthusiasm and initiative in fulfilling job duties and advancing organizational objectives is the weakest predictor of employee engagement. This suggests a widespread belief that fostering "cultural diversity and unity" in a global workplace is crucial to inspire employees' engagement and passion for their work. This study offers valid evidence in support of its conclusion that relationship management stimulates the cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement of employees in the Nigerian maritime industry. The study recommends to maritime companies that recognizing diversity and unity in relationship management is essential for higher employee engagement and involvement levels.

Keywords: Affective engagements, Behavioural, Cognitive, Diversity, Employee engagement, Relationship management, Unity.

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Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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1. Introduction

The importance of relationship management has grown significantly for both employees and managers in our interconnected and globalized world. As geographical boundaries continue to fade and technology facilitates communication across borders, effectively handling relationships across diverse cultures and backgrounds has become a crucial skill. In a global context, relationship management involves understanding cultural nuances, adjusting communication styles, establishing trust and fostering collaboration to navigate the intricacies of an interconnected global work environment. According to [Abdulrahman et al. \[1\]](#) relationship management is a strategic and deliberate practice to create and nurture connections among employees to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships. This entails effective communication, trust-building, conflict resolution and collaboration to promote positive interactions in pursuit of shared goals and objectives. [Abdulrahman et al. \[1\]](#) also suggest that relationship management facilitates strong employee relationships by encouraging knowledge sharing and exchanging ideas.

Additionally, when effective relationship management is in place, employees are more likely to engage their expertise, collaborate on problem-solving and contribute innovative ideas within the organization [\[2\]](#). This underscores the significance of employee engagement particularly for innovation-driven firms. In recent years, employee engagement has gained prominence due to its connections to productivity, profitability, safety, innovation and employee commitment. Engaged employees are highly aware of their roles and are passionate about advancing their organizations. According to [Akopunwanne and Johnson \[3\]](#) engaged employees are more likely to be actively involved in their work and often ascend to leadership positions within their organizations. Therefore, employee engagement plays a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of leaders within the maritime industry who can foster positive interactions and achieve shared goals.

Research has demonstrated the maritime industry's substantial contribution to a country's economic growth [\[4, 5\]](#). It is widely acknowledged that this industry transforms local markets into national, regional and international hubs resulting in economies of scale and competitive advantage while generating abundant employment opportunities [\[4\]](#). However, corruption remains a significant and intricate issue within the maritime sector. Corruption and manipulation often lead to delays in shipping, posing risks to crew safety and navigation. [Bandura \[4\]](#) contends that corruption disrupts regular work activities and harms sustainable employee engagement [\[6\]](#).

Furthermore, [Daqar and Smoudy \[7\]](#) provide insight into the mediating role of relationship management in influencing the relationship between organizational strategy and employee commitment in selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. [Abdulrahman et al. \[1\]](#) also explore how young workers perceive leadership and employee commitment. There are still information gaps particularly in the areas of relationship management and sustainable employee engagement within Nigerian maritime enterprises, although several studies have looked at the influences of workload, self-efficacy and relationship management on employee social conduct.

It is important to note that previous studies have primarily focused on the moderating role of management support in the relationship between employee engagement, business orientation, institutional support, job commitment, innovation, and performance [\[8, 9\]](#). This current paper centers on how relationship management can enhance employee engagement, thereby fulfilling maritime firms' strategic objectives and contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) which aims to promote decent jobs and economic development. The United Nations developed the SDGs to ensure prosperity, peace, sustainable economic advancement, productive engagement and decent jobs by 2030. Achieving these goals remains a challenge for Nigeria. This paper employs structural equation modelling to quantify variables, evaluate latent constructs and analyze structural relationships while previous studies have typically used correlation and regression methods for data analysis. The factor model used in this study demonstrates construct validity, reliability and a good fit through discriminant and convergent analysis.

This paper addresses significant gaps in the existing literature by thoroughly examining the impact of relationship management on employee engagement. Its specific objectives are as follows: (a) to assess the influence of relationship management on sustaining employee affective engagement. (b) To evaluate the impact of relationship management on sustaining employee behavioural engagement and (c) to investigate the effect of relationship management on sustainable employee cognitive engagement. The first section of this paper provides background information on the research. The methodology is outlined in the second section and the final section covers data analysis, discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relationship Management

Relationship management involves comprehending ongoing situations and their impact on employees through self-awareness, self-control and social awareness. It serves as a means to enhance employees' inherent communication skills. According to [Goleman \[10\]](#) relationship management encompasses attributes such as influence (the ability to build consensus and gain people's support by focusing on their priorities), leadership (being the one people willingly follow) and communication (clearly defining success criteria to enable employees to make their distinctive and valuable contributions). [Goleman \[10\]](#) further suggests that when employees become aware of their emotions, they focus on enhancing their social and emotional competencies leading to increased effectiveness, productivity and satisfaction in their relationships.

2.1.1. Sustainable Employee Engagement

This concept within human resource management acknowledges the natural inclination to concentrate on, assess and maximize employees' levels of involvement. It has become a buzzword in the modern workplace and among highly

successful businesses. It can be described as dedication, complete devotion and a willingness to go the extra mile for the company's success. Employee engagement enhances employee morale and encourages alignment with the company's goals, plans and priorities. The more an employee feels invested in the organization's success, the more engaged they are with the company [11]. It boosts workplace morale and encourages employees to actively support the organization's objectives, priorities and strategies [11]. Sustainable employee engagement can be observed through employees' behavioural, cognitive and affective engagement within the organization [12].

2.1.2. Behavioural Engagement

This pertains to employees' active participation in work-related activities such as attentively listening, completing tasks assigned by supervisors and actively engaging in meetings and discussions [13]. Additionally, it explains why employees are willing to exceed the requirements of their job descriptions. According to Opeyemi et al. [14] behavioural engagement signifies employees' ability to adapt to new situations, their intentions to learn and acquire new skills and their ability to maintain their energy and alertness within the organization.

2.1.3. Cognitive Engagement

This denotes employees who are fully aware of and aligned with the organization's strategies. They understand their responsibilities have faith in the organization and its members and are mentally invested in their work Jani et al. [13]. Jani et al. [13] also define cognitive engagement as the degree to which employees are mentally conscious of their roles while keeping the organization's objectives in mind. Opeyemi et al. [14] affirm that when employees possess a sustainable, gratifying and positive mindset, they are cognitively engaged. Existing studies suggest that employee cognitive engagement is higher in organizations that efficiently and effectively distribute information [12].

2.1.4. Affective Engagement

This occurs when employees are motivated to excel and establish a psychological connection with the organization. Emotionally engaged employees have more control over their work-life balance than those without emotional engagement. They are less inclined to engage in activities detrimental to the company's reputation or overall performance [12]. Emotionally engaged employees exhibit enthusiasm for their organization. However, it's worth noting that Opeyemi et al. [14] point out that negative emotions like exhaustion and anger may also be present when discussing affective engagement.

2.2. Hypothesis Development for Relationship Management and Sustainable Employee Engagement

2.2.1. Relationship Management and Sustainable Employee Affective Engagement

Relationship management within the maritime industry involves individuals' collaborative interactions and teamwork leading to enhanced performance and productivity beyond what each person could achieve independently. Cooperative synergy emerges when employees with diverse skills, perspectives and strengths come together and effectively coordinate their efforts towards a shared objective. Relationships founded on functional complementarity or the division of labour can yield synergistic outcomes Kahn [15]. Bandura [4] demonstrates the connection between team efficacy and team performance emphasizing that group dynamics significantly impact team-level results more than individual dynamics. In organizational contexts, relationship management typically manifests as heightened creativity, innovation, problem-solving capabilities and overall efficiency. It is essential to recognize that building and nurturing relationships requires deliberate effort, effective teamwork and the establishment of a collaborative and cooperative environment [15]. Researchers like Ogueyungbo, et al. [16] and Jani, et al. [13] assert that various workplace factors are vital for sustaining employee engagement. Ismail, et al. [12] conclude that effective relationship management empowers employees to complement one another's strengths, compensate for weaknesses and collectively foster high levels of employee engagement. Therefore, the present study posits that

H₁: Relationship management influences sustainable employee affective engagement.

2.2.2. Relationship Management and Sustainable Employee Behavioural Engagement

Relationship management represents an organization's state of equilibrium, coherence and shared identity. It embodies unity, solidarity and mutual support among group members leading to a collective sense of purpose and a shared dedication to the group's objectives and principles. According to Li et al. [17] effective relationship management plays a significant role in influencing individuals' attraction to and motivation to remain within the organization. It is a dynamic process that illustrates a team's propensity to stick together while collaborating to achieve a common task. Macey and Schneider [18] highlight the importance of relationship management as it encourages group members to willingly collaborate due to their increased understanding of their peers and their readiness to offer support and guidance. Gilani and Al Ahmadi [11] point out that organizations use relationship management training to enhance employees' self-confidence and elevate the quality of their teamwork.

Interestingly, Gilani and Al Ahmadi [11] also found that relationship management training can enhance teamwork. It may not necessarily enhance coworkers trust. Furthermore, Makinde et al. [19] researched the use of team training to enhance employees' understanding and tolerance of each other. Another study by McCrae et al. [20] delved into the application of outbound training to foster cohesion among marine employees. The literature has extensively established the relationship between management and employee engagement [12, 14].

H₂: Relationship management influences sustainable employee behavioral engagement positively.

2.2.3. Relationship Management and Sustainable Employee Cognitive Engagement

Relationship management encompasses using the other three components of emotional intelligence to effectively oversee interpersonal relationships. These components include self-regulation, motivation and empathy. According to Nkansah et al. [21] self-regulation involves one's ability to manage and control emotions. Motivation pertains to the process of driving and guiding oneself towards attaining personal and professional objectives. According to Nkansah et al. [21] the ability to identify with others is a measure of an employee's emotional intelligence. Several factors, including open and efficient communication, active engagement of all participants, mutual trust, respect, shared goals, proficient leadership and an inclusive work environment significantly influence effective relationship management. According to Odor and Samuel [22] relationship management can be connected to employees' cognitive engagement. Consequently, relationship management heightens employees' concentration, attention and comprehension of their job responsibilities and roles. According to Makinde et al. [19] when employees are engaged and interested in their work, they typically function within teams characterized by heightened creativity, innovation and problem-solving capabilities.

H₂: Relationship management influences sustainable employee cognitive engagement positively.

3. Methodology

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of relationship management on sustainable employee engagement encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects within selected maritime firms in Nigeria. The data was gathered through a survey methodology employing both stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was chosen because the survey exclusively targeted full-time employees within the designated marine firms in the Lagos metropolitan area. To effectively address the sampled population, it was categorized into various strata, necessitating the utilization of stratified sampling. Subsequently, the collected data was coded and analyzed using SPSS. Furthermore, the study employed Smart PLS Structural Equation Modeling (PLS_SEM) to examine the goodness-of-fit and the impact of relationship management on employee engagement including its cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. The research also conducted convergent and discriminant analyses to evaluate construct validity, factor model reliability and the model's overall fit. The study's population comprises six maritime companies characterized by their high levels of technological innovation and adoption which contribute to enhanced operational effectiveness, safety, innovation and sustainability. The data for this research was collected through employee surveys conducted at the selected maritime firms in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria. A sample size of 410 was determined based on information provided by the Shipping Association of Nigeria (SAN). Out of this sample, 380 completed questionnaires were returned and subjected to analysis representing 92.6% of the sample size. The questionnaires employed a Likert scale with a five-point range. The study rigorously assessed the validity and reliability of the final measurement model after necessary refinements. The reliability test used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) loading to calculate composite reliability. Cronbach's alpha tests for internal consistency were conducted to measure the reliability of the research instrument with results for all constructs employed in this study meeting or surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.70. Both construct composite reliability and CFA loading results fell within the acceptable ranges of 0.70 and 0.80. Additionally, the obtained construct variance estimates and the variance of error met the relevant criterion of 0.50. Table 1 provides a summary of the CFA results along with comprehensive indices.

Table 1.
Presents the analysis for the influence of relationship management on employee engagement.

Constructs	Loading	VIF	t-statistics	P value	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	RhO.A
Benchmark	≥ 0.6	<3.0	>1.96	<0.05	≥0.5	≥ 0.8	> 0.7	
Relationship management					0.669	0.801	0.836	0.841
Group synergy	0.863	1.301	15.017	0.000				
Group unity	0.770	1.531	10.510	0.000				
Affective engagement (β = 0.375; R ² = 0.142; t-statistic = 5.670)					0.534	0.815	0.753	0.718
Inspiration	0.814	2.371	18.713	0.000				
Excitement	0.789	1.575	10.905	0.000				
Positive energy	0.744	1.461	7.280	0.000				
Behavioral engagement (β = 0.373; R ² = 0.141; t-statistic= 4.271)					0.569	0.839	0.766	0.816
Physical exertion	0.820	1.117	9.203	0.000				
Cooperation	0.806	1.687	8.797	0.000				
Hard work	0.753	1.686	4.866	0.000				
Discretion	0.617	1.539	3.267	0.000				
Cognitive engagement (β = 0.557; R ² = 0.312;					0.639	0.874	0.809	0.820

Constructs	Loading	VIF	t-statistics	P value	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	RhO.A
t-statistic = 8.909)								
Creativity	0.768	2.400	14.175	0.000				
Strategical thinking	0.784	1.466	17.012	0.000				
Skills usage	0.786	1.783	13.519	0.000				
Purposiveness	0.847	2.272	23.322	0.000				

Table 1 provides an overview of the analysis results encompassing factor analysis outcomes, reliability assessments, average variance extracted (AVE) estimates and Cronbach alpha values. The criteria set for factor loading, composite reliability, AVE and Cronbach alpha were all met successfully. Additionally, all constructs exhibit collinearity statistics specifically variance inflation factor (VIF) values below the threshold of 5 as recommended by Ogolo [23]. This confirms that the assumptions related to multicollinearity and normality have been satisfied (see Table 1).

Convergent and discriminant validity were employed as methods to assess construct validity. As elucidated by Ogueyungbo et al. [16] convergent validity establishes the connection between relationship management and employee engagement indicators. On the other hand, discriminant validity does not necessitate a high correlation with other measures when there are differences as emphasized by Oyebanji [24]. It is important to note that when all the factor loadings for individual measurement items surpass the threshold of 0.60, these items collectively capture a substantial portion of the variation. The study compared the AVE with the squared correlations between each component to further ensure discriminant validity. The AVE of the latent variable was found to exceed the squared correlations between it and the other elements in the model.

4. Results

4.1. Test of Hypotheses

PLS-SEM is a robust statistical instrument known for its proficiency in modelling and scrutinizing the connections between latent constructs and observable variables. Its remarkable flexibility and versatility render it particularly suitable for situations where data do not meet the rigorous assumptions mandated by traditional Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methods. Consequently, it has emerged as a cherished tool across a range of research and analytical fields.

The study's hypothesis was tested using the PLS_SEM (Smart PLS Structural Equation Modeling) approach which employed diverse methods to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. These methods encompassed calculating the structural path coefficient (R^2) through the PLS algorithm model employing the PLS bootstrapping model with P-values and using the PLS bootstrapping model with T-values. The null hypothesis (H_0) posits no significant correlation between management and employee engagement encompassing affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions. This hypothesis explicitly examines relationship management's impact on cognitive employee engagement within selected maritime firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The empirical data were analysed through the path coefficient. Figure 1 illustrates T-values.

Figure 2 illustrates the path coefficient and t-values.

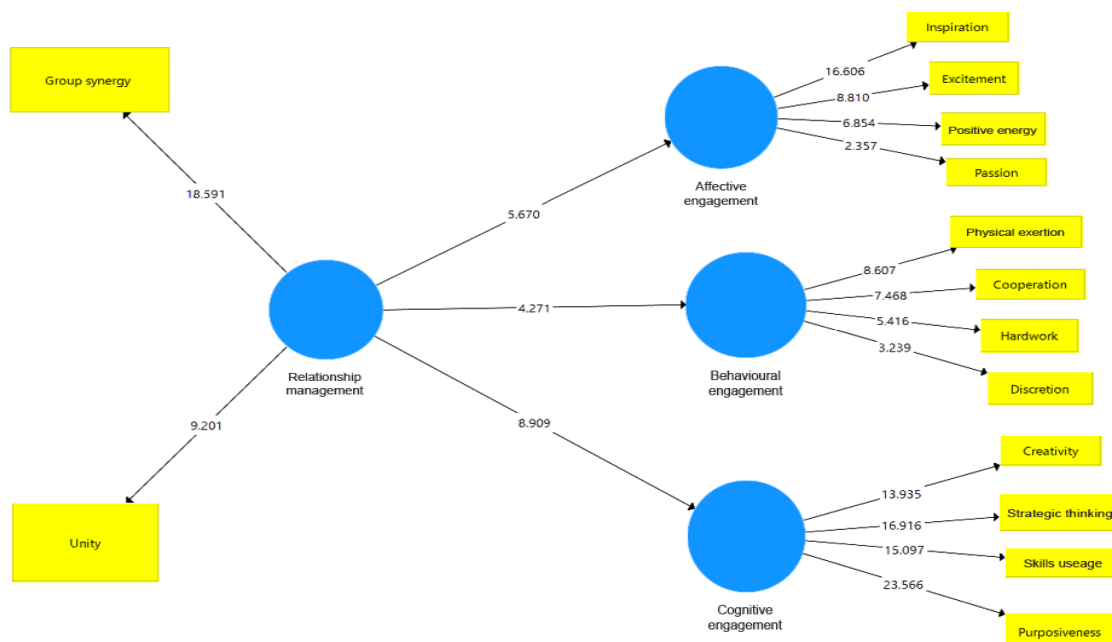


Figure 1. T-values.

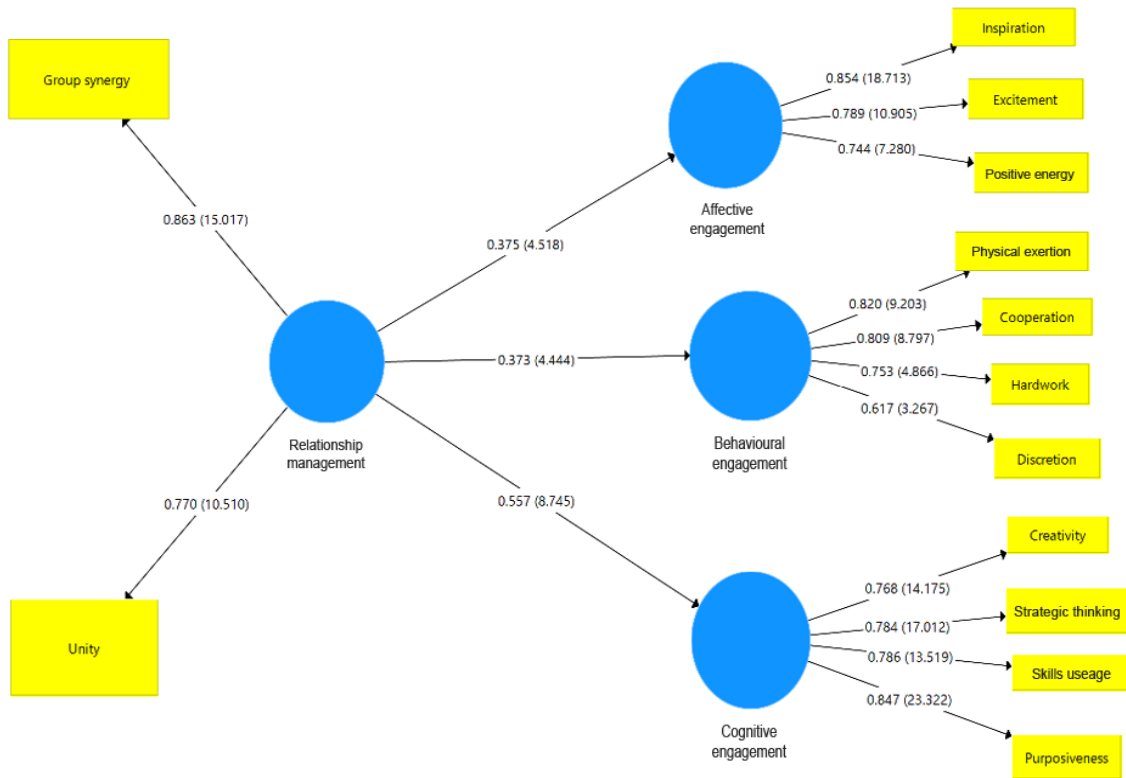


Figure 2. Path co-efficient and T-values.

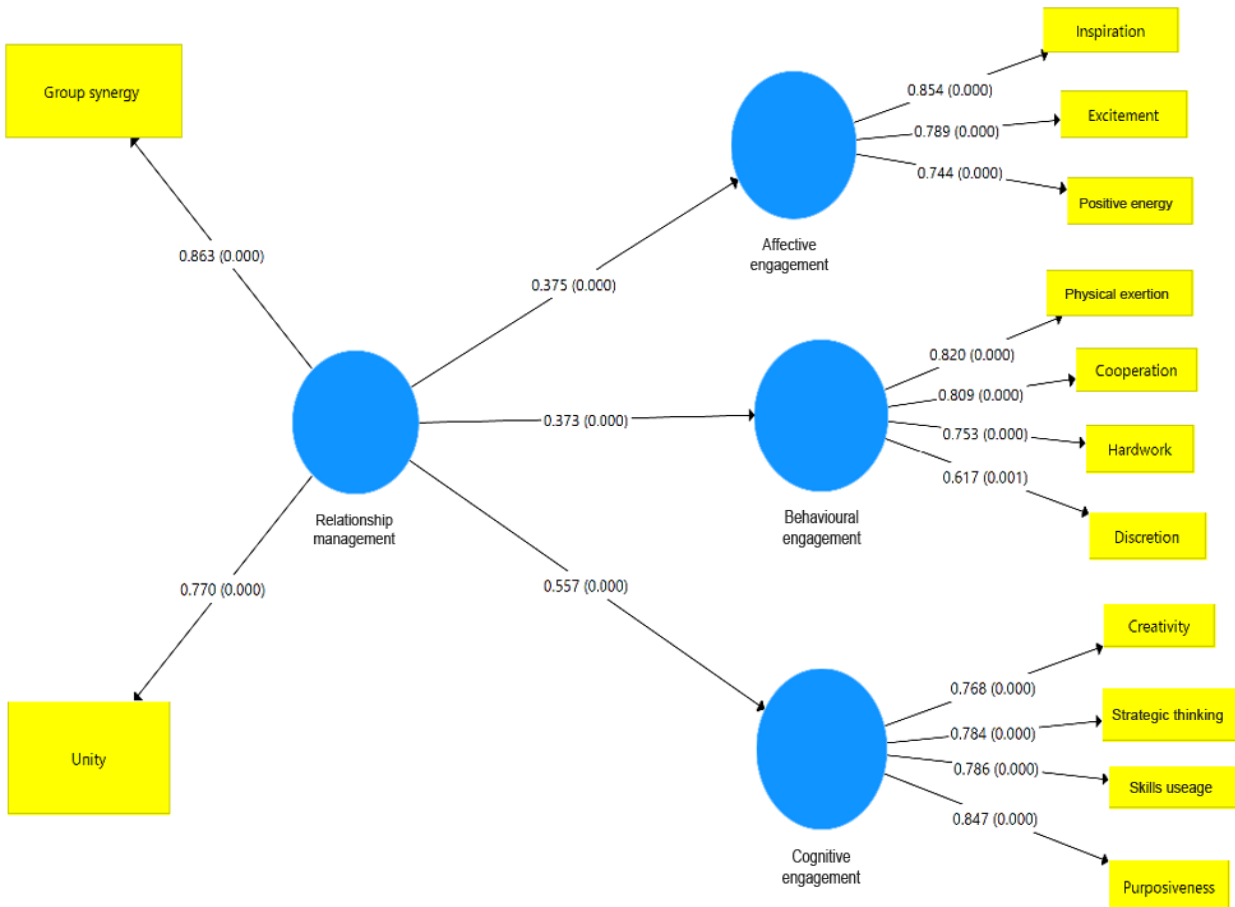


Figure 3. PLS bootstrapping figure with β and P values for relationship management and employee engagement (affective , behavioral and cognitive engagement).

The PLS algorithm model which examines the relationship between management and sustainable employee engagement within the selected maritime firms in Lagos State, Nigeria is visually presented in Figure 3. This diagram also includes the loading values associated with each measurement item for relationship management, the path coefficient values and the R² values. Furthermore, Figure 3 provides the PLS bootstrapping illustration showcasing β and P values for relationship management and employee engagement. Additionally, Table 2 offers insights into the interaction coefficient analysis among the model's variables.

Table 2.

Presents the path coefficients for relationship management (RM), affective engagement (AE), behavioral engagement (BE), and cognitive engagement (CE).

Variables	Path coefficient	R-square	Std. dev	T-statistics	P-value
RM → AE	0.375	0.142	0.067	5.670	0.000
RM → BE	0.373	0.141	0.087	4.271	0.000
RM → CE	0.557	0.312	0.062	8.909	0.000

The table above presents the results of the partial least square analysis for relationship management and employee engagement. The coefficient path was used to assess the influence of management on employee engagement encompassing affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects. Relationship management was measured using two specific indicators, while sustained employee engagement, including affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions was measured using eleven indicators. The results indicate a significant impact of relationship management on sustainable employee engagement.

The analysis for hypothesis one was affirmed revealing a substantial effect of management on employees' affective engagement ($\beta=0.375$, $R^2=0.142$, $t\text{-statistics}=5.670 > 1.96$ and $p\text{-value}=0.000 < 0.05$). The path coefficient of 0.375 signifies a strong correlation between management and employees' affective engagement within Nigerian maritime firms. Management can account for a 14.2% variation in affective engagement as indicated by the R² value of 0.142.

Similarly, the statistical examination for hypothesis two was supported ($\beta = 0.373$, $R^2=0.141$, $t\text{-statistics}=4.271 > 1.96$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). The path coefficient of 0.373 suggests a moderate association between management and employee behavioral engagement in a Nigerian maritime organization. According to the R² value of 0.141, management may explain 14.1% of the variation in employee behavioral engagement.

The study's results also confirmed hypothesis three ($\beta= 0.557$, $R^2=0.312$, $t\text{-statistics}=8.909 > 1.96$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). There exists a significant relationship between management and employees' cognitive engagement within a Nigerian maritime organization with a path coefficient of 0.557. The R² value of 0.312 indicates that relationship management explains 31.2% of the variability in cognitive engagement.

Furthermore, the statistical analysis depicted in Figure 3 demonstrates that cognitive engagement holds the highest predictive power followed by affective and behavioral engagement. Therefore, it can be inferred that management has a more substantial influence on maintaining employees' affective engagement. A test for discriminant validity was conducted to evaluate the distinction between these variables.

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity for management and employee engagement.

Table 3.

Discriminant validity for management and employee engagement.

Constructs	Affective engagement	Behavioral engagement	Cognitive engagement	Relationship management
Affective engagement	0.731			
Behavioral engagement	0.743	0.754		
Cognitive engagement	0.812	0.656	0.797	
Relationship management	0.774	0.788	0.657	0.818

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This research shows the empirical relationship between management and sustainable employee engagement in selected Nigerian maritime firms. Relationship management is a critical component of employee engagement driven by the influence of sustainable development goals. Relationship management also helps to inspire novel ideas, produce novel insights and deliver ground-breaking innovations. Relationship management helps to develop effective communication and clear goals and objectives.

Relationship management facilitates and promotes employee affective engagement in Nigerian maritime firms. Additionally, the ability of these firms to emphasize the outcome of constructive conflict resolution where differences of opinion are addressed respectfully and conflicts are resolved through open dialogue will improve and enhance employee affective engagement. The conclusion of the study by Shanthi et al. [25] and Kahn [15] indicated that relationship management is a crucial necessity for sustainable employee engagement especially in a globally connected workplace. Additionally, the discovery supports the information provided by Shattuck and Olcott [26] and Daqar and Smoudy [7]. They highlighted that it is a positive development that there is relationship management for a workable engagement where the sustainable development goals have become a crucial focal point.

Additionally, relationship management contributes to the sustained behavioural engagement of employees at the Nigerian maritime firm. This shows that employees will frequently express enthusiasm, excitement and good feelings

towards their work and the organization if the management of marine enterprises encourages them to foster a cohesive and collaborative work environment. Similarly, maritime firms must ensure that managers and supervisors are accessible to staff members who want to distribute their knowledge or provide vital information that will offer the company a competitive advantage. This supports the findings of McCrae et al. [20] and Ismail et al. [12] respectively. The outcomes of this study are consistent with those of studies by Macey and Schneider [18] and Daqar and Smoudy [7] which found that management support boosts employees engagement in the educational sector. According to the author, this can foster an atmosphere that motivates employees to remain dedicated and lowers their leaving rates.

Furthermore, relationship management facilitates and promotes sustainable cognitive engagement among employee in Nigerian maritime firms. This explains that harmony, cohesion and shared identity among employees enhance their mental alertness and capacity to work. This conclusion follows the submission by Nkansah et al. [21] and Shattuck and Olcott [26] that the sense of togetherness, solidarity and mutual support that exists within an organisation leads to a collective sense of purpose and a shared commitment to the group's goals and values. Additionally, the findings support the data presented by Kahn [15] and Daqar and Smoudy [7]. They highlighted the need for relationship management for sustainable cognitive engagement.

According to Abdulrahman et al. [1] relationship management is critical for employee engagement since it increases employee commitment and dedication. When it comes to behavioural engagement (which refers to dedication, enthusiasm, and initiative in performing job responsibilities and contributing to the organization's goals) the least predictive indicator of employee engagement, there is a common assumption that achieving "cultural diversity and unity" in a global work environment is a significant concern for today's employees' dedication and enthusiasm to work especially those in the Millennial generation. They strive for inclusive, respectful and supportive organizations for all individuals regardless of their cultural backgrounds. They seek organizations that create opportunities for collaboration, understanding and shared experiences that promote social cohesion and well-being. This trend emphasises the most minor prediction revealed regarding the role of behavioural engagement demonstrated by the result of this study. This study concludes by showing evidence that relationship management motivates employee cognitive, behavioural and affective engagement in the Nigerian maritime industry. As a result, the authors recommend that maritime companies enhance diverse unity training for higher levels of relationship management and employee engagement. Moreover, the management of the selected firms is encouraged to resolve conflicts more effectively by promoting open dialogue, empathy and respect for diverse viewpoints to increase dedication, enthusiasm and initiative in performing job responsibilities.

5.1. Policy Implications

Policy implications concerning relationship management and employee engagement in Nigerian maritime companies might encompass:

1. **Support for employee training and skill enhancement:** Implement strategies that encourage maritime companies to invest in employee training and skill improvement initiatives. This investment can result in a more proficient and motivated workforce. Such strategies may encompass tax incentives or government grants to support training programs.
2. **Strengthened safety and health regulations at work:** Introduce and uphold policies that prioritize the safety and welfare of maritime personnel. Implementing rigorous regulations and safety standards can lead to a more secure work environment, reducing incidents and thereby increasing employee commitment.
3. **Facilitation of collaboration between labor and management:** Encourage policies that foster cooperation between labor unions and management within the maritime sector. These policies can provide incentives for the establishment of joint committees or partnerships aimed at resolving workplace issues, enhancing communication and cultivating improved relations between employees and employers.

5.2. Contribution to Knowledge

1. The study's emphasis on the predictive function of group synergy in relation to sustainable employee engagement is a significant contribution to organizational theory.
2. This paper added to the continuing debates regarding the literature on human resource development by demonstrating the connection between relationship management and sustainable employee behavioural engagement.
3. This study offers empirical proof of relationship management's special contribution to employee engagement.

5.3. Limitations and Further Study

The study's limitations include:

- (1) Structural equation modeling was employed in the study. The analysis of the identified hypotheses was conducted using Smart Partial Least Square 3.0. However, future researchers may use a combination of methodologies, notably in-depth interviews to get extra information that quantitative analysis cannot.
- (2) The study was unable to cover all of the definitions of group unity, group synergy and other pertinent topics. Therefore, definitions of the pertinent concepts should receive enough consideration in future investigations.
- (3) For this study, just six maritime companies in Lagos, Nigeria were taken into consideration out of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This restricts the applicability of the results to other maritime firms in other geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The study's scope could be expanded in the future to cover additional Nigerian zones.

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